

## Retracing the Tragic Hero in Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Philip Roth's The Human Stain

Shaimaa Mohamed Hassanin

Basic Sciences Department || Physical Therapy College || Horus University || Egypt

**Abstract:** This paper reevaluates the fundamental status of Coleman Silk in Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* and Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* by testing their characters against Aristotelian tragic hero's elements. In spite of the verifiable comparisons to Oedipus, Coleman is not a neglected figure, but a subverted one that underpins Roth's proposal of "the different nature" of inconceivable postmodern American tragedy.

In Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*, the protagonist Coleman Silk is implicitly linked to Sophocles' classical figure Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*. The plot is interwoven with allusions to Greek tragedies, but in *The Human Stain* Coleman lacks the stature and the real character of Oedipus. In addition, Coleman lacks, to some extent, the real elements of a tragic hero that constitute the Catharsis: the process of releasing and providing relief; a conflict which raises the question; is Coleman really a tragic hero? According to Aristotle, the tragic hero should experience a dilemma and a massive transformation from valuable standards to lower depth, and this person should suffer particularly after committing a mistake, or even thinking about his past deeds. The tragic hero should be relatively a commendable person whose comeuppance is brought about by his own fallacies which he did not commit out of defect or wickedness, but out of his own serendipity. Following the ancient Greek concept which asserts that fluke is associated with actions, Coleman is a fortuitous man at first, unlike Oedipus, despite being born as a black man. Because of this unlucky fact, he is capable of changing his identity and rising up to the level of preeminence.

**Keywords:** Tragic hero, Oedipus, Roth, Human nature, Greek mythology.

### تتبع البطل المأساوي في سوفوكليس الملك أوديب وفيليب روث وصمة عار الإنسان

شيماء محمد حسنين

كلية العلاج الطبيعي || جامعة حورس || مصر

**المخلص:** هدفت هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تقييم البطل التراجيدي الأسطوري أوديب وشخصية كولمان من خلال اختبار شخصيتهم ضد المعضلة الإغريقية التي تتماشى مع البطل التراجيدي في الأساطير اليونانية. على الرغم من المقارنات التي يمكن التحقق منها لأوديب، إلا أن كولمان تعد قريبة الشبه خصوصاً في البعد النفسي للشخصية الأسطورية، ولكن هذه المرة يقدم لنا روث "الطبيعة المختلفة" لأمريكا ما بعد الحداثة من خلال شخصية كولمان.

في رواية فيليب روث، يرتبط بطل الرواية كولمان ارتباطاً ضمناً بشخصية أوديب الكلاسيكية في مسرحية أوديب ملكا. القصة مليئة بتلميحات كثيرة من المأسى اليونانية العظيمة، لكن شخصية كولمان تفتقر إلى القامة والشخصية الحقيقية الموجودة في أوديب ملكا. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يفتقر كولمان، إلى حد ما، إلى العناصر الحقيقية لبطل مأساوي، الكاتاريسيس: عملية إطلاق وتقديم الإغاثة، مما يثير السؤال؛ هل كولمان حقاً بطل مأساوي؟ وفقاً لأرسطو، يجب أن يتعرض البطل المأساوي لمعضلة وتحول هائل من المعايير السطحية إلى عمق أقل، ويجب أن يعاني هذا الشخص بشكل خاص بعد ارتكاب خطأ أو حتى التفكير في أفعاله الماضية. يجب أن يكون البطل المأساوي شخصاً مسالماً وهذا هو سبب سقوطه بسبب بعض الأخطاء أو الأخطاء التي لم يرتكبها ولكنه وقع في براثنها. بعد المفهوم

اليوناني القديم بأن الارث الإنساني مرتبط بالأفعال، فان كولمان رجلا محظوظا في البداية، على عكس أوديب، على الرغم من كونه ولد أسود، حقيقة غير معروفة في خلفيته التاريخية، فهو قادر على تغيير هويته ولكنه يرتفع إلى مستوى التفوق بعد ذلك في مراحل حياته المختلفة .

