Murdering Dad: Not A Big Deal

Aristotle believed that the tale of Oedipus Rex wove the perfect tragedy, creating a model for all other tragedies to learn from. This wasn’t exactly a revolutionary claim; the tragedy behind killing one parent then sleeping with the other is poorly concealed, at best. However, according to Freud, Oedipus was just a poor, misunderstood schmuck who wasn’t fulfilling a personal destiny, but rather submitting to a force that governs all of mankind. In this sense, Oedipus should not be seen as a monster or tragic figure, but rather an inspiration to us all.

Freud makes the assertion that all human beings have, at one point, felt the exact same way that Oedipus did. This stage comes early in life, directly after the “polymorphously perverse” stages where the child begins the lifelong goal of seeking pleasure. Young boys and girls, who are becoming acquainted with the world around them, are shocked to realize that the opposite sex does not possess the same sexual organs that they do, which directly segues into the formation of an Oedipus or Electra complex. The young boy simply channels his newfound phallic desire toward his mother, who has been the primary source of pleasure for his entire existence. He quickly realizes that his mother, while slowly weaning him from his previously infinite access to her person, still interacts regularly with dad. This creates a mixture of jealousy and hatred that becomes imbued within the child forever, or at least until he is able to remove dad from the picture and take mom for his own. Though most don’t end up taking the course of action that Oedipus did, they will still likely one day be attracted to and/or seek out a mate who heavily resembles mother dearest.

Freud explains the Electra complex in the same way that he justifies all of his other beliefs about female behavior - poorly. He claims that the young girl becomes horrified at the fact that she does not have a penis, and infuriated with her mother for not providing her with this essential organ. This is cleverly known as “Penis Envy”. Unlike the male, who can simply redirect all of his phallic desire towards the mother that he already loved so dearly, the female must find a new object of desire. Unable to acquire a penis, the young woman (obviously) decides to have a child instead, and as a giant middle finger to mom, elects to do so with her own father. Regardless of whether or not Freud’s train of thought on this matter actually makes any sense, it *does* make for an excellent story.