

ISSN 0976-8165

The Criterion



The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Bi - Monthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access eJournal

June 2014 Vol. 5, Issue-3

5th Year of Open Access

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor

Madhuri Bite

www.the-criterion.com

criterionejournal@gmail.com

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>

Exotic Setting and its Relevance in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*

Rafiul Islam Shazu

Dept. of English Language and Literature,
JKKNIU

Abstract:

The exotic setting is the remarkable element of romantic comedy. Without exotic setting it is impossible to compose a romantic comedy. My article is concerned about exoticism and its relevance to the romantic comedies such as William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) and *Twelfth Night* (1599-1600). In the following passages, the comparisons between *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* are shown in respect of exotic setting and its relevance to romantic comedy.

Keywords: exotic setting, tragic and comic element, imagination and improbabilities, land of love, song and music, romance and comic atmospheres, violation of unities, happy ending.

Introduction

Exoticism is the essential part of Shakespeare's Romantic comedy. In fact, the word 'exotic' was first used in 1599 to mean 'alien, introduced from abroad, not indigenous'. By 1651 its meaning had been extended to include 'an exotic and foreign territory, 'an exotic habit and demeanor' (OED). As a noun, the term meant 'a foreign plant not acclimatized'. During the nineteenth century, however, the exotic or the foreign, increasingly gained, throughout the empire, the connotations of a stimulating or exciting difference, something with which the domestic could be (safely) spiced (Ashcroft et al., 2004: 94).

The key conception here is the introduction of the exotic from abroad into a domestic economy. Exotics are the significant part of imperial displays of power and the plenitude of empires. Moreover, the term 'exoticism' includes remote or distant setting, high imagination and improbabilities, land of love, deception, master-slave relationship, song and music, and various romance and comic atmospheres. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is a playwright who successfully uses the term "exoticism" in his romantic comedies. So, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* are the plays which are abound with various exotic elements. Shakespeare skillfully handles these exotic elements in order to create romantic comedies. This article is concerned with exotic setting of *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* and its relevance to romantic comedies.

Post-colonial view

Exoticism is a post-colonial term which deals with the various effects of colonization, master-slave relationship, hegemony, awareness about the self and others. According to post colonialism; colonizers are more than the colonized. Language itself is the second area of concern of post-colonial study. In the play *The Tempest* Prospero's attitude to the island, to Caliban and also his usurpation of power all can be interpreted from post-colonial view. At first, Prospero's attitude to the island is similar to the attitude of the colonizer who goes to the

colonies. It is true that Prospero's coming to the island is accidental not intentional. He did not come to the island to better his condition. He was made an exile against his will. But as soon as he lands on the island his conduct does not differ from that of a colonist. He subjects the two inhabitants namely Caliban and Ariel of the island and demands unwavering loyalty from them. He uses the island as a colony and very much like a colonist discards it as soon as his use for it is over. That Prospero at heart is a colonist is seen by the fact that he hates the island in spite of passing twelve years there. He calls it "a poor cell", "a poor court" though the island gives him shelter, provides him substance and creates opportunity to accomplish his mission. Caliban, a native of the island, regards himself as the rightful owner of the place. Due to his self awareness he bluntly states:

"This island is mine, by Sycorax my mother,

which thou tak'st from me". [In *The Tempest* : Act-1, scene-2]

"You taught me language; and my profit on't

Is, I known how to curse; the red plague rid you

For leaning me your language" [In *The Tempest* : Act-1, scene-2]

He is forced against his will to serve Prospero and Miranda. But Caliban refuses to live by Prospero's rules and tries to rape Miranda. Thus, Caliban's awareness about self and others is the essence of post-colonial study. On the other hand, in *Twelfth Night* we also find the master-slave relationship which is the part of post-colonial study. Olivia and the Duke Orsino, Sir Toby play the role of masters; and Viola, Maria, Feste, the Clowns and Malvolio are the characters who play the servants. Therefore, both the two plays are concerned with exoticism and post-colonial issues.

Remote or distant setting/ Exotic setting

A remote or distant (exotic) place is a notable feature of Shakespeare's romantic comedy, which exist only in the imagination of the dramatist. In the play *Twelfth Night*, we see the action occurs on the shores of Illyria. Though some critics have identified it as a region on the east coast of Adriatic, Shakespeare does not really connect the events of *Twelfth Night* with any definite locality. This ambiguity or uncertainty is also exactly suitable for a romantic comedy. Similarly, *The Tempest* is also a play which has an exotic setting with an unknown island. This enchanted island is located in unknown sea, far away from our daily business of lives. The very remoteness of the island makes it romantic. So, exotic setting is an outstanding feature of Shakespeare's romantic comedy.

Mingling tragic and comic element

The exotic setting is use in the romantic comedy in order to mingle both romantic and comic elements. Due to the exoticism, the tragic and comic element elements are mingle together in *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. In both plays, the main plot is serious and melancholic in tone, while the sub-plot is entirely comic and even active. Thus, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* make free use of variety in theme and tone, and mixing tragic and comic elements in the same play. This is the reason why, the exotic setting is the essence of Shakespearean comedies.