الكلمات المفتاحية: البطل المأساوي، أوديب، فيليب روث، الطبيعة البشرية، الأساطير اليونانية.

## Introduction:

Greek mythologies through Sophocles' literary and dramatic works have enriched the world with endless ideas and numerous provoking thoughts. Moreover, Sophocles was the mastermind behind immortal and psychological tragedies such as: Oedipus. His methods of acumen, conceivability and anticipations have served to impact different branches of sciences and humanities. Eventually, the idea of the tragic hero originally stems from the early literary works of Sophocles, as a practical part of Aristotle's theoretical definitions:

Sophocles was born into a wealthy family; therefore, Sophocles was fortunate enough to enjoy all the luxuries of the late 5th century BC Greek lifestyle. Sophocles was well educated and studied various forms of arts growing up. This is significant because it gives evidence as to why Sophocles was a well-known mastermind in the literary world. He was given proper education due to the wealth of his family. (Royal, 2019, p.1)

In spite of the fact that it was written around 425 B.C., Oedipus Rex presents all-inclusive concepts of a tragedy such as: rivalry, conation, laws of destiny and determinism that have motivated human relations, and have proceeded to invigorate most scholars. Diversely, The Human Stain holds a number of conceivable meanings, like: the corruption of a perfect characteristic state through social and cultural interferences. In addition, The Human Stain is linked to Sophocles' Oedipus through the approach of intertextuality. This approach links two different literary works together in a way that explains the main attitudes of the heroes of the novel and; it also demonstrates the extended roots of each character. Which means that, Coleman, the protagonist of the Human Stain, is directly linked to the tragic hero of Sophocles' Oedipus.

## Aims of the study:

This study contends that there is a clear mutual background of the two literary works. Roth and Sophocles evoked the sense of recognizing the exquisite composition of a tragedy and its methods of self-adjustment and acclimatization. They try to highlight the boundaries of frame, history and human nature; in addition, to delimit a disobedience that provokes political repulsions of supreme opportunity.

## Importance of the Study:

By being subjugated and emotionally oppressed, tragic heroes as prejudiced figures, fail to feel socially integrated and seek to build subjectivities of their own that may differ from already existing

identities built so long ago through a rich heritage of stereotypes and long history of mixed identities and undefined ideas of different societies. This study tries to shed light on the importance of apprehending the characters, and it offers to give different characters to show its qualities, no matter how were their backgrounds. In addition, it tries to build different criteria that may neglect the heritage of stereotypes exaggerated by history, folklore and myths.

### Theory and Method:

At a closer inspection, it becomes clear that *The Human Stain* is definitely an intertextual novel. Julia Kristeva coined the term "intertextuality" in 1966, clarifying that there are two connections going on through the content of the novel: there's the relationship between the reader and the writer (the even hub) and between the content and other writings (the vertical hub). It's the vertical hub that gives us our definition of intertextuality. In addition, she emphasizes that no content exists from a scratch and that we need to recognize how existing works shape current writings and readings. Kristeva's definition, in her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel," intertextuality is "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion on intertextuality replaces that of inter subjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double". (Kristeva, 1980, p. 37)

Kristeva's innovative ideas were a reaction to Ferdinand de Saussure's hypothesis; and she contradicted his claims, saying that modern literary works are continuously being influenced and filtered by other writings. Basically, when scholars borrow from past writings, their works obtain more layers of meanings and philosophical ideas. She believes that writers do not create their fiction out of their own imagination, but rather inspire them from pre-written texts. Thus, the text becomes, "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text," in which "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another." (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36).

