

Abandoned and Redeemed

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In the works of Ibsen and those of Sophocles, certain aspects of the works represent a large part of the story. Those aspects are some times abandoned, forgotten, or mistreated, and then redeemed and reestablished later on in the play. There are a few aspects in the plays *The Cherry Orchard* and *Oedipus the King* that follow this trend. These aspects are usually essential objects or themes of the play, and are abandoned either the characters of the play or by the author. These aspects are vital in the play, and help build the plot line and emphasize the narrative. Another aspect necessary to analyze is the theme of victimization by society, or by an individual. This is how the society or individual condemned the object in the play.

In the play *Oedipus the King*, the largest aspect of the story that had to do with desertion and redemption was the life of Oedipus himself, including his childhood. Oedipus's parents were Laius and Jocasta. As a newborn baby, Oedipus was thrown out of the house of Laius because of a prophecy that proclaimed Oedipus to be his father's murderer and his mother's lover. He was abandoned and forgotten because his own parents were afraid that he would kill his father and sleep with his mother. This event was before the play, and is learned later on. Oedipus is soon discovered and given to a shepard in another city, the city of Corinth. Oedipus is raised in Corinth, eventually becoming the prince of the city. He has eventually become a very powerful and authoritative character, ruler of Thebes. He unknowingly marries his mother, who had long forgotten her cast-away son. By marrying the same person who abandoned him, and becoming a powerful ruler, he has redeemed himself in society, and established once again as the main entity of the story.

The abandonment of Oedipus in his early life had not prevented the fulfillment of the prophecy. Oedipus had unknowingly and inadvertently killed his father Laius in self-defense, and eventually married his mother, whom he did not know he had any kind of relation to. He had fulfilled the prophecy, even after being abandoned and forgotten. This illustrates the inevitable aspect of fate and destiny, which all ties into the idea of abandonment and redemption.

Oedipus was a victim of society in this play. He had been respected by his people, but also expected to protect them and to destroy the plague that infected them. He was put under pressure to find a solution to the plague and also to his prophecy. After setting out to discover the truth about his prophecy, he encountered a horrible reality, a reality presented and preserved by society. He discovered that he was, in fact, his father murderer and mother's lover; the prophecy was true. Upon discovering the truth, he could no longer bear to witness society, thus he blinded himself and condemned himself to exile. Society had greatly saddened, and he realized he was under a wicked illusion for his entire life. "People of Thebes, my countrymen, look on Oedipus. He solved the famous riddle with his brilliance, he rose to power, a man beyond all power. Who could behold his greatness without envy? Now what a black sea of terror has overwhelmed him. Now as we keep our watch and wait the final day, count no man happy till he dies, free of pain at last." (Oedipus the King, 1678–1684) This quote emphasizes the point of victimization by society, and the theme of abandonment. Society helped him rise to power, but it also allowed him to discover the horror of the truth, the terrible details of society. It tricked him, placed him under a great illusion, and finally ruined him.

In the play *The Cherry Orchard*, it is a thing rather than a person that is abandoned and later redeemed. The cherry orchard represented the beloved past, the past belonging to Ranevsky Lyubov and her companions. Lyubov was the owner of the estate, the cherry orchard belonging to that same estate. When the orchard was constructed, there were many slaves and laborers working on it, and their blood and sweat would lie in that orchard forever. Lyubov was happy at that point in time, and loved her past, her childhood. The cherry orchard represented her childhood and the blissful portion of her life. Unfortunately, everything turned upside down from there. Ranevsky's husband died, followed by the drowning of her son. Ranevsky left the estate, and the orchard as well, and moved to Paris for five years, thus abandoning the orchard and the memories that surround it. She eventually realized that she could not hide from the past, and by moving away from the origin of her fears and lucid memories she was not solving her problems, merely avoiding them. She learned that she must face her problems to get over them, and she then moved back to the cherry orchard.

After much debate with the other characters in the play as to what should happen to the cherry orchard, they finally decided on a way to buy the orchard and preserve it. The orchard was finally redeemed, and able to continue to hold its many memories and essences of the past. The abandonment of the orchard played into the play as a way for Lyubov to temporarily escape the memory of the death of her son and husband. The orchard represented those memories, including the all of her past, and the history of Russia. It represented the revolution, the emancipation, and all the memories Lyubov ever had in that estate. It also represents the blood and labor devoted to the construction of the orchard.

The orchard was a victim of an individual: Ranevsky Lyubov. The owner of the estate and the orchard, she had loving memories of the past “stored” in the orchard. Then her husband and son died, and her life plummeted. When she abandoned the orchard to escape her dreadful past, the orchard was forgotten, left to decay, haunted by the ghosts of laborers. The cherry orchard, made to uplift the soul of anyone who lays eyes upon it, was neglected by its owner, and no longer emitted its inspiring aura. The cherry orchard, other than representing the past, also represented nature. Nature brightened up the spirit and enlightened the gloomy surroundings. That source of contentment faded when the orchard was abandoned, victim of Lyubov.

In both plays, there were aspects of abandon and redemption, victimization, and vital themes. In *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus happened to be the one that was abandoned by his mother, and then grew up to be one of the most respectable and powerful leaders of that setting location. He was victimized by society when society betrayed him, finally uplifting the illusion that it had placed on Oedipus. Oedipus was so ashamed and disheartened that he blinded and exiled himself. In *The Cherry Orchard*, the cherry orchard itself was the object that was abandoned by the owner, and then reestablished several years later. It was victimized by Lyubov when she abandoned the orchard and moved away, neglecting the properties of pleasure that the orchard provided. These themes and ideas are very important to both plays, and offer a greater feel for the storyline.