

Woolf | A Room of One's Own

Fremdsprachentexte | Englisch

Virginia Woolf

A Room of One's Own

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Chapter I

But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction – what has that got to do with a room of one's own? I will try to explain. When you asked me to speak about
5 women and fiction I sat down on the banks of a river and began to wonder what the words meant. They might mean simply a few remarks about Fanny Burney; a few more about Jane Austen; a tribute to the Brontës and a sketch of Haworth Parsonage under snow; some witticisms if possi-
10 ble about Miss Mitford; a respectful allusion to George Eliot; a reference to Mrs. Gaskell and one would have done. But at second sight the words seemed not so simple. The title women and fiction might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, women and what they are like; or it
15 might mean women and the fiction that they write; or it might mean women and the fiction that is written about them; or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together and you want me to consider them in that light. But when I began to consider the subject in this

5 **banks:** (Fluss-)Ufer. | 7 **Burney:** Frances »Fanny« Burney (1752–1840): britische Schriftstellerin und Dramatikerin. | 8 **Austen:** Jane Austen (1775–1817): britische Schriftstellerin. | **the Brontës:** die Schwestern Charlotte Brontë (1816–55), Emily Brontë (1818–48) und Anne Brontë (1820–49), britische Schriftstellerinnen. | 9 **Haworth Parsonage:** Pfarrhaus in Haworth in Yorkshire, in dem die Brontë-Schwestern aufwuchsen. | **witticism:** geistreiche Bemerkung (*witty*: geistreich, *wit*: Verstand). | 10 **Mitford:** Mary Russell Mitford (1787–1855): britische Schriftstellerin und Dramatikerin. | 10 f. **Eliot:** George Eliot, eigtl. Marian Evans (1819–80): britische Schriftstellerin, Übersetzerin und Journalistin. | 11 **Mrs. Gaskell:** Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–65): britische Schriftstellerin. | 17 f. **inextricably** (adv.): untrennbar.

last way, which seemed the most interesting, I soon saw that it had one fatal drawback. I should never be able to come to a conclusion. I should never be able to fulfil what is, I understand, the first duty of a lecturer – to hand you after an hour's discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks and keep on the mantelpiece for ever. All I could do was to offer you an opinion upon one minor point – a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unsolved. I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions – women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved problems. But in order to make some amends I am going to do what I can to show you how I arrived at this opinion about the room and the money. I am going to develop in your presence as fully and freely as I can the train of thought which led me to think this. Perhaps if I lay bare the ideas, the prejudices, that lie behind this statement you will find that they have some bearing upon women and some upon fiction. At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial – and any question about sex is that – one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold. One can

2 **drawback**: Nachteil. | 5 **nugget**: wertvoller Brocken. | 6 f. **mantelpiece**: Kaminsims. | 11 f. **to shirk s.th.**: sich vor etwas drücken, etwas meiden. | 14 f. **to make amends** (fig.): etwas wiedergutmachen. | 18 **train of thought**: Gedankengang, Gedankenführung. | 19 **to lay bare s.th.**: etwas aufdecken/enthüllen. | 20 **to have some bearing on/upon s.th.**: einen gewissen Bezug zu etwas haben. | 22 **controversial** (adj.): umstritten, kontrovers. | **sex**: hier: Geschlecht.

only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker. Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact. Therefore I propose, making
 5 use of all the liberties and licences of a novelist, to tell you the story of the two days that preceded my coming here – how, bowed down by the weight of the subject which you have laid upon my shoulders, I pondered it, and made it work in and out of my daily life. I need not say that what I
 10 am about to describe has no existence; Oxbridge is an invention; so is Fernham; “I” is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being. Lies will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth and to decide
 15 whether any part of it is worth keeping. If not, you will of course throw the whole of it into the waste-paper basket and forget all about it.

Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please – it is not a matter
 20 of any importance) sitting on the banks of a river a week or two ago in fine October weather, lost in thought. That

2 **limitation**: Einschränkung, Begrenzung. | 3 **idiosyncrasy**: Eigenart, Eigentümlichkeit. | 5 **licence** (BE; AE: *license*): Bewilligung, Erlaubnis. | 6 **to precede s.th.**: etwas vorausgehen/vorangehen (*preceding*: vorangegangen). | 7 **bowed down** (adj.): gebeugt, gedrückt. | 8 **to ponder s.th.**: über etwas nachdenken (*imponderable*: unberechenbar, unwägbar). | 10 **Oxbridge**: Verschmelzung von Oxford und Cambridge. | 11 **Fernham**: Anspielung auf Newnham und Girton, die beiden Frauencolleges in Cambridge. | 14 **to seek s.th./s.o. out**: etwas/jdn. aufspüren. | 18f. **Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael**: Namen aus der *Ballad of the Four Marys*, einer schottischen Ballade aus dem 16. Jahrhundert.

