



**دكتور المادة/ وائل محمد عبد الحكم محمد**  
**كلية الآداب قسم اللغة الانجليزية**  
**مادة الأدب المقارن**  
**الفصل الدراسي الثاني 2012/2013**  
**تاريخ الامتحان / 3-6-2013**



**Banha University**  
**Faculty of Arts- English Department**  
**Time: 2 hrs.**



**Second Grade**  
**Second Term-2012/2013**  
**Comparative Literature**

**Respond to the following Questions:**

**1. Show how both Sophocles and Al-Hakim dramatically introduced the concept of “truth” and its relation to the character of Teiresias in their plays *Oedipus Rex* and *King Oedipus* respectively?**

In both *Oedipus Rex* and *King Oedipus*, Teiresias is defined by his relationship to the truth: in Sophocles' play as a courier, in Tawfiq Al-Hakim's as a manufacturer. Sophocles Teiresias is a conduit, a vessel through which the truth of a future created by the gods can be revealed, while the modern Teiresias is actively engaged in creating, shaping, the truth out of a supposed spiritual vacuum. These differing roles place both characters at a certain distance from their actions and sense of responsibility. Based, to a great extent, on this proximity, each Teiresias develops a radically different concept of the truth. Though the characters themselves are in many ways philosophical opposites, the function Teiresias serves in each play is not at all dissimilar. A sense of the truth as a source of



destruction as well as possible redemption is ultimately reinforced by the presence of Teiresias in each play.

Oedipus accuses Teiresias in each play of withholding critical information. Both characters make similar decisions to attempt to withdraw themselves from the situation. Their motives, however, are distinctly different. Understanding these motives points paradoxically toward the individual fundamental differences between characters as well as their eventual thematic similarities. Sophocles' Teiresias is a reluctant prophet. He is in awe of the truth because he is powerless to change it. Teiresias does not own the truth; it was never his to possess. Instead, he exists as a passive agent, an intermediary, between present and future, gods and humanity. Because the truth is brutal, cruel, and possibly sometimes excessive and unjust even from his mortal point of view, Teiresias hesitates to fulfill his role as soothsayer. "Alas! Alas! How terrible to be wise, where it does the seer no good. Too well I know and have forgot this, or would not have come" (ln 316-18, p.125). He knows all too well that he is trapped in a role he is compelled to complete. He is a slave to Apollo, not to Oedipus (ln. 410, p. 127). Teiresias' slavery to the truth distances him morally from any negative effects of the truth. Thus, once provoked, Teiresias performs his duties zealously with what Oedipus notes as a sense of joy (ln. 369-70, p.126). This is precisely because Teiresias will not be held



accountable for the truth he conveys. Though initially pained to deliver it, the messenger will not be killed for his message.

In Al-Hakim's play, however, messenger and message are intimately connected. Teiresias is both author of the message and the messenger. He creates the truth in which Theban society exists. In the absence of an absolute divine truth in Teiresias' mind, the truth becomes malleable; it can be shaped by the force of one's will. " I see nothing. And I see no god in existence save our own volition. I willed and to that extent was divine...that you [Oedipus] are on the throne is nothing other than a manifestation of my will" (89,90). Teiresias is cast also in the role of scientist, actively testing his hypotheses on the world around him. His refusal to aid Oedipus is one of his experiments "I am withdrawing my hand this time in order to see what will happen" (88). By refusing to interfere, he attempts to encourage Oedipus to abandon his pursuit of other worldly, all encompassing truth. He encourages Oedipus to make his own truth. "Leave Truth alone Oedipus...don't challenge her" (89).

Al-Hakim may have also drawn inspiration for Teiresias' refusal from this statement by the original Teiresias. "I never shall reveal/My evils so that I may not tell yours [Oedipus']" (ln.328-9, p.125). The modern Teiresias understands his fate, to a great extent, is tied to Oedipus'. He warns Oedipus against "depriving people of their



myth" because he realizes that the truth he has created has taken on a life of its own. If it is shattered Teiresias will not be the only one to suffer (89). Ironically Teiresias seeks to privately acknowledge and publicly avoid responsibility for his act of will.

Ultimately, however, both playwrights establish an order of truth that exists above any particular individual, and characters who defy this truth (consciously or unconsciously) are held accountable and punished. In Al-Hakim's play, Teiresias' "false" prophecy is fulfilled, regardless of Teiresias' grand experiments, including his refusal to aid Oedipus. Oedipus and his family are shattered and Teiresias is driven mad. Teiresias is responsible in the end. His arrogant presumption is mocked by the suffering Oedipus when he states, "You truly had free will...But it was always operating, without your knowing or sensing it, within the framework of heaven's will...You fell. But you swept us along with you" (123-4). Teiresias is a slave to heaven's, not his own, will. The torment of Oedipus and his family seems to be justified by the validating of this particular master/slave relationship in both plays. Sophocles and Al-Hakim seem to suggest that we must be willing to submit to a notion of truth that exists outside of our own experience. We must see with eyes beyond our own. Sophocles' Teiresias epitomizes this dilemma. While physically blind, he is able to see the truth created by the gods. Al-Hakim's Teiresias,



however, is stripped of his second sight. He is blind both literally and metaphorically. His fate serves as an example of thoughts and behavior to avoid. Seeing the authentic truth requires the ability to obscure one's own limited vision of reality. This is not an endorsement for the wearing of eye patches or nation-wide eye gouging parties ("out vile jellies!"), but refers, instead to vision on a more figurative level. Sophocles speaks to this kind of "blindness" when Teiresias states, "You whose vision is straight shall be blind" (ln 419, p.127).

## **2. According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, illustrate what is meant by tragedy?**

**Definition of Tragedy:** "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its *katharsis* of such emotions. . . . Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Melody." (translation by S. H. Butcher.