Moreover, when a text is perused within the light of another one, this will serve as sub-theme, and work as a reminder of the twofold stories in purposeful anecdotes. A complex utilize of intertextuality is considered as an advanced instrument in composing fiction. Intertextuality tries to arouse certain questions, for example: can a content be seen in separation or do we need to recognize at what level does it relate to other writings? For postmodernists, it's clear that no content exists in confinement and that most literary works need to be related to other ones. As scholar Barthes entireties up, a content is "multidimensional space in which an assortment of works, none of them unique, mix and clash." (Barthes, 1972, p. 377)

Intertextuality may be an idea or an inadvertent. Scholars may not be aware of the impact that other writings on their works. To differentiate, other writers seek to convert an arousing idea from content into a new concept that carries additional implications. Authors regularly borrow or reevaluate their storylines, themes and characters. Studying intertextuality can enrich modern literary works as the author

can add his new image of modern ages. Defining the main elements of intertextuality can be appreciated by investigating the lavishness that intertextual links can bring to our encounter of perusing:

The study of intertextuality is thus not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived; it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts. Barthes warns that from the perspective of intertextuality 'the quotations of which a text is made are anonymous, untraceable, and nevertheless already read'; they function this is the crucial thing as 'already read. (Kiebuszinska , 2001, p. 103)

### Discussion:

In fact, *The Human Stain*, like *Oedipus Rex*, is concerned with the development of the tragic character across different shapes of culture, e.g. African-American, Jewish- American and French vs. American. Besides, we can consider the novel as a half-breed in form and substance, a blend of distinctive classes closely related to different societies: it is fundamentally a critical and judgmental novel. *The Human Stain* can flawlessly pass as an unequivocally American fiction, while it is fundamentally reminiscent of Greek tragedy. Analogies from Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and chapter headings like "The Purifying Ritual," cannot be neglected. They refer to diverse intertextual references to Greek, and moreover to Shakespearian Tragedy.

Indeed, father against son dilemma that is deeply expounded in *Oedipus Rex* is inconsistent and cannot be refuted. In case of Oedipus's father, this dilemma implies giving up the primal acknowledgement after meandering around to another area of fatherhood. Since humanity has been continually derived, the story is a tragedy which represents a person with a confused nature who suffers a lot through his life. In addition, there are numbers of similarities and dissimilarities between Oedipus and Coleman as: meandering around and being representatives of the tragic hero. Both protagonists are casualties of destiny, but Coleman takes an interest in formulating his own destiny by ignoring his black background. Whereas Oedipus unwittingly murders his father and marries his mother. Coleman and Oedipus can both dodge their destiny, but each accepts oneself to be the source of invincibility:

Because we don't know, do we? Everyone knows... How what happens the way it does? What underlies the anarchy of the train of events, the uncertainties, the mishaps, the disunity, the shocking irregularities that define human affairs? Nobody knows. 'Everyone knows' is the invocation of the cliché and the beginning of the banalization of experience, and it's the solemnity and the sense of authority that people have in voicing the cliché that's so insufferable. What we know is that, in an unclichéd way, nobody knows anything. You can't know anything. The things you know you don't know. Intention? Motive? Consequence? Meaning? All the we don't know is astonishing. Even more astonishing is what passes for knowing. (Royal, 2019, p. 24)

*The Human Stain* by Philip Roth starts with a discussion between Oedipus and Creon in *Oedipus Rex*. Oedipus is the cause of the torment that affected the city of Thebes. His accidental killing of his father Laius, is the main reason for the plague. Oedipus endures a hopeless passing, which decontaminates the city of Thebes. Afterwards, his sufferings started when he was elected as the ruler of Thebes and involuntarily wedding his mother. At this moment, Oedipus starts to encounter his destiny and pays for his old deeds as a real tragic hero. According to the main elements of a tragedy, a tragic hero must afford his old deeds and pay for them during his life:

CREON: Banishment, or the shedding blood for blood.

This stain of blood makes shipwreck of our state.