collar I have spoken of, women and fiction, the need of coming to some conclusion on a subject that raises all sorts of prejudices and passions, bowed my head to the ground. To the right and left bushes of some sort, golden and crimson, glowed with the colour, even it seemed burnt with the heat, of fire. On the further bank the willows wept in perpetual lamentation, their hair about their shoulders. The river reflected whatever it chose of sky and bridge and burning tree, and when the undergraduate had oared his boat through the reflections they closed again, completely, as if he had never been. There one might have sat the clock round lost in thought. Thought – to call it by a prouder name than it deserved – had let its line down into the stream. It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflections and the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it until – you know the little tug – the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one's line: and then the cautious hauling of it in, and the careful laying of it out? Alas, laid on the grass how small, how insignificant this thought of mine looked; the sort of fish that a good fisherman puts back into the water so that it may grow fatter and be one day worth cooking and eating. I will not trouble you with that thought now, though if you look carefully you

1 **collar**: hier: Joch. | 4 f. **crimson** (adj.): purpurrot. | 6 **willow** (bot.): Weide. | 6 f. **perpetual** (adj.): unaufhörlich, fortwährend. | 7 **lamentation**: Klage, Gejammer. | 9 **undergraduate**: Student(in) vor dem ersten akademischen Grad. | **to oar**: rudern. | 13 **line**: hier: Angelschnur. | 14 **to sway**: schwingen; hier: sich hin und her bewegen. | **hither and thither** (arch.): hin und her. | 16 **tug**: Zug, kräftiges Ziehen (*to tug*: zerrén, ziehen). | 16 f. **conglomeration**: Anhäufung, Ballung. | 18 **to haul s.th. in**: etwas einholen/einziehen. | 19 **alas** (lit.): leider, ach.

may find it for yourselves in the course of what I am going to say.

But however small it was, it had, nevertheless, the mysterious property of its kind – put back into the mind, it became at once very exciting, and important; and as it darted and sank, and flashed hither and thither, set up such a wash and tumult of ideas that it was impossible to sit still. It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help, he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me. Such thoughts were the work of a moment. As I regained the path the arms of the Beadle sank, his face assumed its usual repose, and though turf is better walking than gravel, no very great harm was done. The only charge I could bring against the Fellows and Scholars of whatever the college might happen to be was that in protection of their turf, which has been rolled for

3 **nevertheless** (adv.): trotzdem, dennoch. | 3 f. **mysterious**: geheimnisvoll, rätselhaft. | 4 **property**: hier: Eigenart, Fähigkeit. | 5 **to dart**: fliegen, huschen. | 6 **wash** (n.): hier: Wellenschlag, Schwall. | 7 **tumult**: Auf-
ruhr. | 8 **rapidity**: Schnelligkeit. | 9 **to intercept s.o./s.th.**: jdn./etwas
abfangen. | 11 **cut-away coat**: kurzer Gehrock. | 12 f. **indignation**: Empö-
rung, Entrüstung. | 14 **beadle**: Pedell, Hausmeister der Universität. | **turf**:
Rasen. | 15 **fellow**: Forschende(r) und Lehrende(r) am College. | **scholar**:
Gelehrte(r), Studierende(r). | 16 **gravel**: Kies, Schotter. | 17 **to regain
s.th.**: etwas wiedererlangen/zurückgewinnen. | 18 **repose** (n.): Ruhe.

300 years in succession they had sent my little fish into hiding.

What idea it had been that had sent me so audaciously trespassing I could not now remember. The spirit of peace descended like a cloud from heaven, for if the spirit of peace dwells anywhere, it is in the courts and quadrangles of Oxbridge on a fine October morning. Strolling through those colleges past those ancient halls the roughness of the present seemed smoothed away; the body seemed contained in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate, and the mind, freed from any contact with facts (unless one trespassed on the turf again), was at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment. As chance would have it, some stray memory of some old essay about revisiting Oxbridge in the long vacation brought Charles Lamb to mind – Saint Charles, said Thackeray, putting a letter of Lamb's to his forehead. Indeed, among all the dead (I give you my thoughts as they came to me), Lamb is one of the most congenial; one to whom one would have liked to say, Tell me then how you wrote your essays? For his essays are superi-

