



Golden Fields: A Poetry Anthology

Inspired by Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott

Edited by Christina Wolf and Edward Wolf

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BLUE WOLF

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<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45359/the-lady-of-shalott-1832>

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Contents

Introduction	6
<i>The Lady of Shalott (1832) by Alfred, Lord Tennyson</i>	8
<i>Through the many fields of rye... by Emilia Todaro & Hector Rodriguez Barbero</i>	10
<i>Blue sky that embraces the breeze...by Carolina Salas Rangel & Seaheun Seo</i>	11
<i>The sky is blue...by Anastasiia Bunak & Sofia Marchioro</i>	12
<i>Golden field under the sky... by Alberto Martinez Planas, Anastasiia Taran & Yelyzaveta Monastyrska</i>	13
<i>The Golden Grief by Manuel Roman Atienza & Teresa Chacón Nogales</i>	14
<i>The Journey by Eva Vivien Meta Helderman, Fernando Acemel Cabrera & Pauline Dufeu</i>	15
<i>Live, Die, Repeat by Manuel Parejo Sosa & Tobias Alexander Stumpf</i>	16
References and Further Reading	17

A golden end to ignoble dreams
Sapping strength to new seeds
The flow unending to veil's end
What does it all portend?

Edward Wolf



Introduction

Every literary period and every literary genre have their own main characteristics and styles. However, they are not limited in themselves but are influenced by works that came before and influence those which come after. When studying the Victorians, great emphasis is often put on the interest Victorian writers, architects, and artists had in the medieval period. Nineteenth-century Britain saw the apex of the Industrial Revolution, which unsettled the social hierarchy and profoundly changed the countryside as well as the nature of urban communities; it had to grapple with new scientific discoveries that shook the foundations of its religious beliefs and their understanding of the human nature. In such disquieting times, looking back to a distant past when the countryside was barely touched by human interference – apart from agricultural production and hunting – and where values of chivalry and faith were upheld could, in principle, provide some escape and comfort. However, Victorian artists and writers also used medieval themes and motifs to critically look at their own times and reflect on the changes their society was going through.

One of the texts studied in the EL3022 module on English Language and Literature – run as part of the Study Abroad Programme at the University of Leicester – is Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s *The Lady of Shalott*. Through close reading and textual analysis students are guided to consider the rhetorical features of the poem along with the historical context in which it was created and received. Moreover, in the module sessions, students are encouraged to establish connections between the changes Victorians experienced in the period to the technological, political and social changes experienced in our own times. They are expected to advance their own interpretations of the text in classroom discussions. They may also write an essay on the poem as part of their formal assessment if they wish so.

The poems published here were all inspired by the students’ own readings of *The Lady of Shalott*. They were produced as a classroom pair/group activity that focused on critical analysis and the application of different poetic elements – meter, rhyme, alliteration, imagery, and use of rhetorical devices. Above all, they are an exercise in imagination and creative writing. The authors are international students (2024-25 cohort) attending a credit bearing module as part of their exchange programmes. Their first language is other than English and they come from different countries, including France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, South Korea, Spain, and Ukraine. Some of them had some previous experience writing poetry while for others this was their first attempt at the genre. No theme or specific format was imposed to them apart from taking the inspiration from Tennyson’s work. Two images related to Part I and Part IV of the poem were also used as prompts for a pre-writing speaking activity. This publication is a way of saying thanks to the students for accepting the challenge and producing such meaningful, inspiring, high-quality work. We hope it also serves as memento for the time they spent in the UK and a sample of the learning processes they have been through while attending this module. Furthermore, we hope their attempt at writing poetry does not stop here...who knows what the future holds?

This booklet starts with a reproduction of Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s 1832 version of *The Lady of Shalott*. The text used here is available on the Poetry Foundation website and is in the public domain. This is followed by the students’ poems at no particular order. We hope you, the reader, will not only enjoy their works but also, perhaps, be inspired by them.

