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Reading *The Lady of Shalott* in times of pandemic may be quite strange experience. This poem written by Alfred lord Tennyson, loosely based on Arthurian legends, tells the story of a young noblewoman imprisoned in a tower. Her confinement is a leitmotif of the poem and nowadays can remind the reader about the isolation many people experience due to the spread of coronavirus.

I think this comparison, though intuitive, does not have much point. First of all, our isolation caused by the virus is partially and temporary. Although many public spaces are closed, we can still go outside the house and our lockdown will end in the near future. Moreover, many people have chosen to stay at home instead of going to work, so in some cases the isolation is voluntary. The same cannot be said about the lady of Shalott. Suffering from a mysterious and undeserved curse, the heroine cannot leave her prison nor even look outside the window, or she will die. Her world will stretch out from the wall to the wall for the rest of her life.

The experience of the lady of Shalott is thus not a comment on the isolation in times of pandemic, like Camus' *The Plague*. The poem, as many literary critics say, is rather an allegory of the women's social situation in the Victorian era. The fate of a Victorian woman was predetermined – she was destined to be a good housewife and a caring mother. Trapped in her home, like the Tennyson's heroine, she has never lived real life and has never experienced freedom and emotions. Liberation from the bonds of community often resulted in ostracism and was in some way a social death, what is reminiscent of the tragic fate of the lady of Shalott.