1 **in succession** (adv.): in Folge, hintereinander (*to succeed*: nachfolgen). | 3 **audaciously** (adv.): kühn, dreist. | 4 **trespassing** (n.): unerlaubtes Betreten. | 5 **to descend**: herabsteigen, absinken. | 6 **to dwell**: wohnen, verweilen. | **quadrangles**: hier: viereckige Innenhöfe auf dem Campus. | 7 **to stroll**: schlendern, spazieren. | 10 **miraculous**: übernatürlich, wundersam. | **glass cabinet**: Glasvitrine; hier: Glasgehäuse. | 11 **to penetrate s.th.**: etwas durchdringen. | 14 **stray** (adj.): vereinzelt, verirrt. | 16 **Lamb**: Charles Lamb (1775–1834): englischer Essayist und Autor des Essays *Oxford in the Vacation* (1820). | 17 **Thackeray**: William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–63): britischer Schriftsteller. | 19 f. **congenial** (adj.): sympathisch, wesensverwandt.

or even to Max Beerbohm's, I thought, with all their perfec-
 tion, because of that wild flash of imagination, that light-
 ning crack of genius in the middle of them which leaves
 them flawed and imperfect, but starred with poetry. Lamb
 5 then came to Oxbridge perhaps a hundred years ago. Cer-
 tainly he wrote an essay – the name escapes me – about the
 manuscript of one of Milton's poems which he saw here. It
 was *Lycidas* perhaps, and Lamb wrote how it shocked
 him to think it possible that any word in *Lycidas* could
 10 have been different from what it is. To think of Milton
 changing the words in that poem seemed to him a sort of
 sacrilege. This led me to remember what I could of *Lycidas*
 and to amuse myself with guessing which word it could
 have been that Milton had altered, and why. It then oc-
 15 curred to me that the very manuscript itself which Lamb
 had looked at was only a few hundred yards away, so that
 one could follow Lamb's footsteps across the quadrangle to
 that famous library where the treasure is kept. Moreover, I
 recollected, as I put this plan into execution, it is in this
 20 famous library that the manuscript of Thackeray's *Esmond*
 is also preserved. The critics often say that *Esmond* is
 Thackeray's most perfect novel. But the affectation of the

1 **Beerbohm:** Max Beerbohm (1872–1956): britischer Essayist und Satiri-
 ker. | 4 **starred** (adj.): mit Sternen übersät, funkelnd. | 7 **Milton:** John
 Milton (1608–74): britischer Dichter und Intellektueller, der die Pastoral-
 Elegie *Lycidas* (1638) schrieb. | 12 **sacrilege:** Frevel, Sakrileg. | 14 **to alter**
s.th.: etwas abändern/modifizieren (*alteration:* Abänderung). | 19 **to**
recollect: sich erinnern (*recollection:* Erinnerung). | **to put s.th. in/into**
execution (fig.): etwas ausführen/vollenden. | 20 **Esmond:** Thackerays
 Roman *The History of Henry Esmond, Esquire* (1852) ist im Stil des
 18. Jahrhunderts geschrieben. | 22 **affectation:** Affektiertheit, Künstelei.

style, with its imitation of the eighteenth century, hampers one, so far as I can remember; unless indeed the eighteenth-century style was natural to Thackeray – a fact that one might prove by looking at the manuscript and seeing whether the alterations were for the benefit of the style or of the sense. But then one would have to decide what is style and what is meaning, a question which – but here I was actually at the door which leads into the library itself. I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction.

That a famous library has been cursed by a woman is a matter of complete indifference to a famous library. Venerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast, it sleeps complacently and will, so far as I am concerned, so sleep for ever. Never will I wake those echoes, never will I ask for that hospitality again, I vowed as I descended the steps in anger. Still an hour remained before luncheon, and what was one to do? Stroll on the meadows?

