

# Oleana as a tragedy

Literature



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Oleana presents many definitive traits that could categorise it as a tragedy. The most prominent is the presence of a 'harnartia', executed by John. Harnartia is Greek terminology that translates literally to "missing the mark", and was often used to depict the 'Hero's fatal flaw. In the case of Oleana, it could be argued that John committed the fatal error' of breaching the lawful gap between teacher and student by "placing his arm around" Carol while trying to soothe her.

This sentimental reaction is generally condoned by the audience, despite the legal implications, as the motional reasoning behind it temporarily clouds the unprofessional elements. Ultimately these actions result in a string of misfortune. Tragedies also have a reputation for elating the audience, and encouraging conflicting emotions for the characters. Such is arguably achieved, as Carol is portrayed as a youthful woman whom is insecure in her own academic abilities and correspondingly becomes a victim to John's crass, arrogant attitude as is shown by an extreme amount of ellipsis and interruptions in their earlier interactions.

She is also strained by that of her own group' whom convince her to liberate the dramatic allegations that guaranteed John's downfall. However, she is also represented as vindictive and headstrong, as is shown by her dialogue in the last act wherein she attempts to blackmail John into rebuking his book: "If you would like me to speak to the tenure committee, here is my list. You are a free person, you decide. John is firstly depicted as a brash and slightly aloof man with good intentions, but as the story develops, these quirks lose their initial romance and his character appears intrusive and pompous, due to his esquipedian qualities. He dominates the conversation and ushers

Carol repeatedly; an action which is generally regarded as being extremely derogatory and advocates the belief that his elder status gives him a right to be condescending.

Even disregarding the fact that they are of opposite sexes, it is strenuous to reach a conclusive, untainted resolve, and thus the desired effect is achieved. It is common in tragedies to have a 'reversal' of fortune; this could be aligned with John's looming loss of power, job, home, and, effectively, life, due to Carol's persecution. A great deal of his loss is arguably down to John's insolent action of belittling the resonance of a higher power; in this case the Tenure Committee.

He believes that they will revoke the statement, and thus foolishly provides Carol with more opportunities to amplify damning evidence. This is an unmistakable trait in variations of Tragedies, generally tagged 'hubris', wherein the equilibrium is only achieved after the hero suffers for their imprudence towards the Gods. Lastly, a key feature in any play is the chorus; a seemingly detached group, whom gather to inflict Judgements and muse over the righteousness of the character's actions throughout.

The most relevant comparison to this in Oleana is the presence of the telephone, and the confliction and distraction it brings. This ongoing chaos could possibly be interpreted as foreshadowing for the misfortune that John was fated to experience, or the general tone of condemnation regarding John's various inappropriate actions towards Carol. In conclusion, there are many connections that can be made between a typical tragedy production

and Oleana, and it would be completely valid to place Oleana in that genre.

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