The Rose and the Mirror

Many wonder what the difference is between fairy tales and tales. Perhaps fairy tales are just euphemisms for sad tales passed down to children. Fairy tales often contain a magical or supernatural phenomenon that cannot be explained; while tales are stories passed down from generations to deliver a message of hope. Disney’s fairy tale Beauty and the Beast, and Alfred Tennyson’s “Lady of Shalott” have a premise that distinctly reflects the difference between a tale and a fairy tale. Both stories contain an environment that reflects the mood, a lifeline that courses their lives, and a destiny that concludes the definition of fairytale or just tale.

To first examine both stories it is important to analyze the start point of the environment/mood. In “Beauty and the Beast” surrounding the beast’s castle the weather is typically dark and eerie. The beast’s castle is surrounded by a forest where the sun seems to hide from this place; conveying longer nights. There is a strong wind that dances with the dark woods and causes their branches to push up against the windows of the castle while making a screeching and scratchy noise. This noise sets a dreary environment with little to no hope of a sunny day. The setting symbolizes the feelings of the beast, because his depression is extreme due to his curse. In a like manner, the environment of “Lady of Shalott” is pleasant but distant in the description that paints a picture of the jumpstart mood. “To many-towered Camelot; And up and down the people go, Gazing where the lilies blow Round an island there below, The island of Shalott” (Tennyson 5-9). This line is a great description, although there is a beautiful spring
day, life is going on right in front of the lady’s tower but she is trapped in her tower as if frozen in time. As has been noted, isolation is a big part of both curses.

In addition, the significant differences and similarities of the protagonists is equally important. In *Beauty and the Beast* and “Lady of Shalott” both protagonists are described as being young, and both have a similar dilemma, a curse. In the story of “Beauty and the Beast” Beast has been cursed because “He has no love within his heart. His only way of breaking the spell is by learning to love and to earn the love of another” (Disney). Alternatively in “Lady of Shalott,” the lady’s reason of her curse is not clearly mentioned. What is clear is the type of curse that is bestowed upon her; it is the curse of isolation.

Both stories *Beauty and the Beast* and “Lady of Shalott” have a metaphorical life line. In “Beauty and the Beast” the Beast’s life line is a rose, while in “Lady of Shalott” it is a mirror. These two objects determine whether the protagonists are alive or dead. When Beast’s rose wilts he dies with it and when the lady’s mirror breaks she dies. The mirror and the rose are symbolic to their owner’s destiny. In the “Lady of Shalott” the lady’s life is a lot like the mirror. She sees people and nature through the reflection of the mirror. Metaphorically speaking, the lady is only a reflection of life but not actually a part of it. In contrast Beast is also alike his rose. The rose is preserved in a jar and kept away from the world for fear of its destruction. Thus, Beast has condemned himself from the village because if the villagers realize that he is a ‘monster,’ they must kill him out of fear. Under those circumstances the protagonists eventually reach a breaking point, and then, action trumps destiny.

Breaking the curse in both stories is a result of the culmination of their desperation. In “Lady of Shalott,” the lady sees a knight, and her yearning for human contact, quite possibly love, compels her to go to him. She leaves her tower with the will power to make her own
destiny rather than being entrapped by a curse. Like the lady, Beast must have love to break his curse. This condition seems bleak for him because of his image and temper. His lack of human contact has jaded his manners, and friendliness is a foreign concept. When the time comes for Beast to take a chance at breaking the curse, he locks up Bella. With time and perseverance, the Beast shows a side of him to Bella that dignifies his past actions and manners.

These two stories have the same concept but one is an atonement for the reality of a woeful ending. In “Lady of Shalott,” the ending is gloomy because it ends with death. As soon as the lady leaves her tower, her mirror cracks; this foreshadows her ending. As she makes her way to her knight, she sings her last song and dies. Conversely, Beast is ambushed at his castle by the villagers. He fights to protect Bella but dies in her arms. Fortunately, death is not part of fairy tales, so love breaks the spell and brings the beast back to life in the form of a human being.

Although both stories are significantly different, both contain essentially the same symbolisms and message. Both stories highlight the repercussions of being isolated from society. During the Victorian Age, Alfred Tennyson wrote “Lady of Shalott,” Tennyson simulates the good and the bad that comes with being out of tune with the latest industrialization. A good reason for being up to date with society is the privilege of maintaining pace with society. In this way, one is molded with society’s norms and expectations. An example of a bad point is that society plays such a big role in our lives that it is too easy to be manipulated and dependent on everyone else’s ideas and goals. In both, Beauty and the Beast and “Lady of Shalott” being neglected by society was the downfall of their lives. Unfortunately, the “Lady of Shalott’s” curse ended in a bleak manner, never being able to join society.
Works Cited