1 **to hamper s.o.:** jdn. stören (*hampered*: behindert, eingeschränkt). | 9 **to issue:** herauskommen, erscheinen. | 10 **to bar s.th.:** etwas versperren (Weg). | **flutter:** Geflatter. | **gown:** Robe, Talar. | 11 **deprecating** (adj.): abwehrend. | 14 **to furnish s.o.:** jdn. ausstatten. | 14f. **letter of introduction:** Empfehlungsschreiben. | 16 **to curse s.th./s.o.:** etwas/jdn. verfluchen (*curse*: Fluch). | 17 **indifference:** Gleichgültigkeit (*indifferent*: gleichgültig, desinteressiert). | 17f. **venerable:** ehrwürdig. | 19 **complacently** (adv.): selbstgefällig. | 21 **hospitality:** Gastfreundschaft, Gastlichkeit. | 23 **luncheon** (form.): Mittagessen. | **meadow:** Wiese.

sit by the river? Certainly it was a lovely autumn morning;
 the leaves were fluttering red to the ground; there was no
 great hardship in doing either. But the sound of music
 reached my ear. Some service or celebration was going for-
 5 ward. The organ complained magnificently as I passed the
 chapel door. Even the sorrow of Christianity sounded in
 that serene air more like the recollection of sorrow than
 sorrow itself; even the groanings of the ancient organ
 seemed lapped in peace. I had no wish to enter had I the
 10 right, and this time the verger might have stopped me, de-
 manding perhaps my baptismal certificate, or a letter of in-
 troduction from the Dean. But the outside of these magnif-
 icent buildings is often as beautiful as the inside. Moreover,
 it was amusing enough to watch the congregation assem-
 15 bling, coming in and going out again, busying themselves
 at the door of the Chapel like bees at the mouth of a hive.
 Many were in cap and gown; some had tufts of fur on their
 shoulders; others were wheeled in bath-chairs; others,
 though not past middle age, seemed creased and crushed
 20 into shapes so singular that one was reminded of those gi-
 ant crabs and crayfish who heave with difficulty across the
 sand of an aquarium. As I leant against the wall the Univer-
 sity indeed seemed a sanctuary in which are preserved rare

5 **magnificently** (adv.): prächtig. | 6 **sorrow**: Leid, Kummer. | 7 **serene**
 (adj.): klar, ruhig. | 8 **groaning**: Ächzen, Stöhnen. | 9 **to lap**: einwickeln,
 einhüllen. | 10 **verger**: Kirchendiener(in), Küster(in). | 11 **baptismal cer-**
tificate: Taufschein. | 12 **Dean**: Dekan(in). | 14 **congregation**: Kirchen-
 gemeinde. | 14 f. **to assemble**: sich versammeln/treffen. | 16 **hive**:
 Bienenstock. | 17 **cap**: hier: Doktorhut. | **tuft**: Büschel. | 18 **bath-chair**
 (arch.): Rollstuhl. | 19 **creased**: knittig, gefaltet. | 21 **crayfish**: Languste. |
to heave: hieven, stemmen; hier: sich schleppen. | 23 **sanctuary**: Zu-
 fluchtsort, Refugium.

types which would soon be obsolete if left to fight for existence on the pavement of the Strand. Old stories of old deans and old dons came back to mind, but before I had summoned up courage to whistle – it used to be said that at the sound of a whistle old Professor – instantly broke into a gallop – the venerable congregation had gone inside. The outside of the chapel remained. As you know, its high domes and pinnacles can be seen, like a sailing-ship always voyaging never arriving, lit up at night and visible for miles, far away across the hills. Once, presumably, this quadrangle with its smooth lawns, its massive buildings and the chapel itself was marsh too, where the grasses waved and the swine rootled. Teams of horses and oxen, I thought, must have hauled the stone in wagons from far countries, and then with infinite labour the grey blocks in whose shade I was now standing were poised in order one on top of another. and then the painters brought their glass for the windows, and the masons were busy for centuries up on that roof with putty and cement, spade and trowel. Every Saturday somebody must have poured gold and silver out of a leathern purse into their ancient fists, for they had their beer and skittles presumably of an evening. An unending stream of gold and silver, I thought, must have flowed into

1 **obsolete** (adj.): veraltet, überholt. | 2 **Strand**: geschäftige Straße in London. | 3 **don**: Professor(in), besonders in Oxford oder Cambridge. | 3 f. **to summon up courage to s.th.**: den Mut aufbringen/zusammennehmen etwas zu tun (*to summon*: herbeirufen). | 8 **dome**: Kuppel. | **pin-nacle**: Spitze, Zinne. | 10 **presumably** (adv.): mutmaßlich, wahrscheinlich. | 12 **marsh**: Sumpf, Moor. | 13 **to rootle**: wühlen. | 16 **to poise**: balancieren, verharren. | 18 **mason**: Maurer(in), Steinmetz(in). | 19 **putty**: Spachtelmasse. | **trowel**: Maurerkelle. | 22 **skittles** (BE; pl.): Kegelspiel.

