

Structure in Sophocles' Antigone

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Aristotle in his *Poetics* (chap. 7) says: "[L]et us now discuss the proper structure of the plot, since this is the first and most important thing in tragedy" (1033). M. H. Abrams says that "almost all literary theorists since Aristotle have emphasized the importance of structure, conceived in diverse ways, in analyzing a work of literature" (300). The matter of the structure of Sophocles' *Antigone* is a subject of varying interpretation among literary [critics](#), as this essay will reveal.

Gilbert [Murray](#), professor at [Oxford](#) University in England, cites structure as one of the reasons why he chose Sophocles to translate. Then he elaborates on this structure: "But Sophocles worked by blurring his structural outlines just as he blurs the ends of his verses. In him the traditional divisions are all made less distinct, all worked over the direction of greater naturalness. . . . This was a very great gain. . . ." (107). Murray here refers to Sophocles' modification of the classic structure for tragic drama. This is distinct from what Aristotle above refers to as the "structure of the plot." The classic structure for drama includes: Prologue "everything up to the chorus; Parodos "the chorus" sings; First Episode "development of plot by main character(s); First Stasimon "the chorus again;

Repetition of Episodes and Stasimons until the climax is near; Exodos ? the climax, crisis, and catastrophe. As Murray notes, Sophocles does not adhere to the classical structure as rigidly as other dramatists of the period.

Aristotle?s ?structure of the plot? is what most literary critics mean when they refer to the ?structure? of Antigone. In Chapter 18 of the Poetics Aristotle states: ?Ever...

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