OEDIPUS: Whom can he mean, the miscreant thus,  
denounced? (Sophocles, 2010, pp. 100-101)

Setting *The Human Stain* in 1988, at the time of the presidential sex embarrassment, Roth unveils the rigidity of the biased American lawmakers with low- mindedness and self- righteousness of the staff at Athena College. At that time The American Congress charged President Clinton of infidelity and prevarication; an act which made America insecure. Coleman Silk is a teacher of classical literature who instructs Greek writings at Athena's College. He got engaged in a critical case when he accidentally called his absent students "spook" and was constrained to resign. After the death of his spouse Iris, he led a forlorn life. At last, he passes on with his girlfriend, Faunia Farley. His passing as a white man, unfortunately, contributes nearly nothing to match the rules of Athena College.

*The Human Stain* criticizes the American abused souls through Oedipus, Coleman and Clinton. Roth compares these souls to the germs of infection that apply a lethal impact upon human life. He appears to explain that *The Human Stain* is a property of humanity that is not effectively expelled. Most likely, he accepts that a dazzle conviction within the immaculateness of human nature is nothing but a sweet figment or a presentation of habit. Philip Roth's success in creating a striking similarity between the stories of Coleman and Oedipus is progressed by Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche. Roth's novelistic inspiration of Oedipus denies the supernatural and ideological affiliations of Freudian Oedipus and paves the way to the Nietzschean rendering of Oedipus that's characteristically Dionysian:

Greek tragedy was considered to be a festival of Dionysus, and the roots of tragedy lie in the chorus, the most Dionysian element of theater, where the spectators become part of the play. In the tragedy, we now believe, there was no play, only chorus. The roots of tragedy, and of theater, go back to communal festivals where individual identity was exchanged for group togetherness. (Richards, 2019, p.1)

Race is a vital establishment of social categorizing. It is agreed that any racial group has an underprivileged place to some people than to others. The convention of passing began in America at the times of subjugation, when few slaves were able to pass as whites, and thus improve their social position. Traditionally passing is "the individual's potential elusion from his undesired background to a favorable

one". Seemingly, this venture in literature's structure empowers the capacity that constitutes the backbone of relocation. Both Roth and Sophocles recognize that any passionate reparation, which happens inside these stories, takes an ideological development, through the creation of 'a verifiable space:

There is something fascinating about what moral suffering can do to someone who is in no obvious way a weak or feeble person. It's more insidious even than what physical illness can do, because there is no morphine drip or spinal block or radical surgery to alleviate it. Once you're in its grip, it's as though it will have to kill you for you to be free of it. Its raw realism is like nothing else. (Roth, 2005, p.14)

However, creative writing remains one of the most powerful ways in which uprooted recognitions can be delivered. Its capacity to reflect complex and vague substances, makes it a conceivable representation of human feelings. By both communicating and encoding uprooted awareness through writing, the creative writer tries to deliver his message through dialogues of interest in a vision of reality which supersedes the sense of the complex. Thus, identity building, in this sense, is a matter of going out of oneself and one's time to the beyond to watch over things with more insight before coming back to a new revised spirit, just as Roth did in his novel, *The Human Stain*.

In *The Human Stain*, Coleman builds his character like a clock to maintain a strategic distance away from his claims of equivocalness and talks of race, which are a fictitious thought that came to the surface with the "spook" incident. In this sense, Sophocles' Oedipus is compared to Coleman, who also tries to elude himself from his social influences, and become a legend. Till the end of the play, it turns out that his character was indeed nothing more than a development or a deep psychological autobiography. Both works show a serious involvement with characters' self-control, and constructed identities. Both heroes are involved with a tragic encounter with the past which continuously appears in their present and even future. Their past deeds make it hard for them to forget about their background.