this court perpetually to keep the stones coming and the masons working; to level, to ditch, to dig and to drain. But it was then the age of faith, and money was poured liberally to set these stones on a deep foundation, and when the
 5 stones were raised, still more money was poured in from the coffers of kings and queens and great nobles to ensure that hymns should be sung here and scholars taught. Lands were granted; tithes were paid. And when the age of faith was over and the age of reason had come, still the same flow
 10 of gold and silver went on; fellowships were founded; lectureships endowed; only the gold and silver flowed now, not from the coffers of the king, but from the chests of merchants and manufacturers, from the purses of men who had made, say, a fortune from industry, and returned, in
 15 their wills, a bounteous share of it to endow more chairs, more lectureships, more fellowships in the university where they had learnt their craft. Hence the libraries and laboratories; the observatories; the splendid equipment of costly and delicate instruments which now stands on glass
 20 shelves, where centuries ago the grasses waved and the swine rootled. Certainly, as I strolled round the court, the foundation of gold and silver seemed deep enough; the

2 **to ditch**: ausheben. | **to drain**: entwässern. | 6 **coffer**: Truhe; hier (fig.): Kasse. | **noble** (n.): Adlige(r) (*noble*: adlig). | **to ensure**: sicherstellen, gewährleisten. | 8 **tithes** (pl.): Zehntabgaben. | 9 **age of reason**: Zeitalter der Aufklärung. | 10 **fellowship**: (gelehrte) Vereinigung; Stipendium. | 10 f. **lectureship**: Dozentenstelle. | 11 **to endow s.th.**: etwas subventionieren/stiften/finanzieren. | 15 **bounteous** (arch.): großzügig, reichlich. | **chair**: hier: Lehrstuhl. | 17 **craft** (n.): Handwerk, Fertigkeit. | **hence** (adv.): daher, deshalb. | 18 **observatory**: Sternwarte. | **splendid** (adj.): prachtvoll, stattlich. | 19 **delicate** (adj.): fein, empfindlich.

pavement laid solidly over the wild grasses. Men with trays on their heads went busily from staircase to staircase. Gaudy blossoms flowered in window-boxes. The strains of the gramophone blared out from the rooms within. It was impossible not to reflect – the reflection whatever it may have been was cut short. The clock struck. It was time to find one's way to luncheon. 5

It is a curious fact that novelists have a way of making us believe that luncheon parties are invariably memorable for something very witty that was said, or for something very wise that was done. But they seldom spare a word for what was eaten. It is part of the novelist's convention not to mention soup and salmon and ducklings, as if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever, as if nobody ever smoked a cigar or drank a glass of wine. Here, however, I shall take the liberty to defy that convention and to tell you that the lunch on this occasion began with soles, sunk in a deep dish, over which the college cook had spread a counterpane of the whitest cream, save that it was branded here and there with brown spots like the spots on the flanks of a doe. After that came the partridges, but if this suggests a couple of bald, brown birds on a plate you are mistaken. The 10 15 20

3 **gaudy** (coll.): knallbunt, protzig. | **window-box**: Blumenkasten (vor einem Fenster). | **strains** (pl.): hier: Klänge. | 4 **to blare out**: hinaus-schmettern, hinausposaunen. | 6 **to cut s.th./s.o. short**: etwas/jdn. unterbrechen. | 9 **invariably** (adv.): ausnahmslos, stets. | **memorable**: unvergesslich, denkwürdig. | 11 **to spare s.th.**: etwas erübrigen/ übrig haben. | 13 **duckling**: junge Ente. | 16 **to defy s.th./s.o.**: etwas/jdm. trotzen, sich über etwas/jdn. hinwegsetzen. | 17 **sole**: Seezunge. | 19 **counterpane** (arch.): (Bett-)Decke. | **save that**: nur dass, außer dass. | **branded**: hier: gesprenkelt. | 20 **flank**: Flanke. | 21 **doe**: Reh. | **partridge**: Rebhuhn.

partridges, many and various, came with all their retinue of sauces and salads, the sharp and the sweet, each in its order; their potatoes, thin as coins but not so hard; their sprouts, foliated as rosebuds but more succulent. And no sooner had
 5 the roast and its retinue been done with than the silent serving-man, the Beadle himself perhaps in a milder manifestation, set before us, wreathed in napkins, a confection which rose all sugar from the waves. To call it pudding and so relate it to rice and tapioca would be an insult. Meanwhile the
 10 wineglasses had flushed yellow and flushed crimson; had been emptied; had been filled. And thus by degrees was lit, half-way down the spine, which is the seat of the soul, not that hard little electric light which we call brilliance, as it pops in and out upon our lips, but the more profound, sub-
 15 tle and subterranean glow which is the rich yellow flame of rational intercourse. No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself. We are all going to heaven and Vandyck is of the company – in other words, how good life seemed, how sweet its rewards, how trivial

