The Importance Of A Plot In A Tragedy Oedipus Rex

Plot plays a pivotal role in the fabric of the play. Aristotle states that “plot is the composition of occurrences” (Aristotle) that gives purpose to the characters because it provides them with a foundation of action, something to find solutions to. The series of obstacles devised for Oedipus is there for him so he can find ways to evade the prophecy. His actions after then drive the plot which creates a new set of dilemmas along the way. The plot must unfold in chronological order and have actions that take place offstage as well. Events that take place offstage are told by a messenger(s) who provide a narrative to the audience and characters alike. This is seen happening in Oedipus Rex many times. For example, a messenger comes to Oedipus to tell him that 'he will remember all too well the time we spent around Cithaeron. He had two flocks of sheep and I had one. I was with him there for six months at a stretch, from early spring until the autumn season. In winter I’d drive my sheep down to my folds, and he’d take his to pens that Laius owned. Isn’t that what happened—what I’ve just said (Sophocles, 1365).” In this quote, a messenger recounts an event that occurred offstage. In Ancient Greek theatre culture, an event that happens offstage can mean that the creative resources were unavailable at the time in creating such an event in front of a live audience.

Furthermore, the play has both a clear and intelligent Perptia (reversal) and Anagnorisis (recognition) weaved into the fully completed and drawn out beginning, middle, and end structure of the storyline. Peripeteia is 'change of the actions to their opposite, as we said, and that, as we are arguing, in accordance with probability or necessity. (Aristotle, 14). The reversal of fortune happens when Oedipus realizes that he is Laius and Jocasta's son. The messenger appears to Oedipus thinking that he will free him of the anxiety that he will murder his father as foretold by the prophecy, however, through the revelation of the mystery behind Oedipus's true self and how he was taken in by Polybus after being abandoned, the messenger does the contrary. The messenger heightens the king's nerves by making him more frightful and he reverses Oedipus' life. The Greek Chorus affirms Oepdius' comfort and potential life of joy for is now ruined by the reversal stating 'You are my great example, you, your life your destiny, Oedipus, a man of misery - I count no man blest' (Sophocles, 1320). Anagnorisis is a 'change from ignorance to knowledge, and so to either friendship to enmity, among people defined in relation to good fortune or misfortune' (Aristotle, 14). In other words, a moment in the plot where the protagonist recognizes the true nature of his/her situation leading to the resolution of the narrative. In the play, Anagnorisis happens when the messenger arrives and exposes the true birth of Oedipus. The king then realizes his queen, Jocasta, as his birth mother, and the man whom he has killed as his true father, as well as himself, a sinner who is responsible for the destruction in Thebes. Oedipus’ recognition is executed excellently as peripeteia attends to it creating one grand tragedy.

According to Aristotle, The element of spectacle is less important of the elements but still plays an enticing role in the play as it allows for the visualization of various images to be brought to life through the use of words. At the beginning stage of the play 'a procession of priests enters; suppliants, broken and despondent, they carry branches wound in wool and lay them on the altar' (Sophocles, 1102). The imagery of this is developed through the word choices and the use of evocative emotions to describe the characters and what they're doing. The audience is confronted with the urgency and gravity. In a climatic and grisly scene, Oedipus gouges his

eyes out, but the action takes place offstage. But to create the same effect, Sophocles employs descriptively vivid vocabulary to detail the incident to allow for intense imagery, 'and at each stroke blood spurts from the roots, splashing his beard, a swirl of it, nerves and clots' (Sophocles, 1413). This example of spectacle shows violence taking place at the most gruesome level.

Another major element that is present in the play is Melody, which involves the chorus of the play. Aristotle affirms that the chorus should be regarded as 'one of the actors. It should be part of the world and contribute to the performance' (Aristotle, 25) as it is just as important because they help carry the plot by delivering tone and mood. This is prominently shown when the Chorus speaks about the epidemic prevailing over Thebes, a “city of death, one long cortege and suffering rises wails of mercy rise and the wild hymn for the healer blazes out clashing with our sobs our cries of mourning” (Sophocles, 215). After the reader learns of Oepdius' unfortunate fate, the chorus lets out an eerie urge to “Let none presume on his good fortune he find/life, at his death a memory without pain.” (Sophocles,1494). Melody also provides a robust understanding of important themes, such as Fate. The chorus shares their opinion on how the citizens of Thebes would have thought about Oedipus' fate. He already achieved his disturbing prophecy many years ago and so, therefore, has already met his fate even if he was unaware of it. One could argue that he does have free will, however, in his decision to pursue the facts about his past, despite many suggestions that he let it go. Melody is vital in the play because it personifies feelings which brings a completely new layer of depth to the plot. When they chant and sing, it helps the reader see a contrasting angle of a situation and connect with the characters through a different lens, unveiling the world of the tragedy.

Perhaps the second most important element of a tragedy is Character. Given that Oedipus is a perfect tragedy, the character will assist in advancing the development of the plot. Oedipus is an effectively built character because his initial position in life starts as a powerful authoritative figure at the highest authority who is thriving who then assumes the role of a tragic hero. Oedipus brings about his downfall as he is unable to control his fate and therefore his tragic fall brings down the people of Thebes who he was the ruler of. Oedipus also possess a fatal flaw in his character's nature. His arrogance and god-like complex shines through when he says “Oedipus, whose name is the greatest known and greatest feared” (Sophocles, 11). Oedipus assumes he is the master of everything, that he can do nothing and nothing negative will follow.

Aristotle Poetics and Oedipus Rex go hand in hand because they’re interconnected. The play is made up of all six of the Aristotlian elements that define a perfect tragedy structure. Each element is created and presented in ways that are effective and transparent in carrying advancing the plot of the story.