By separating Coleman and Oedipus from their roots, they were deprived of the power to resist massive historical forces. Eventually, it is not only the forces of history that cause the downfall of the two protagonists. There appear to be something more like a supernatural power that metes out the discipline for intentional deracination; this is the power of history. Coleman, for instance, resists his destiny, being a black man, and commits a wrong deed, allegorical murder his mother. He tries to neglect it by committing a crime; marrying a white lady and bringing forth white children. But there is a reason that the epigraph of the novel is taken from *Oedipus Rex*; like Oedipus, Coleman silk of *The Human Stain* is destined to neglect his background and being punished due to his past deeds.

Both Coleman in *The Human Stain* and Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*, constitute the perfect elements of the Aristotelian tragic hero. Like Sophocles, Roth takes a particular interest in Greek philosophy and the concept of handling a tragic figure. Moreover, he resorts to the use of the Greek Aristotelian philosophy in order to establish a connection between past and present. Coleman, like Oedipus, rushes to meet his fate

by trying to escape way from it. In other words, trying to escape one's background actually accelerates one's downfall:

Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear and pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect. The tragic wonder will then be great than if they happened of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design. (Aristotle, 1961, p. 5)

In *The Human Stain*, Philip Roth affirms the idea that destiny is something predetermined for everyone. For this reason, any attempt to escape it will cause tragic and destructive consequences. Through this point, Coleman Silk in *The Human Stain* can be compared to Sophocles' Oedipus. The more they attempt to escape their fate, the more they rush to meet it. In the classical Greek tragedy, the hero's fall is always preceded by a tragic flaw. Oedipus' tragic flaw is imbedded in ignoring the oracle's prophecy, in which he would accidentally kill his father and marry his mother. Punishment can appear in the image of a member of their family, like Oedipus when he married his mother. In the case of Coleman, his punishment comes from inside when his mind refuses to accept his background and starts to act as another person. Through these cases, destiny declares that it is invincible, and everyone eventually must meet his own destiny and pay for his own deeds:

Reversal is a change to the opposite direction of events [...] with probability or necessity: as when in the Oedipus the person who comes to bring Oedipus happiness, and intends to rid him of his fear about his mother, effects the opposite by revealing Oedipus' true identity. [...] Recognition, as the very name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, leading to friendship or to enmity, and involving matters which bear on prosperity or adversity. (Aristotle, 1961, pp. 11, 65)

The novel's title, *The Human Stain*, shows another angle of psychological matter and includes a number of conceivable meanings, among them damaging a personality through cultural interference. In fact, it gets to be clear that *The Human Stain* can be considered as a transcultural novel in center. The novel is concerned with the development of character through different kinds of culture. *The Human Stain* may pass flawlessly as a classical romantic novel, whereas it is fundamentally a tragic one:

Only rarely, at the end of our century, does life offer up a vision as pure and peaceful as this one: a solitary man on a bucket, fishing through eighteen inches of ice in a lake that's constantly turning over its water atop an arcadian mountain in America (Ahlberg, 2016, p.361).

Several analogies like: The epigraph of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and headings like "The Purifying Ritual," cannot be ignored; because they serve the main idea of intertextuality of the two literary works. They are upheld by a large amount of intertextual references to Greek mythology, moreover to Shakespearian tragedy, including another layer of social reference. In addition, the names of characters are

drawn from Roman and Greek mythologies and tragedies, whereas the plays of Shakespeare, particularly Julius Ceaser, serve as a mediator: there's Coleman "Brutus," and Ernestine "Calpurnia" Silk.

Popularly, *The Human Stain* is phenomenal a novel about passing around and arranging life in different societies: Coleman is born into an African-American family and, he was recognized as a young person that his fair skin permits him to pass as white. He revokes his family, takes on a white personality and gets to be a teacher of Classics at Athena College. Inevitably, he should resign because of his racial behavior against African-American students. The irony lies in Silk's choice to pass as white in order to reduce the effect of racial discrimination.