1 **retinue**: Gefolge, Begleiter. | 3 **sprouts** (pl.): Rosenkohl, Kurzform von *Brussels sprouts*. | 4 **foliated**: beblättert. | **rosebud**: Rosenknospe. | **succulent** (adj.): saftig, wohlschmeckend. | 6 f. **manifestation**: Erscheinungsform. | 7 **wreathed**: umkränzt (*wreath*: Kranz). | **confection**: Süßspeise, Konfekt. | 9 **tapioca**: Tapioka, Stärke aus der Maniokwurzel. | 12 **spine**: Wirbelsäule. | 14 **profound** (adj.): tiefgründig (*profundity*: Tiefgründigkeit). | 14 f. **subtle** (adj.): fein, raffiniert (*subtlety*: Feinheit). | 15 **subterranean** (adj.): unterschwellig, unterirdisch. | 16 **intercourse**: Verkehr, Umgang. | **to sparkle**: glänzen, funkeln. | 18 **Vandyck**: Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641): flämischer Maler, bekannt für seine Porträts von Charles I. von England. *Vandyck is of the company* waren angeblich die letzten Worte des Malers Thomas Gainsborough (1727–88).

this grudge or that grievance, how admirable friendship and the society of one's kind, as, lighting a good cigarette, one sunk among the cushions in the window-seat.

If by good luck there had been an ash-tray handy, if one had not knocked the ash out of the window in default, if things had been a little different from what they were, one would not have seen, presumably, a cat without a tail. The sight of that abrupt and truncated animal padding softly across the quadrangle changed by some fluke of the subconscious intelligence the emotional light for me. It was as if someone had let fall a shade. Perhaps the excellent hock was relinquishing its hold. Certainly, as I watched the Manx cat pause in the middle of the lawn as if it too questioned the universe, something seemed lacking, something seemed different. But what was lacking, what was different, I asked myself, listening to the talk? And to answer that question I had to think myself out of the room, back into the past, before the war indeed, and to set before my eyes the model of another luncheon party held in rooms not very far distant from these; but different. Everything was different. Meanwhile the talk went on among the guests, who were many and young, some of this sex, some of that; it went on swimmingly, it went on agreeably, freely,

1 **grudge**: Groll, Missgunst. | **grievance**: Kummer, Beschwerde (*grieved*: bekümmert). | **admirable**: bewundernswert. | 5 **in default (of)**: mangels. | 8 **truncated**: gestutzt. | **to pad**: tapfen, stapfen. | 9 **fluke**: Glücksfall, Zufall. | 9 f. **subconscious**: unterbewusst (*subconsciousness*: Unterbewusstsein). | 11 **hock**: weißer Rheinwein. | 12 **to relinquish**: loslassen, lockern. | **Manx cat**: Manx-Katze, Katzenrasse ohne Schwanz. | 23 **swimmingly** (adv.; coll.): problemlos, wie geschmiert. | **agreeably** (adv.): angenehm.

amusingly. And as it went on I set it against the background of that other talk, and as I matched the two together I had no doubt that one was the descendant, the legitimate heir of the other. Nothing was changed; nothing was different
5 save only – here I listened with all my ears not entirely to what was being said, but to the murmur or current behind it. Yes, that was it – the change was there. Before the war at a luncheon party like this people would have said precisely the same things but they would have sounded different,
10 because in those days they were accompanied by a sort of humming noise, not articulate, but musical, exciting, which changed the value of the words themselves. Could one set that humming noise to words? Perhaps with the help of the poets one could.. A book lay beside me and,
15 opening it, I turned casually enough to Tennyson. And here I found Tennyson was singing:

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
20 She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, “She is near, she is near”;
And the white rose weeps, “She is late”;
The larkspur listens, “I hear, I hear”;
And the lily whispers, “I wait.”

3 **descendant**: Nachkomme. | **heir/heirress**: Erbe/-in. | 6 **murmur**: Gemurmél, Raunen (*to murmur*: murmeln, raunen). | **current**: Strom; hier: Rauschen. | 11 **humming (noise)**: Gesumme. | **articulate** (adj.): deutlich, artikuliert. | 15 **casually** (adv.): zufällig, beiläufig. | **Tennyson**: Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809–92): britischer Dichter. | 17 **splendid** (adj.): hier: glänzend. | 19 **dove**: Taube. | 23 **larkspur** (bot.): Rittersporn. | 24 **lily** (bot.): Lilie.

