



**HAL**  
open science

“ The Risk of Intimacy in Night and Day: Fancy,  
Couples and the Heteronormative Norms. ”

Nicolas Pierre Boileau

► To cite this version:

Nicolas Pierre Boileau. “ The Risk of Intimacy in Night and Day: Fancy, Couples and the Heteronormative Norms. ”. “ Woolf: For a Poetics and a Politics of Intimacy”, May 2023, Saint-Etienne, France, France. hal-04425467

**HAL Id: hal-04425467**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04425467>**

Submitted on 30 Jan 2024

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Public Domain



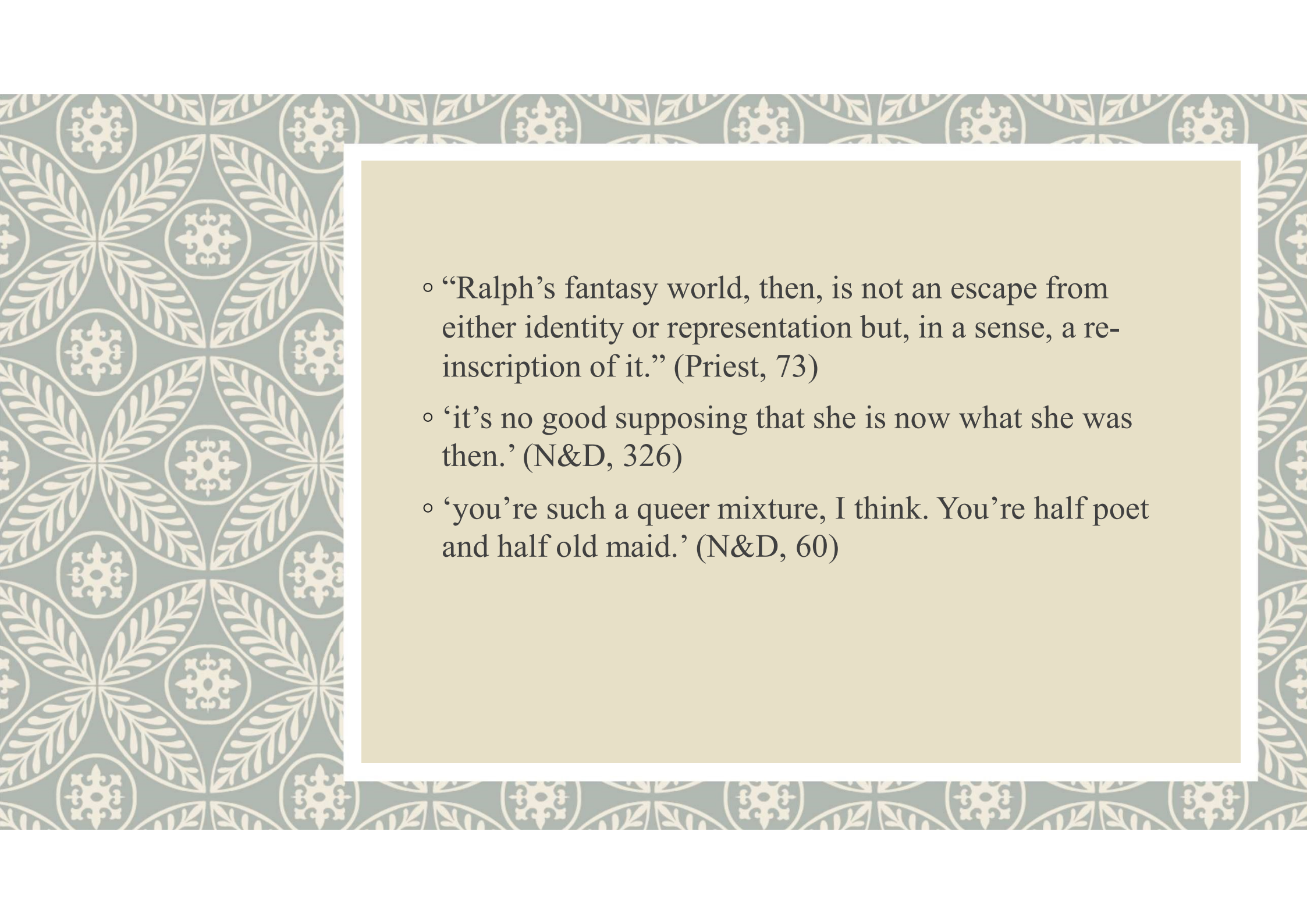
**THE RISK OF INTIMACY IN *NIGHT AND DAY*: FANCY, COUPLES  
AND THE HETERONORMATIVE NORMS.**

Nicolas Pierre Boileau – LERMA, Aix-Marseille Université, Aix-en-Provence  
[nicolas.boileau@univ-amu.fr](mailto:nicolas.boileau@univ-amu.fr)

