

*(An evening party in London. Among the guests is Par-  
giter; he has just come back from Africa.)*

He was an outsider, he felt again, as he glanced round the room. All these people knew each other. They called each other—he stood on the outskirts of a little group of young men and women—by their Christian names, by their nicknames. Each was already part of a little group, he felt as he listened, keeping on the outskirts. He wanted to hear what they were saying; but not to be drawn in himself. He listened. They were arguing.—Politics and money, he said to himself; money and politics. But he could not understand the argument which was already heated. Never have I felt so lonely, he thought. The old platitude about solitude in a crowd was true; for hills and trees accept one; human beings reject one...

It was like hearing small boys at a private school, hearing these young men talk politics. "I'm right... you're wrong." At their age, he thought, he had been in the trenches; he had seen men killed. But was that a good education? He shifted from one foot to another. At their age, he thought, he had been alone on a farm sixty miles from a white man, in control of a herd of sheep. But was that a good education?...

**Virginia Woolf**