



Which Is More Melancholic "The Solitary Reaper" or "The Lady of Shalott"

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The Abstract

According to Ruth Parkin Gounelas, melancholy is endemic inside all beings but in some situations, especially those of losses, it can be converted into creative emergence or process. In her *Literature and Psychoanalysis: Intertextual Readings* (2000), Gounelas returns to Freud's theory of mourning and also adopts the opinion of the psychologist Melanie Klein who refers to the idea that language starts with depression going in line with mourning. Klein also thinks that creative products or activities are tendencies to repair what is destroyed by destructive internal or external elements. (Gounelas 56) . This paper tries to apply this psychoanalytic opinion concerning literature on two of the most famous English poems: "The Solitary Reaper"(1807) by William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and " The Lady of Shalott" (1833) by Alfred Tennyson (1809 – 1892). It aims at showing who is more effective in showing his melancholy.

Key Words: melancholy , sorrow , psychoanalytic.

أيهما أكثر حزناً " الحاصدة المنعزلة " أم " سيدة شالوت "

م. رزاق زغير شناوه

المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة ذي قار

المستخلص

تتري المفكرة روث باركن كونليس في كتابها الادب والتحليل النفسي: قراءات داخل النص (2000) ان مفهوم الحزن (melancholy) مستوطن في كل كيان ولكنه في بعض الحالات – خصوصاً مع فقدان ما هو عزيز – يتحول إلى حالة من الابداع. ورغم استنادها إلى نظرية فرويد في الحزن إلا كونليس تبنت وبشكل واضح رأي عالم النفس ملين كلين Melanie Klein الذي يشير إلى فكرة أن اللغة تبدأ باكتئاب يسير جنب إلى جنب مع الانين. تحاول هذه الورقة البحثية أن تطبق هذا الرأي النفسي التحليلي فيما يتعلق بالأدب على قصيدتين مشهورتين وهما قصيدة " الحاصدة المنعزلة " (1807) للشاعر وليم وردز ورث (1770-1850) وقصيدة " سيدة شالوت " (1833) للشاعر ألفرد تينيسن (1809-1892) . وتهدف الدراسة إلى إبراز أي الشاعرين أكثر إظهاراً لنغمة الحزن .

الكلمات المفتاحية : الحزن ، الأسى ، التحليل النفسي

Section One: " The Solitary Reaper" by William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is one of the romantic poets who adopts the old ways of writing or the way of ballad-poets. He insists that a poet should use the language which is used by ordinary people; he expresses his refusal for the poetic diction. Moreover, he calls for old imagination and legend. He adds that to be a poet means a huge responsibility because a poet has an access to the hidden heart secrets. Wordsworth's composing poetry is a vocation, not a spare-



time entertainment. In his poetry, nature has a unique meaning; he is in contact with mountains, forests, trees and fields, fields. As a result of this poetic tendency comes his " *The Solitary Reaper*" . (Wilson 216)

Being orphaned early in countryside, William Wordsworth gives much attention to loneliness, melancholy, and nature. He was given freedom to wander in green fields in northern England with its charming scenery, beautiful lakes, lovely waterfalls and mountains, castles and ancient ruins. In this environment, he his deep interest in nature develops clearly. This interest is supported by his long tours in Italy, France and Switzerland. In addition to his orphanage, his marriage comes to support his loneliness. After falling in love with a Frenchwoman called Annette Vallon, they got married and soon got their first child. Being in England when the war broke out between France and England, Wordsworth was prevented from meeting his wife for years.

Much of his melancholic sate is due to these circumstances which present him as a victim of inner psychological crisis, crisis which occupies a wide range of his melancholic poetry. To escape from this inner suffering, he finds nature a shelter and a source for his creative power and his imaginative world to lament the joy he lost. One of the famous poems that reflect his attitudes is "The Solitary Reaper", a poem where he addresses his listeners to live imaginatively into his poetic atmosphere. and shapes an imaginative experience with which readers or listeners not only imagine the pictures of the situation but they feel as if they could hear its speeches or hearing its anthems. (Mason 14 - 71)

Before describing how melancholic this poem is, William Wordsworth tries to attract the attention of his readers by commanding his addressee to use his both senses with 'behold' and 'listen' to watch a reaping girl. In order not to sudden her with a behavior which may force her to stop singing, the poet ask his listener either to stop or to walk calmly. The image of being 'alone' is repeated more than once with different expressions such as 'solitary' 'single', 'by herself' and 'alone' before describing the poem as sad.

The other image is that of the place which is described as a ' profound valley' that is not only dominated by the echo of sound, but also ' overflowing'. Furthermore, what makes the song more sorrowful is that she sings while she is working or binding the grain as if she amuses herself from an inner pain. All these images seem to be employed by the poet as an introduction to his main description of the song which ' a melancholy strain '

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,



And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound. (1-8)

The melancholy of this song is so unique that nightingale is unable to chaunt like it even if it is in some shady haunt. To show the strangeness of this song, the poet adds that this song has never been heard even by the weary travellers in the Arab sands. Another feature of this song is that – in spite of its being thrilling – it is not quiet, a matter which can be felt when it is compared to the cuckoo-bird which normally wakens sleepers. As far as the song is concerned, it breaks the silence of the seas. Significantly, the poet tries not to limit this song to a particular place on earth. After mentioning the idea that it is not heard in Arab desert, he adds such a song has never been heard before in the farthest islands of the ocean.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides. (9-16)