Violation of classical unities

Romantic dramas violate also the classical unities of time, place, and action because of exoticism. In both *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* only the unity of place has been observed. The entire action of *Twelfth Night* occurs in the town, Illyria. Likewise, the entire action of *The Tempest* occurs in the same place, a remote island. Both the plays do not allow the unity of time and place. The time extends over many days and is not limited only Twenty-four hours. It employs a sub-plot beside the central theme. Thus, romantic plays break the classical three unities due to the exoticism.

High Imagination and Improbabilities

Generally a romantic play is unrealistic. Because of the exotic setting and power of high imagination, many improbable things enter in a romantic play. In *Twelfth Night*, we find some such kinds of improbabilities. Shakespeare's play followed the account of the storm, the break-up of the ship and the survival of all the occupants (cited in Jurline T. Franklin, p: 97). For instance, Sebastian and Viola are separated from each other in a shipwreck. In those days a shipwreck was a distinct possibility. But both brother and sister land safely on the same sea-coast namely Duke Orsino's court to try their luck. This is certainly improbable. On the other hand, it is possible for the twins to look exactly same. But a woman's voice is certainly differently from a man's voice, even if they were born twins. Likewise, Shakespeare also uses high imagination and improbabilities in *The Tempest* which are found through Prospero's use of supernatural power, Caliban's half-human and half-human nature, and the involvement of supernatural elements such as Ariel, goblins, elves, fairies, etc. This is the reason why, high imagination and improbabilities are the essence of exotic setting of a romantic comedy.

Land of Love

Land of love is another requirement for the exotic and romantic setting which is found in both the plays *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. No doubt, Illyria in *Twelfth Night* is an equally a land of love, thoroughly an imaginative world. It is a kingdom of romance, where all the characters of the play are deserted by their own lovers and beloveds. In this love land we find there are no less than six pairs of serious or comic lovers. By any way, all of them are victims of cupid, the god of love. Here Cupid, like half a child or half a god, plays a serious and fanciful game with Olivia, Sebastian, Viola, and The Duke, even Malvolio. *The Tempest*, contrary, carries us to a poetic wonderland which is "full of noise, sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not". Prospero, the protagonist, who controls everything in that isolated island, even the love making of his daughter. Moreover, due to the land of love Prospero forgives all his enemies in the island who have done great wrong to him. Prospero remarks that "rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance". Therefore, the exotic setting is useful for land of love which creates a wonderful romantic play.

Love at first sight

The exotic setting creates an environment where almost all characters fall in love at first sight. The first and foremost characteristic of a romantic comedy is that, its almost every character is affected by love; specially love at first sight, passionately and intensely. In *Twelfth Night*, we find a number of love episodes. The Duke fell in love in with Olivia, when

he saw her first, Viola fell in love with the Duke immediately, Olivia fell in love with Cesario at the very first interview and Sebastian fell in love with Olivia in a moment. In spite of various unavoidable distinctions between these lovers, one thing is common to them. They all fell in love at first sight.

Again, in *The tempest*, the beautiful love affair of Ferdinand and Miranda who are simply fascinated by each other at first sight, is highly romantic. Miranda seems to be a goddess to Ferdinand. For her sack he is willing to carry a number of logs, for her sack he becomes a willing log-man. Miranda cannot bear to see him toiling so hard. She offers to share his labors, but as an ardent lover he will not listen to any such proposal. In her perfect simplicity and innocence, Miranda offers to be his wife. This is how she speaks to him;

“I am your wife, if you will marry me;

If not; I’ll die your maid; to be your fellow

You may deny me; but I will be your servant

Whether you will or not” [In *The Tempest* : Act-3, scene-1]

This is how Ferdinand expresses his love:

“Beyond all limit of what else in the world I

Do love, prize, honour you” [In *The Tempest* : Act-3, scene-1]

They breathe the very spirit of youthful love with all its passion and ardor which is very romantic in nature. Thus, it is realized that the exotic setting creates an environment where almost all characters fall in love at first sight.

Song and music

Songs and music is another outstanding feature of a romantic play. If love is the dominating theme of the play, music comes next in importance. There are four songs are sung by the same person, the clown. The first song “O mistress mine, where are you roaming” [in *Twelfth Night*: Act-2, scene-3] is sung at the request of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew about perpetual love. It also tells that the youth is short lived, so lovers should make the best use of it.

The second song “Come away, come away death” (in *Twelfth Night*: Act-2, scene-4) is address to Malvolio. This song is sung in a joking manner, with nothing sentimental about it.

