

KBU M.A. PROGRAM

January, 2021

## "THE LADY OF SHALOTT" AND THE VICTORIAN FEMALE ROLE OF AMBIVALENCE

Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" vivifies the role of the female, embodying the aesthetic method of ideal appearance and extreme vision with the implicit vail of ignorance, which unwittingly generates its fictional realm. The web around her proves to be the tragedy of her life. The lady in the poem is not yet conscious of her curse, but may be able to acknowledge, in her psychic attitudes, that at any minute an uncanny world could collapse on her. The poem is a lovely illustration of the Biblical concept of Tennyson's intense sorrow. She is trapped inside the web; however, she demonstrates her willingness and strength to smash across her synthetic connection, thus expanding her world. Her personality is broken but she does not attempt to recover her emotions from a Victorian feminist viewpoint. But over a quite long period, her resistance to her endurance was suddenly weakened and eventually led to her realization that she is, after all, an actual individual. The poem is viewed as a fable that shows a lack of obligation on the part of the spiritual world towards its responsibility and therefore views the reaction of the Lady as a refusal to be responsible for a sin and thus revolting against it.

The poem includes an ambiguous story that might be seen as really useful to the world, particularly for females subservient to the rules of men. It provides a Victorian female's perspective, in which their defined and socially constructed roles were domesticity and repression. Even if their lives had been corrupted, they had remained and conveyed through artworks a glamorous and idealistic depiction. The writer tries to reflect the unfair social culture of the Victorian era in an obscured form. A female, according to the general contemporary view, is not an important member of the community. Her position is not deemed as valuable. Owing to the weakness of the female body, the community does not prioritize her, thus, her repression is always viewed as only tied to her male partner.













The poem is a tale of a young strangely incarcerated medieval lady over an island near Camelot. The Lady has to create a bright net, and just look via a mirror across at the universe. The lady might be damned if she glimpses straight at Camelot. The mirror is a representation of herself, and a crack on this mirror indicates a change in personality packed with the knowledge of human and spiritual love. The lady spoke only two sentences, which expressed her attitude and emotional tension. Though she behaved like a princess, and though she liked to weave and watch the universe, she half drowned in grief and turned half-sick of her existence. She stopped to watch the universe slip away without anything aside from her net and mirror, spinning images into her net. These two symbols -- the net and the mirror -- occupied her love and expertise, the mirror additionally having the function to demonstrate her magical daily visions. The poem indicates that the artist must reside in remote isolation. experiencing life just in the mirror of the imagination, not explicitly viewing it.

The post inherited the plot from medieval storylines. The tale of the poem creates a powerful image for a woman devastated by the misguided difficulties of the male who may be the source of that love and the community around them. Tennyson refers to this myth in a nuanced way that influenced a series of artists to pursue their individual approaches to and re-creations of a strong romantic image of a woman. Instead of describing more of the lady, Tennyson begins with depictions of the lovely land upon which she is imprisoned. The outside world's vibrancy compares with the prison of the walls that enclose her, declaring her separation from all aspects of life. As she is introduced by the narrator, the feeling of ambiguity in the text persists. Her hair is described as excessively messed over her head like a sultry female trapped in the web of its unwavering tapestry. The narrator, who wonders how her hair is thrown violently as if in a storm, does not embrace these very dramatic representations. Further, the reader may wonder by the web is made to wind like cocoon strings around.

Tennyson extensively describes the external universe in the poem, whereas the Lady continues to intrigue the reader. What the Lady does not know is why she is cursed. Most of the times she is referred to in the poem she sings, and at one of the only occasions that Tennyson refers to her emotional responses there is appreciation granted to her to realize that she is genuinely important to the world. Similarly, when she flees from her loneliness in the darkest of times, she attains appreciation from the nation. The Victorians viewed the lady looking out the window at Lancelot as a collapse of morality, in which the Lady conducts an incident of moral rebellion.















Eventually the Lady thinks that it is more important to her own emotional happiness to glance outside of her mirror and see Lancelot in reality, She allows an ethical choice and prefers to prioritize the life of Lancelot above her life. She saw things in a mirror without realizing the their actual significance; then she is led to her death and is certain to confront the everlasting truth. Deliberate in her choice to leave her real, she decides to react against tyranny, and live in equivalence, realizing that an aspect of moral debate is the curse itself. Her choice is commonly viewed as immoral, but she interprets it otherwise. She seeks truth and actual existence, a presence in the real world. Multiple opposite facets of the eternal war between good and evil could be seen in this poem. The Lady's tapestry as it was approaching reality became lost, since the Lady's tapestry had been made of reflected pictures. The web of tapestry from replicated images stands for artwork as imitation, a concept that was brought under dispute at Tennyson's time. In the poem, the beauty referred to at the end of the poem is characterized in such a form that it could be seen as lovely outside the Victorian frame of mind.



The life of the Lady depicts the religious devotion as an important aspect of her personality, being rooted in spiritual sincerity. Her focus on Lancelot reveals a rejection of traditional chastity. The Lady is dying on her way to a new city on board of a boat with her name inscribed on its prow. Through the poetic delineation of her death, beauty emerges. She imposed on herself the curse's retribution that induced her tragic end.

To conclude, in the words of Lancelot, Tennyson eliminates the erotic suggestion of peering at the prone female body by considering only her face and God's audience. The watery life of Tennyson serves as an important context for reading the poem. For a very long time, the feminine gender was marginalized as passive and fragile, while the active and industrial gender with the tendency to be dominant was the male one. Females who crossed the boundaries of the public sphere of business still face difficulties because they still have to control their actions and show that they can surpass the standards or requirements put on them by other people.

## References

Chadwick, J. (1986). "A Blessing and a Curse: The Poetics of Privacy in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott". *Victorian Poetry*, 24(1), 24-28.

Hill, J. (1968). "Tennyson's 'The Lady Of Shalott': The Ambiguity of Commitment". *The Centennial Review*, 12(4), 420-424.

Gray, E. (2009). "Getting It Wrong in "The Lady of Shalott". Victorian Poetry, 47(1), 50-54.

Shannon, E. (1981). "Poetry as Vision: Sight and Insight in 'The Lady of Shalott'". *Victorian Poetry*, 19(3), 216-219.

© 2021 Department of English, KBU