Describing all the details and effectiveness of this strange sorrowful song, the poet goes on to know the content and the causes of this sorrow which remains a mystery for him. He begins the third stanza with a rhetorical question to all those who hear the song asking " Will no one tell me what she sings? 17 ". He himself answers the question with uncertainty using the word ' perhaps'. To him, the reasons behind this sorrow may be so deep in history or link with the old battles which led to her pain and loss. This image complicates this sorrow by not being short-lived and easily solved. Rather, since it started a long time ago, it is inherited from a generation to another, a matter which increases its mysteriousness.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain, (17-24)



The final scene of this tragic poem also starts with a rhetorical question "That has been, and may be again? 24" . In this stanza, the poet describes the girl as maiden to indicate his being fond of old expressions. Again he asks about the mysteriousness of this song content or theme. What increases his astonishment is that the sorrow of this song has no end. This is obvious through the idea that he listens motionlessly . Even when he leaves the place, the song controls his emotions echoing his heart, a matter with which the poem has been given a timeless universality through the speaker to the audience.

That has been, and may be again?
Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more. (25-33)

Significantly, the melancholy of Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" left its influence on other poets; modern and contemporary. A modern example of this influence is that which is obvious in Pessoa's " She sings, poor reaper " (1907) which shows a kinship in many perspectives. Both texts present a scene with a male poet, walking , listening and watching a singing female reaper in a green field. In both, the male poet shows a great reaction to a single female's singing. They both show their skill in portraying almost the 'accurate map' for their listeners. Following this map, Pessoa shows how influential the Wordsworth's reaper is. (Castro 102)

Section Two: " The Lady of Shalott " by Alfred Tennyson

A mysterious woman living alone is an image which dominates Alfred Tennyson's poem " The Lady of Shalott". Describing the place she inhabits is given a special attention by the poet. Even the line " The Lady of Shalott" which is used as a repeated refrain has a little change in the first stanza to become " The Island of Shalott" to prioritize the place to the lady in the opening part. Melancholic atmosphere tackles a large share in this poem.

The first two stanzas – apart from the refrain in the second one – are devoted to a wholly to describe the place with the two sides of the river that are covered by long fields of wheat and barley, fields with greenness that touch the sky horizon. This place has a castle of Camelot with all its towers which are near a quiet island sheltering a lady who has not been seen by people. (Tilak 112)



But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott? (24-27)

Only the people who reap wheat and barely hear the song with her voice which echoes the place, a voice which lives in the hearts of reapers even at moony night when they wearily return home. A part of her melancholy, she spends day and night alone in her tower. She is weaving magic colours isolating herself because of a mysterious voice whispering her that if she looks directly at the castle, a curse will end her life. And worse, she does not know what this curse and how it can be. To amuse herself, she looks at a mirror which reflects the place to her

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott. (37-46)

In the second part of the poem, the poet employs the supernatural impact on the lady through the expressions 'a magic web' and 'She has heard a whisper say'. These images are reasons behind her suffering which is not built on reality. In the following stanza, the mirror has become a real source for her, through which she sees happy women, church men and shepherds. The most important seen entity is the knights who are riding in pairs, a matter which increases her melancholy because she has no knight to love.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott. (55- 63)

Tennyson finishes the second part with the image that she is still fond of weaving the attractive sights she sees in the mirror. Her sorrow is often supported by sights such as the sights of funeral. Significantly, not only funerals



which causes her gloom but even weddings which remind her of happiness which she deprives of, a feeling which psychologically divides her into two halves of shadows "I am half sick of shadows," said The Lady of Shalott. (71-72) "

It is part three which represents the beginning of the curse. Despite the fact that this part is divided into five stanzas, its continuous events seem to be one. The emergence of the red knight in this part evokes her feelings and complicates her melancholy especially when he kneels. The poet gives a full description of the charming knight who appears under the blue sky with a flame-like burning helmet. The poet compares the emergence of the knight to a meteor which passes on a dark night with a light that follows it. That is why he flashes into the mirror singing Tirra lirra (96- 108)

This flashing and singing of the knight motivates the lady to leave her room, taking some steps. Seeing the helmet of the knight cracks the magic mirror and brings the curse.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott. (109 – 117)

This curse shocks all the place. The river begins to shout, the sky rains heavily, and the most important event is that the lady leaves the tower to find an old boat on which she writes her name. With the coming of the night, she unchained the boat which took her away. As the boat was moving, people hear her melancholic song with a changing in her voice from loud to low. Her eyes get dark, her blood turned cold; she died with singing lips. People who see her dead wonder who she is and only one who prays that God would be merciful to her is the knight Sir Lancelot whose words " She has a very pretty face " Seeing her dead on the boat, people (150-171).

Conclusion

Applying Gounelas's psychoanalytic opinion on these two sorrowful poems leads to the conclusion they are real interpretation of what he calls endemic melancholy. They both interpret sorrowful atmosphere of inner side of two ladies who express it in expressive songs. Despite these common, touching lights on them to show the more melancholic is still possible.



Unlike Tennyson, Wordsworth directly takes his addressee to the song. Tennyson prepares his listeners by describing the place because isolating the lady from others represents a pillar without which the song stops. Being able to see and seen, Wordsworth's reaper is less melancholic because she a level of freedom the lady of Shalott lacks, and even if there is a chance for her to see through the mirrors, she can see what depress her such as funeral or wedding parties that she cannot make.

To sum up, reading the poems in detail brings many melancholic items in common such as the sorrowful songs which occupy the hearts of listeners even if they are away. Dominated by mystery complicate the melancholy of them both because the listeners cannot understand the real reason behind it. In spite of this, " The Lady of Shalott" is more melancholic not only because of the long suffering the lady spends in her tower but also because of tragic end the lady faces.

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