



Notes for the *Tempest*

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Shakespeare's Four Final Plays-The Romances: *Pericles* (1607-8), *Cymbeline* (1609-10), *The Winter's Tale* (1609-10), *The Tempest* (1611)

Romance is not a generic classification in Shakespeare's time. The modern 'romance' refers to a hybrid of comedy and tragedy (tragi-comedy. Coined by Fletcher). According to Fletcher, a tragi-comedy "wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy."

ROMANCE

ROMANCE:

- Unrealistic, supernatural elements, characters are "larger than life" like Prospero or one-dimensional like Miranda and Ferdinand.
- The Plots are not logical, and lack a cause-effect relationship.
- The action is serious in theme, subject matter, tone, and it seems to be leading to a catastrophic ending until an unexpected trick brings the conflict to a harmonious resolution.

COMEDY/ROMANCE

- Like comedy, romance includes love intrigue and a happy ending but in Romance, joy is mixed with sorrow.
E.g. Comedy ends with weddings (personal passions). Romance also ends in weddings, but the focus is less on personal happiness and more on the healing of rifts within the total human community.
- Themes in Romance are more serious than comedy. While comedy minimizes evil, Romance acknowledges it.
- Comedy focuses on youth (*Midsummer Night's Dream*), Romance on middle-age and older protagonists such as Prospero.

TRAGEDY/ROMANCE

- Romance has a serious plot-line (betrayals, tyrants, usurpers of thrones) and treats serious themes.
- Tragedy emphasizes evil, romance acknowledges evil (the reality of human suffering)
- In Romance plot structure with tragic potential leads to not tragedy but providential experience. In Tragedy characters are destroyed as a result of their action or choices, in Romance characters respond to situations and events rather than provoking them. Tragedy involves irreversible choices leading to a tragic outcome while in Romance, time seems reversible. Tragedy deals with events leading to individual deaths, Romance emphasizes the cycle of life & death.
- Tragedy is governed by Fate (*Macbeth/Hamlet*) Fortune (King Lear) but in Romance a sense of destiny comes instead of Divine Providence
- Tragedy depicts alienation & destruction, Romance reconciliation and restoration. Tragedy is concerned with revenge, Romance with forgiveness.
- Tragedy explores characters in depth (emphasis on individual psychology), Romance focuses on archetypes (the collective and symbolic patterns of human experience). Compared to Shakespeare's tragedies, the characters in Romance seem one dimensional.
- In Romance, the emphasis shifts from individual human nature to Nature.