In any case, Coleman's choice to uproot himself from his own black identity produces modern fallacies, such as misleading his spouse and children. The sense of triumph, after telling many lies, leads him to an obscure amalgam of undesirable memories that do not make sense or formulate the character he has aspired for all his life. However, his modern personality comes out at the cost of confinement and fear of being finally discovered. Coleman eventually starts to groan after the death of his wife and his relationship to a cleaning lady; a relationship that constitutes an outlet of his death-in-life state.

On the other hand, Oedipus' character in *Oedipus Rex* becomes the solver of divine riddles and a person who seeks self-redeem. The significant topic of the tragedy is Oedipus' struggle from his cradle to recognize his background and fulfill his wish to cover up the truth that will bring him a real tragedy. The confused character of Oedipus and his conflict of self-knowledge has made the tragedy a rich source of motivation for psychoanalytic concept and cognitive advancement:

Fear? What should a man fear? It's all chance, chance rules our lives. Not a man on earth can see a day ahead, groping through the dark. Better to live at random, best we can. And as for this marriage with your mother- have no fear. Many a man before you, in his dreams, has shared his mother's bed. Take such things for shadows, nothing at all- Live, Oedipus, as if there's no tomorrow! (Sophocles, 2010, pp.1068–1078)

In fact, Oedipus's life was directed by his own destiny. Maybe he was able to form shallow choices, unravel an enigma or wed a queen, but none of these choices may offer him a kind of assistance in eluding from his destiny. In a more advanced way, we might say that his free will enabled him to create compelling choices and accomplish a victory of his life. It made no distinction how much he knew or didn't, or how solid, intelligent, gusty or well- born he was. After all, such blessings permitted him to feel a fake sense of control; as he continued to do what he had to do. The epigraph of the novel is taken from *Oedipus Rex*:

Oedipus: What is the rite of purification?

How shall it be done?

Creon: By banishing a man, or expiation of blood by blood



since it is murder guilt which holds our city in this destroying storm. (Sophocles, 2010, pp. 97-98,100-03).

These lines constitute a clear reference of *The Human Stain*, which relates the story of a classic professor whose transgression has caused him a destructive punishment. These lines also help emphasize *The Human Stain's* major theme that confirms people's idealistic desire for perfection, crime and purification. On the other hand, Oedipus tries to keep a strategic distance from the misfortune of murdering his father and wedding his mother. Once he realizes that this has become a reality, he blinds himself and gets expelled from any pleasure. Like Oedipus, Coleman neglects his identity as a black man and passes as a white one. He thought that by wedding a white lady and bringing forth white children, he can accomplish flexibility and filtration. To do that, Coleman begins a modern life in a white community.

Coleman Silk readily performs several activities which lead to his self- destruction. Born and raised in a black family in 1948, Coleman silk chooses to pass as a white man to keep his job as a classic professor. The genuine nature of Coleman's ethnicity is depicted according to (Brauner, 2010, pp. 15-16) as, "the small-nosed Jewish type with the facial heft in the jaw, one of those crimped-haired Jews of a light yellowish skin pigmentation who possess something of the ambiguous aura of the pale blacks who are sometimes taken for white." In this case, Athena College appears to follow the citizens of Thebes in their commitment to the errand of cleansing the community of the contamination imbued within.

Sophocles with his creative ability gives immaculate charm to the story. Out of one hundred and twenty plays which he wrote "*Oedipus the King*" that holds numerous lessons as time goes by. Sophocles has enriched his characters than any other writers of his time. He has an imaginative and fruitful skills that enabled him to decrease the parts of refrain, which plays an effective significance through the play. Sophocles was the foremost effective writer of his time, who follows the main rules of tragedy and the tragic hero. To Aristotle, tragedy is an impersonation of an activity that's genuine, total and of certain greatness; in sugar-coated dialect and imaginative expressions. These elements are found in different parts of the play; through the characters' feeling of fear and regret.

