



كلية : الآداب

القسم او الفرع : اللغة الانكليزية

المرحلة: الرابعة

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اسم المحاضرة التاسعة باللغة الإنكليزية : Analysis of Alfred Lord, Tennyson's *The Lady of*

*Shalott* (Part One)

Tennyson's "The Lady Of Shalott" is one of the most well-known poems of the Victorian period. Alfred Lord Tennyson uses fall metaphorically throughout "The Lady of Shalott" to illustrate how the Lady of Shalott's life (or lack thereof) progresses. "The Lady of Shalott" tells the story of a Lady imprisoned in a tower by a "curse" that will come upon her if she leaves. The Lady can only view the world through reflections in a mirror. She works at her loom all day until Lancelot rides by, at which point she looks directly at him and notes that the curse came upon her. Leaving her tower, she finds a boat and, singing a song, drifts down to Camelot while she slowly dies. Lancelot gazes at her in the end, pronouncing her face "lovely." This is told in four parts, each of which contains a theme: the first part details the Lady's natural surroundings; the second discusses what the Lady does in her tower; the third describes Lancelot's arrival and the Lady's choice to leave the mirror and her loom; and the fourth shows the Lady's floating and death. Lady of Shalott's life saw very little change. Until there was a very sudden and abrupt sequence of events that led to the death (or winter) of her life. Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott", a poem in four parts, tells the story of a cursed Lady imprisoned on the island of Shalott. Forbidden even a single glance out of her window, she sits each day weaving a tapestry that illustrates the outside world -- which she may

glimpse only through her mirror's reflections. One day, however, the Lady hears the voice of Sir Lancelot as he rides by outside, and she catches sight of his reflection in her mirror. Captivated, she steps away from her loom and looks out the window to see him, and thus doomed by her love, the Lady leaves the island on a boat, in which she dies.

Tennyson drew from the Arthurian legend of Elaine of Astolat, who fell in unrequited love with Lancelot, and died only after ordering her body to be floated down the river towards Camelot (Stevenson 236). However, Tennyson adds multiple elements to the story: "...He did not completely adopt the story of Elaine as it was to be found in Malory...and the Italian novella of *La Damigello di Scalot*, which was presumably its more immediate source, had no tower, tapestry, mirror, or curse" (Stevenson 236). Tennyson added these things and must have had a reason for doing so. Until there was a very sudden and abrupt sequence of events that led to the death (or winter) of her life. In addition viewing fall at the micro level one does not see a fixed display of weather. On the contrary, fall is made up of some clear and warm days and some cold and dismal days. This would lead to the belief that fall is neither hot nor cold, but that it is actually in the middle somewhere. In other words fall is a gray area. It is neither black nor white. A reference to this can be seen in the sixth line of stanza two when Tennyson describes The Lady of Shalott's abode as, "Four gray walls, and four gray towers." Likewise three key quotes help to

illustrate three different stages in Lady Shalott's life. Tennyson characterizes the first stage of Lady Shalott's life where she is cursed and cut off from society as cold and somber. This feeling can be seen in, "Little breezes dusk and shiver (ln. 11). The Lady is caught in the trap of weaving, is not able to make her own decisions. When the *curse comes upon* her, she lies "robed in snowy white," in her virginal state to drift toward Camelot. The Lady is seen, again, unable to act upon her own will and arrives "dead pale" to her destination.

The Victorian period was the most prosperous era among the previous ones since the industrial revolution in Britain was expanding. Women, both in social and domestic life, from the middle class up to aristocrats, spent their time with needlecraft. Tennyson derives his inspiration for the poem that makes the Lady engage in weaving, like the Victorian women who kept themselves occupied with needlework in the pursuit of reproducing or rebuilding their own dreams, knowing they will be subjected to "redundancy".