Christina Wolf and Edward Wolf
Editors



The Lady of Shalott (1832)

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Part I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
 Skimming down to Camelot:
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?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott."

Part II

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.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

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.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
 And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
"I am half sick of shadows," said
 The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
 Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
 As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldrick slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
 Beside remote Shalott.
All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
 As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
 Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
 As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

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.

Part IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
 Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
 Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
 Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
 The Lady of Shalott."



Through the many fields of rye
A river, heard, passing by
Glistening, the sunrays perish
Surrendering life with a lot of cherish
The clouds grinning up high
Softly moulding in the sky
Convoluting, saddened in grief
Saluting summer, of seasons the chief
Abandoning the trees, gliding in the air
Moulting their cape, leaves become fair.

Emilia Todaro
Hector Rodriguez Barbero



Blue sky that embraces the breeze
Sunny heaven that makes me breathe
Green nature my eyes can see
Shiny light my heart can feel.

The river runs through my soul
Feels like the end of the world
And I am here all alone.
It's the beginning of the cold.

Carolina Salas Rangel
Seaheun Seo



The sky is blue
and so do you
The grain grows
and so my love
The day was bright
The wind was blowing
your memory starts flowing
As life goes on,
you have gone.

As the season changes
you cannot be blamed
As the river flows
he really makes you glow
I am always more blue,
I see your love for him is true.

Anastasiia Bunak
Sofia Marchioro



Golden field under the sky,
and the clouds don't cry,
There are no birds in sight,
thus, my feelings go awry.
The sun is no longer that bright,
because autumn has arrived.
My path is full of yellow leaves,
that are falling from the trees.
The Lady of Shalott.

Alberto Martinez Planas
Anastasiia Taran
Yelyzaveta Monastyrska

The Golden Grief



It stand tall, the wheat
Slowly moving with the breeze.
The blue sky as my only sight
I feel the wheat with my naked feet.

The wheat stand proud
with the birds singing loud.
Sitting with my dear
there is no place for fear
in such calming atmosphere.

My boat follows the stream,
the clouds vanquish my dream.
As the yellow glow on the leaves,
My poor heart grieves.

Manuel Roman Atienza
Teresa Chacón Nogales

The Journey



Running through a field of barley
Trying to be free
The gentle breeze of the wind
Makes me feel like having wings
The clouds passing by
Revealing the blue sky
Showing us the way
To create a better day
As I am running through a field of barley

Running along a winding river
The cold starting to making us shiver
I can feel the loneliness of the boat
While in the river it floats
Craving to be in the open sea
Just like me, it's not free
As I am running along a winding river

Eva Vivien Meta Helderman
Fernando Acemel Cabrera
Pauline Dufeu

Live, Die, Repeat



The summer wind rustles through the plains,
everything is yellow – until the very last grain.
At least until the harvester comes,
almighty with his deadly scythe.

All that has grown - in so many months,
now lies splattered on the earth.
DEAD. BROKEN.
But then the seeds are sown again.
Reborn. Like the phoenix from the ashes.
As they constantly go through the cycle all over
again.
Like the seasons seem to do.

Live,
Die,
Repeat.

Manuel Parejo Sosa
Tobias Alexander Stumpf

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“A poem is a fictional, verbally inventive moral statement in which it is the author, rather than the printer or the word processor, who decides where the lines should end. This dreary-sounding definition, unpoetic to a fault, may well turn out to be the best we can do” (Eagleton, 2007, p. 25).

“Literature comes into being as an interaction between texts with certain linguistic tendencies and readers with certain expectations and interests, including reading for curiosity, pleasure and to ‘expand horizons’” (Hall, 2015, p. 95).

“Victorian narrative frequently makes us aware of displaced lyric pressures. Tennyson tells stories in lyric form in poems such as ‘The Lady of Shalott’ (1832/1842), a poem whose centre is the Lady’s wish to be part of the larger narrative of Camelot; her story is one of an inward separation from reality and is incomprehensible to others,” (Hurley & O’Neill, 2012, p. 206)