# Introduction

- ‘She could fancy Ralph suddenly sacrificing his entire career for some fantastic imagination; some cause or idea or even (so her fancy ran) for some woman seen from a railway train hanging up clothes in a back yard.’ (N&D, 115)
- ‘But there is literally no way for her to articulate this desire [to throw off the models of identity open to her]: it cannot be described, represented in words, without being appropriated by the conventional models of identity which language itself underwrites. So she takes refuge in words that are merely placeholders for something entirely other — words like nothingness and emptiness.’ (Priest, 66)



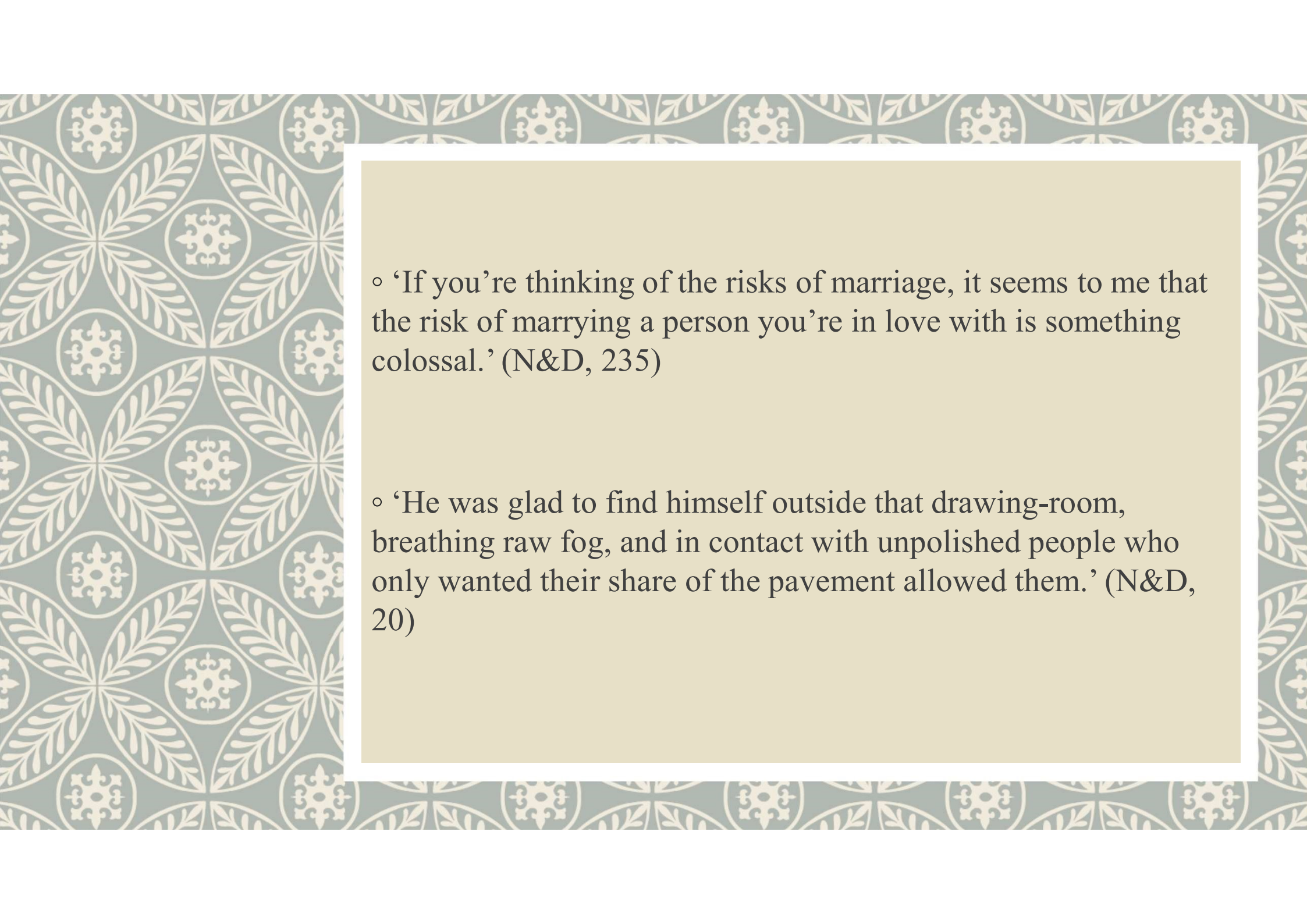
- 
- “Ralph’s fantasy world, then, is not an escape from either identity or representation but, in a sense, a re-inscription of it.” (Priest, 73)
  - ‘it’s no good supposing that she is now what she was then.’ (N&D, 326)
  - ‘you’re such a queer mixture, I think. You’re half poet and half old maid.’ (N&D, 60)

# I. “[Women] have no sense of romance” (N&D, 121): The Marriage Plot

- ‘She did not want to marry at all. It seemed to her that there was something amateurish in bringing love into touch with a perfectly straightforward friendship, such as hers was with Ralph, which, for two years now, had based itself upon common interests in impersonal topics, such as the housing of the poor, or the taxation of land values.’ (N&D, 75)
- ‘Though she has to undergo a private and difficult struggle in order to understand her feelings, the struggle takes her towards a mutual experience.’ (Lee, 63)

