

Julia Szendera

“The Lady of Shalott” by Alfred Tennyson tells the story of a young woman, forced to stay in the four walls of a tower on an island. She is a quite mysterious character, since readers are not really exposed to any information about her, apart from the fact that she has been cursed. The reason for the curse she is under remains unknown. She is not even exactly sure what may happen if she leaves her tower – “She knows not what the curse may be.” However, she still decides to stay inside and look at the mirror reflection of the world outside and a better place – Camelot. She is not allowed to look directly out at the world and she is forced to only watch the “shadows of the world.” It seems like nobody, except for the local farmers, knows of the lady’s existence. Sometimes she can be heard by them, singing.

In my opinion, what we experience now during the coronavirus outbreak in Europe can be compared to the confinement of the Lady of Shalott inside her castle tower. I think that nowadays we can all relate to this poem at least a little bit. We are trapped in our homes, not allowed to go out, in fear for our lives. Some of us educate ourselves about the new virus the humanity is currently trying to fight, but the truth is many of us are not really aware of the consequences this whole situation might bring. Just like the Lady of Shalott, we only watch “shadows of the world”, not through a mirror though. Our “mirrors” are our phones, TV, radio and the Internet. They let us see the reflection of the real world, they are our substitute for going out and spending time with our friends. Some of us might be “half-sick of shadows” – we miss the outside world, traveling, sightseeing, meeting people. Nevertheless, we must remember that the consequences of leaving our “towers” are harmful not only to us, but for everyone around us.