Was that what men hummed at luncheon parties before the war? And the women?

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

5

10

Was that what women hummed at luncheon parties before the war?

There was something so ludicrous in thinking of people humming such things even under their breath at luncheon parties before the war that I burst out laughing, and had to explain my laughter by pointing at the Manx cat, who did look a little absurd, poor beast, without a tail, in the middle of the lawn. Was he really born so, or had he lost his tail in an accident? The tailless cat, though some are said to exist in the Isle of Man, is rarer than one thinks. It is a queer animal, quaint rather than beautiful. It is strange what a difference a tail makes – you know the sort of things one says as a lunch party breaks up and people are finding their coats and hats.

15

20

4 **shoot** (bot.): Spross, Trieb. | 6 **bough** (bot.): Ast, Zweig. | **thick-set** (adj.): dichtgedrängt. | 8 **halcyon** (lit.): friedvoll. | 13 **ludicrous**: lächerlich, aberwitzig. | 20 **Isle of Man**: Insel in der Irischen See. | **queer** (adj.; arch.): seltsam, eigenartig. | 21 **quaint** (adj.): kurios.

This one, thanks to the hospitality of the host, had lasted far into the afternoon. The beautiful October day was fading and the leaves were falling from the trees in the avenue as I walked through it. Gate after gate seemed to close with
5 gentle finality behind me. Innumerable beadles were fitting innumerable keys into well-oiled locks; the treasure-house was being made secure for another night. After the avenue one comes out upon a road – I forget its name – which leads you, if you take the right turning, along to Fernham. But
10 there was plenty of time. Dinner was not till half-past seven. One could almost do without dinner after such a luncheon. It is strange how a scrap of poetry works in the mind and makes the legs move in time to it along the road. Those words –

15 There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear –

sang in my blood as I stepped quickly along towards Headingley. And then, switching off into the other measure, I
20 sang, where the waters are churned up by the weir:

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree ...

2 f. **to fade**: schwinden, verblassen. | 5 **innumerable**: unzählig. |
12 **scrap**: Fragment, Bruchstück. | 18 f. **Headingley**: fiktives Dorf, das sich zusammensetzt aus Headington in der Nähe von Oxford und Madingley in der Nähe von Cambridge. | 19 **measure**: hier: Rhythmus, Takt. |
20 **churned up** (adj.): aufgewühlt. | **weir**: Wehr, Stauanlage.

What poets, I cried aloud, as one does in the dusk, what poets they were!

In a sort of jealousy, I suppose, for our own age, silly and absurd though these comparisons are, I went on to wonder if honestly one could name two living poets now as great as Tennyson and Christina Rossetti were then. Obviously it is impossible, I thought, looking into those foaming waters, to compare them. The very reason why that poetry excites one to such abandonment, such rapture, is that it celebrates some feeling that one used to have (at luncheon parties before the war perhaps), so that one responds easily, familiarly, without troubling to check the feeling, or to compare it with any that one has now. But the living poets express a feeling that is actually being made and torn out of us at the moment. One does not recognise it in the first place; often for some reason one fears it; one watches it with keenness and compares it jealously and suspiciously with the old feeling that one knew. Hence the difficulty of modern poetry; and it is because of this difficulty that one cannot remember more than two consecutive lines of any good modern poet. For this reason – that my memory failed me – the argument flagged for want of material. But why, I continued, moving on towards Headingley, have we stopped humming under our breath at luncheon parties? Why has Alfred ceased to sing

6 **Rossetti**: Christina Rossetti (1830–94): britische Dichterin. | 7 **foaming**: schäumend. | 9 **abandonment**: hier: Hingabe, Unbekümmertheit. | **rapture**: Verzückung. | 20 **consecutive** (adj.): aufeinanderfolgend. | 22 **to flag**: hier: erlahmen, nachlassen. | **for want of**: in Ermangelung von. | 24 **under one's breath** (fig.): ganz leise. | 25 **to cease s.th.**: etwas einstellen, mit etwas aufhören.

She is coming, my dove, my dear.

Why has Christina ceased to respond

My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me?