The last song “I am gone, sir, anon, sir,”(in *Twelfth Night*: Act-4, scene-2) is sung at the close of the play. The clown here refers to the various stages of human life childhood, manhood, marriage and old age. However, the opening words of this play spoken by the Duke also belong to the theme of the music-

“If music be the food of love, play on;

Give me excess of it.” [In *Twelfth Night*: Act-1, scene-1]

Likewise, *The Tempest* has several songs which are sung by Ariel, Stephano and Caliban in different purposes. For example, Ariel sings:

“While you here do snoring lie,

Open ey’ d conspiracy

His time doth take.” [In *The Tempest*: Act-2, scene-1]

At the end of the play, Ariel also sings the happy song:

“Where the sucks, there suck I:

In a cowslip’s bell I lie;

There I couch when owls do cry.” [In *The Tempest*: Act-5]

Thus, song and music is the essential part of an exotic setting which creates a romantic environment in the play.

Clown’s role

Clowns and fools play a great contribution in the exotic setting of a romantic comedy. In both plays *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*, the clowns and the fools enrich the picture of life. They give us several songs and witty remarks for our enlightenment, for our entertainment, and for our instruction too. In *The Tempest*, Triphano is a jester who along with a drunken butler, Triphano enhances the quality of the exotic setting. This is why, a critics exactly says about the clown of *Twelfth Night*:

“He is the wisest character of the play”

Romance and comic atmospheres

In *Twelfth Night*, the spirit of comedy is beautifully blended with the spirit of romance. The word ‘romance’ means passionate love between man and women. This word also implies adventure, horror, danger, heroic spirit, surprise, improbabilities, etc. In the play, Antonio’s heroic and war-like past, Sebastian and viola’s terrible experience of shipwreck etc. are the instance of romantic atmosphere. In the play, there is also a plenty of comic atmosphere. The foolish pursuits of Olivia by Orsino, Olivia’s pursuit of Cesario, Malvolio’s pursuit of Olivia are absolutely comic. Besides Feste, the fool, Maria, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby contribute to the spirit of gaiety and mirth. They make the excellent comic atmosphere of the play. The Shakespearean canon is characterized by indeterminacy. His world is one where nothing is as it seems; men pose as women, nobles as commoners, and sisters as brothers (cited in Crane, p-3).

Happy ending

The exoticism creates some problems in the romantic play which later on pave the way for happy ending by ringing of marriage bell. Happy ending is one of the essential

requirements of a romantic comedy. At the eleventh hour of the play *Twelfth Night*, we find, the Duke and Viola gets happily married to Sebastian, Sir Toby marries Maria without any hesitation. At the end of the play *Twelfth Night*, the clown sings a merry song, which is a happy précis of the events of the play. Similarly, *The Tempest* also ends with Prospero's forgiveness and reconciliation with his enemies, and their sailing to Naples for the purpose of Miranda's and Ferdinand's marriage. This is the reason why, we can say that the exoticism paves the way for happy ending by ringing of marriage bell.

Conclusion

To sum up, we can say that *Twelfth Night* and *The tempest* are the romantic comedies due to its exoticism and exotic setting. In fact, exoticism and exotic setting help Shakespeare to compose high imagination, improbabilities, mingling tragic and comic elements, and romance and comic atmosphere. Moreover, exotic setting creates the field for the reader and the audience to think about the various aspects such as class division, post colonial issues, master-slave relationship, identity crisis, hegemony, disguise, deception and the picture of the contemporary society. So, there is very close relationship between the exotic setting and the romantic comedy.

Works Cited:

- Ashcroft, et al., 2004. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London and New York. p: 94.
- Berry, Edward. *Shakespeare's Comic Rites*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Berry, Ralph. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972
- Brown, John. R. *Shakespeare and His Comedies*. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1957.
- Crane, Matthew K., "'N othing that is so, is so': Indeterminate Language in Shakespeare" (2007). Honors Theses. Colby College. Paper 276. p-3.
- Gesner, Carol. 1970. *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance*. Lexington: U of Kentucky Press.
- Gurr, Andrew. 1987. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press.
- Hotson, Leslie. *The First Night of Twelfth Night*. New York: MacMillan, 1954.
- John Gillies, La Trobe University. "William Shakespeare Essay - The Open Worlde: The Exotic in Shakespeare".
<http://www.enotes.com/topics/william-shakespeare/critical-essays/john-gillies-la-trobe-university>
- John. R. *Shakespeare and His Comedies*. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1957.
- John Gillies "The Open World : The Exotic in Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, La Trobe University..
<http://www.enotes.com/topics/william-shakespeare/critical-essays/john-gillies-la-trobe-university>
- Jurline T. Franklin. "Magic and Music, Revenge and Reconciliation: The Tempest". Ortiz Middle School p.97.
- Kermode, Frank, ed. 1958. *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. The Arden Shakespeare. 6th edition. London: Methuen.
- Matthews, H.M.V. 1962. *Character and Symbol in Shakespeare's Plays*. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press.
- The Tempest - study guide
<http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/shakespeare/tempest.htm>

Unsettling AustrIllyria: Twelfth Night, Exotic Englishness and Empire
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10486800902986319>