

### The Fall From Power

In Hamlet, Prince of Denmark and Oedipus The King

The plays of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark and Oedipus the King, are very similar in plot because they both are about the kings of their perspective cities being murdered, and the murderer subsequently is crowned king and marries the queen. They are also based on an incestuous relation with the queen. The plays differ in that Hamlet knows who killer of his father is, whereas Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother. They have both pledged to avenge the kings' death. The men are initially portrayed as strong and powerful. However, by the end of the plays both men are weak in character and status. There is no reversal by Hamlet, whereas there is both recognition and reversal by Oedipus. The manner in which the conducted themselves, results in additional tragedies.

In Oedipus the King, the queen and Laius the murdered king were told by a prophet that Oedipus, their newborn son, would kill his father and marry his mother. To avoid committing this terrible sin, they instructed their servant to kill him but, instead, out of compassion for Oedipus, he gave him to a childless couple. After reaching adulthood, Oedipus would later be warned by an oracle of the same fate that was predicted by the prophet. To avoid committing this horrific act against the people that he thought were his real parents, Oedipus left and on his journey he came across some servant who cut him off in his path. In a fit of rage, he killed all but one of the passengers. Among the dead was Laius, the King of Thebes and Oedipus's natural father. Soon after, he would be crowned king of Thebes for answering the riddle of the Sphinx and would marry the queen.

The priests of Thebes came to visit Oedipus because of the undue suffering of the people and the animals of Thebes. They had great respect for him as king because he had defeated the Sphinx; however, they did not think that he was doing enough to bring an end to the suffering. He seemed genuinely concerned and assured the priests that he would find the reason for the plague. Oedipus sent Creon, his dear friend and both of the queen to Apollo, the god to find out what was causing the suffering. The message from Apollo was 'that relief from the plague can only come way. Uncover the murders of Laius, put them to death or drive them into exile'(1129). The leader suggested to Oedipus that he seek answers from Lord Tiresias, the blind prophet because he sees with the eyes of Lord Apollo and could shed some light on who was responsible for the crime.(1128). He agreed and summoned him to the castle. At first, Lord Tiresias was very reluctant to tell Oedipus what he knew. However, after he insulted him by calling him a scheming quack, he told him that he was responsible for the curse. Oedipus became very angry and upset by his comment. After provoking Tiresias further, he told him that he is the murderer. Oedipus became enraged and mocked his blindness as well as calling him other unpleasant names. Tiresias, being of equal power to Oedipus predicted his fate. He told him, 'Blind who now has eyes, beggar who now is rich will grope his way toward a foreign soil, a stick tapping before him step by step' (1132). At this point, Oedipus was desperate to find the killer. He began to accuse Creon of trying to overthrow him as king. Oedipus is very blind to the truth and is very suspicious of everyone. Anyone that offers to help him, becomes a suspect. He thinks that every is plotting against him. When he reflected back on the murders that he committed, he immediately ruled himself out as being the killer.

There is finally a moment of recognition by Oedipus when Jocosta, the queen, told him of her account of how the king had been murdered. When she told him that he was murdered where three roads met, he realizes that this is where he had committed his murders. He was not convinced until the messenger told him the story of how he gave him away at birth. At this point, there was a reversal by Oedipus. He was very sympathetic and sorry for the pain and suffering that he had inflicted upon everyone for committing this sin. Out of embarrassment, the queen committed suicide. Oedipus chose to blind himself over killing himself because he said that his blindness was responsible for the suffering.

In Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Hamlet was faced with a similar situation of avenging his father's death after being informed by the ghost of his father that his uncle Claudius had murdered him. At this point, he was very hostile and angry at anyone who befriended Claudius. His mother was also in an incestuous relation because she married Claudius. Hamlet was not only angry at her but also very rude to her because

he did not think that she grieved his father's death long enough and she knowingly married incestuous relationship. He concluded that it was lust and not love that brought them together. Hamlet was presented with many opportunities to kill Claudius. However, he would always find a reason not to. When he was finally presented with the opportune moment to kill Claudius, he again procrastinates. Hamlet angry towards others was not merit of his treatment towards them because he knew nothing of Claudius sin. He also thought that every one was plotting against him and trying to hurt him. He was furious and bitter to the end. As a result of his blindness and anger, all the people including himself died. Claudius, his intended victim lived on.

Oedipus was very blind to the fact that he killed his father. His internal tragic flaws such as excessive pride, suspicion, and lack of trust for others caused many people to suffer because of this crime. However, there is a moment of recognition by Oedipus when he realizes that it is he that killed his father. There is also reversal because he is very remorseful for killing his father, the adulterous relationship with his mother and the suffering that he has inflicted upon all of the innocent citizens of Thebes.

Unlike Oedipus, there is no reversal by Hamlet. His internal tragic flaws such as excessive anger, procrastination in killing Claudius and blindness prevented him from resulting in the tragic death of the people he cared about including his mother and Ophelia who he truly loved. He could have prevented these additional tragedies if he would have killed Claudius.