- 5 Shall we lay the blame on the war? When the guns fired in August 1914, did the faces of men and women show so plain in each other's eyes that romance was killed? Certainly it was a shock (to women in particular with their illusions about education, and so on) to see the faces of our rulers in the light of the shell-fire. So ugly they looked – German, English, French – so stupid. But lay the blame where one will, on whom one will, the illusion which inspired Tennyson and Christina Rossetti to sing so passionately about the coming of their loves is far rarer now than then.
- 15 One has only to read, to look, to listen, to remember. But why say “blame”? Why, if it was an illusion, not praise the catastrophe, whatever it was, that destroyed illusion and put truth in its place? For truth ... those dots mark the spot where, in search of truth, I missed the turning up to Fern-
- 20 ham. Yes indeed, which was truth and which was illusion? I asked myself. What was the truth about these houses, for example, dim and festive now with their red windows in the dusk, but raw and red and squalid, with their sweets and their bootlaces, at nine o'clock in the morning? And

10 **shell-fire**: Granatfeuer, Bombardierung. | 22 **dim** (adj.): halbdunkel, schummrig. | **festive** (adj.): festlich. | 23 **squalid** (adj.): ärmlich, verwahrlost.

the willows and the river and the gardens that run down to the river, vague now with the mist stealing over them, but gold and red in the sunlight – which was the truth, which was the illusion about them? I spare you the twists and turns of my cogitations, for no conclusion was found on the road to Headingley, and I ask you to suppose that I soon found out my mistake about the turning and retraced my steps to Fernham. 5

As I have said already that it was an October day, I dare not forfeit your respect and imperil the fair name of fiction by changing the season and describing lilacs hanging over garden walls, crocuses, tulips and other flowers of spring. Fiction must stick to facts, and the truer the facts the better the fiction – so we are told. Therefore it was still autumn and the leaves were still yellow and falling, if anything, a little faster than before, because it was now evening (seven twenty-three to be precise) and a breeze (from the south-west to be exact) had risen. But for all that there was something odd at work: 10 15

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit – 20

2 **mist**: Nebel, Dunst. | 4 f. **twists and turns** (fig.): Drehungen und Wendungen. | 5 **cogitation**: Überlegung. | 7 **to retrace s.th.**: etwas zurückverfolgen. | 10 **to forfeit s.th.**: etwas verlieren, einbüßen. | **to imperil s.o./s.th.**: jdn./etwas gefährden. | 11 **lilac** (bot.): Flieder. | 12 **crocus** (bot.): Krokus. | **tulip** (bot.): Tulpe.

perhaps the words of Christina Rossetti were partly responsible for the folly of the fancy – it was nothing of course but a fancy – that the lilac was shaking its flowers over the garden walls, and the brimstone butterflies were
 5 scudding hither and thither, and the dust of the pollen was in the air. A wind blew, from what quarter I know not, but it lifted the half-grown leaves so that there was a flash of silver grey in the air. It was the time between the lights when colours undergo their intensification and purples and golds
 10 burn in window-panes like the beat of an excitable heart; when for some reason the beauty of the world revealed and yet soon to perish (here I pushed into the garden, for, unwisely, the door was left open and no beadles seemed about), the beauty of the world which is so soon to perish,
 15 has two edges, one of laughter, one of anguish, cutting the heart asunder. The gardens of Fernham lay before me in the spring twilight, wild and open, and in the long grass, sprinkled and carelessly flung, were daffodils and bluebells, not orderly perhaps at the best of times, and now wind-blown
 20 and waving as they tugged at their roots. The windows of the building, curved like ships' windows among generous waves of red brick, changed from lemon to silver under the

2 **folly**: Torheit, Unsinn. | **fancy** (n.): Phantasie, Hirngespinnst. | 4 **brimstone butterfly**: Zitronenfalter. | 5 **to scud**: eilen. | **pollen** (bot.): Blütenstaub, Pollen. | 6 **quarter**: hier: (Himmels-)Richtung. | 9 **intensification**: Verstärkung, Steigerung. | 10 **excitable**: erregbar, reizbar. | 12 **to perish**: sterben. | 15 **anguish**: Qual, Leid. | 16 **asunder** (lit.): auseinander. | 17 **twilight**: Dämmerung, Zwielflicht. | 17 f. **sprinkled**: berieselt; hier: verstreut. | 18 **flung** (adj.): geschleudert, geworfen; hier: gesetzt (Pflanze). | **daffodil** (bot.): Narzisse. | **bluebell** (bot.): Hasenglöckchen. | 19 **wind-blown** (adj.): windzerzaust.