Aristotle lauded the tragic work that holds all the characteristics of a tragic hero. The elements of tragedy, that lead to the purgation of feelings for the audience, constitute a profound angle of the tragic hero. In addition, the dramatic dialect is another calculation that makes the play more compelling. In fact, it's one of the most superior plays of Sophocles that brought him unceasing popularity. Also, in *The Human Stain*, Roth derides and excoriates the overabundances of both traditionalists and magnanimous pieties, centering the novel's occasions around the republican endeavors to question president Clinton and the media for all encompassing the Monica Lewinsky issue.

Generous expressions, used in *The Human Stain*, concerning Washington D.C. are tainted by pietisms and malevolence. Coleman Silk, the protagonist of the novel, is a teacher of classics who has been

driven into early retirement after having alluded to two black students, whom he has never seen, as "spook". This particular incident has uncovered his black identity, and unveiled his passing as white man for most of his life. Misreading their characters' fortunes, created a severe dilemma and conflict for both Oedipus and Coleman:

Creon. And if you understand nothing?

Oedipus. I must govern still. (Sophocles, 2010, pp.626-27)

Whereas neither Oedipus nor Creon got the total meaning of "nothing" at the start of the play. But, at the end of the play, Oedipus finally realized his mixed feelings that prevents him of reaching the truth. From the exceptional start, the chorus observes a hero who erroneously peruses the signs of his claimed tragedy and character. As he received the state of the city, Thebes, as a citizen-hero, Oedipus works as rebel mediator, understanding conundrums and examining the prophecy alone. Logically, Oedipus compels his future with conditional explanations whose unexpected substances are totally unrecognizable. Being unable to consider the consequences of being labeled as a criminal, Oedipus makes a condition in which he will fundamentally misinterpret the prophecy he has a sworn to comply. When Creon arrives, Oedipus is prepared to mix up the subject and ask the questions he proposes and wait for the answers he aspires:

Oedipus. What manner of purification? What sort of misfortune?

Creon. Banishment, or the restitution of blood for blood,  
since it is blood that drives the city-state into the storm.

Oedipus. Who is the man whose lot was thus betrayed? (Sophocles, 2010, pp. 99-102)

This specific case of Oedipus' misreading of events plays an extraordinary part within the setting; and it serves the epigraph of *The Human Stain*. Through the setting of *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus seeks his salvation unknowing that he is the answer to the question. The audience are similarly unconscious that the conflict will eventually end up, when the plays' emotional incongruities collapse. Through *The Human Stain's* incidents, the readers keeps searching for the main cause of the conflict and the reason for the misfortune of the hero. Finally, this point was uncovered and pointed out that Coleman himself was the one who is responsible for his misfortunes; he was the cause of the conflict in the first place.

Oedipus finds out that he is the clue of his misfortunes, just like Coleman Silk who in turn finds out that he is the answer of his life question that keeps following him. Eventually, as the storyline of the novel moves, many inquiries about the background of Coleman are revealed; in a way that uncovers the secret he has been hiding all his life. At this moment the epigraph from *Oedipus Rex*, becomes true without the numbness or the sensational incongruities with which Roth started *the Human Stain*.

### Conclusion:

The Human Stain and Oedipus Rex are tales which delights its readers with its exceptional protagonist's predetermination. Also, they are stories that rise above parochial concerns of countries that have witnessed political unrest. From the beginning, Coleman realizes the truth about his background, though he tries to ignore it. As a result, he embraces lots of unexplained conflicts that highlight the part of narration as an indication of rendering a coherence to people's experiences. This particular point drives the novel near to meta-fiction.

Through their fictions, Roth and Sophocles amusingly internalized the tragedy by depicting storytellers and heroes whose familiarity in perusing catastrophe failed to assist them in solving the ambiguities of life's tragedies. These works are filled with implications and dramatization that serve as a stark counterpoint to the tragic events of life. In Fact, the heroes make horrible deeds since they cannot particularly find the answers of their life questions within themselves. In this sense, these literary works constitute a part of Delphic prophecy that try to focus on the dilemma of the tragic heroes and find a way to solve their problems.

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