# I. “[Women] have no sense of romance” (N&D, 121): The Marriage Plot

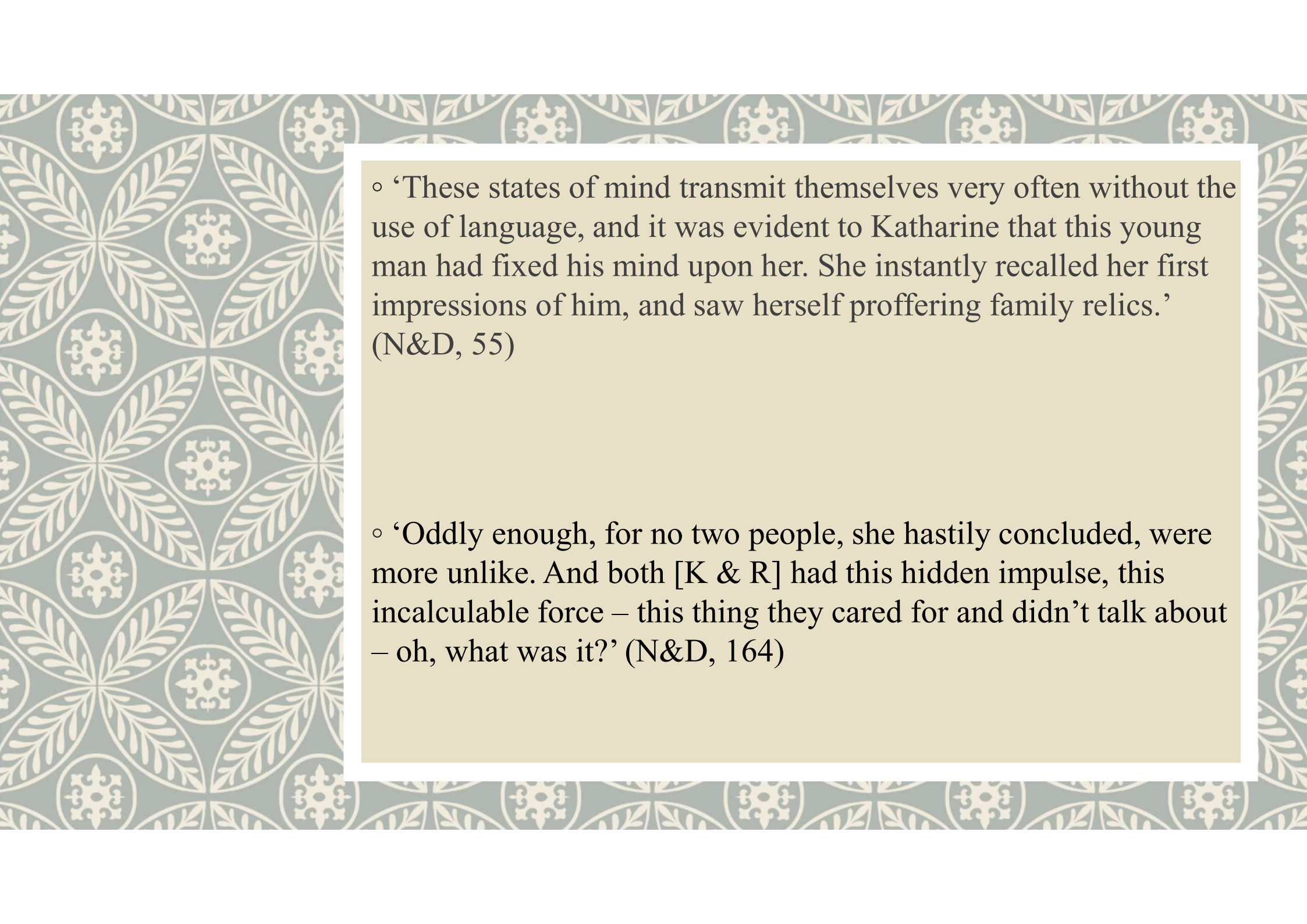
- People like Ralph and Mary, she thought, had it all their own way, and an empty space before them, and, as she envied them, she cast her mind out to imagine an empty land where all this pretty intercourse of men and women, this life made of the dense crossings and entanglements of men and women, had no existence whatsoever.... She wished that no one in the whole world would think of her. However, there was no way of escaping from one’s fellow-beings, she concluded, and shut the window with a sigh, and returned once more to her letters. (N&D, 97)



- ‘If you’re thinking of the risks of marriage, it seems to me that the risk of marrying a person you’re in love with is something colossal.’ (N&D, 235)

- ‘He was glad to find himself outside that drawing-room, breathing raw fog, and in contact with unpolished people who only wanted their share of the pavement allowed them.’ (N&D, 20)





◦ ‘These states of mind transmit themselves very often without the use of language, and it was evident to Katharine that this young man had fixed his mind upon her. She instantly recalled her first impressions of him, and saw herself proffering family relics.’ (N&D, 55)

◦ ‘Oddly enough, for no two people, she hastily concluded, were more unlike. And both [K & R] had this hidden impulse, this incalculable force – this thing they cared for and didn’t talk about – oh, what was it?’ (N&D, 164)

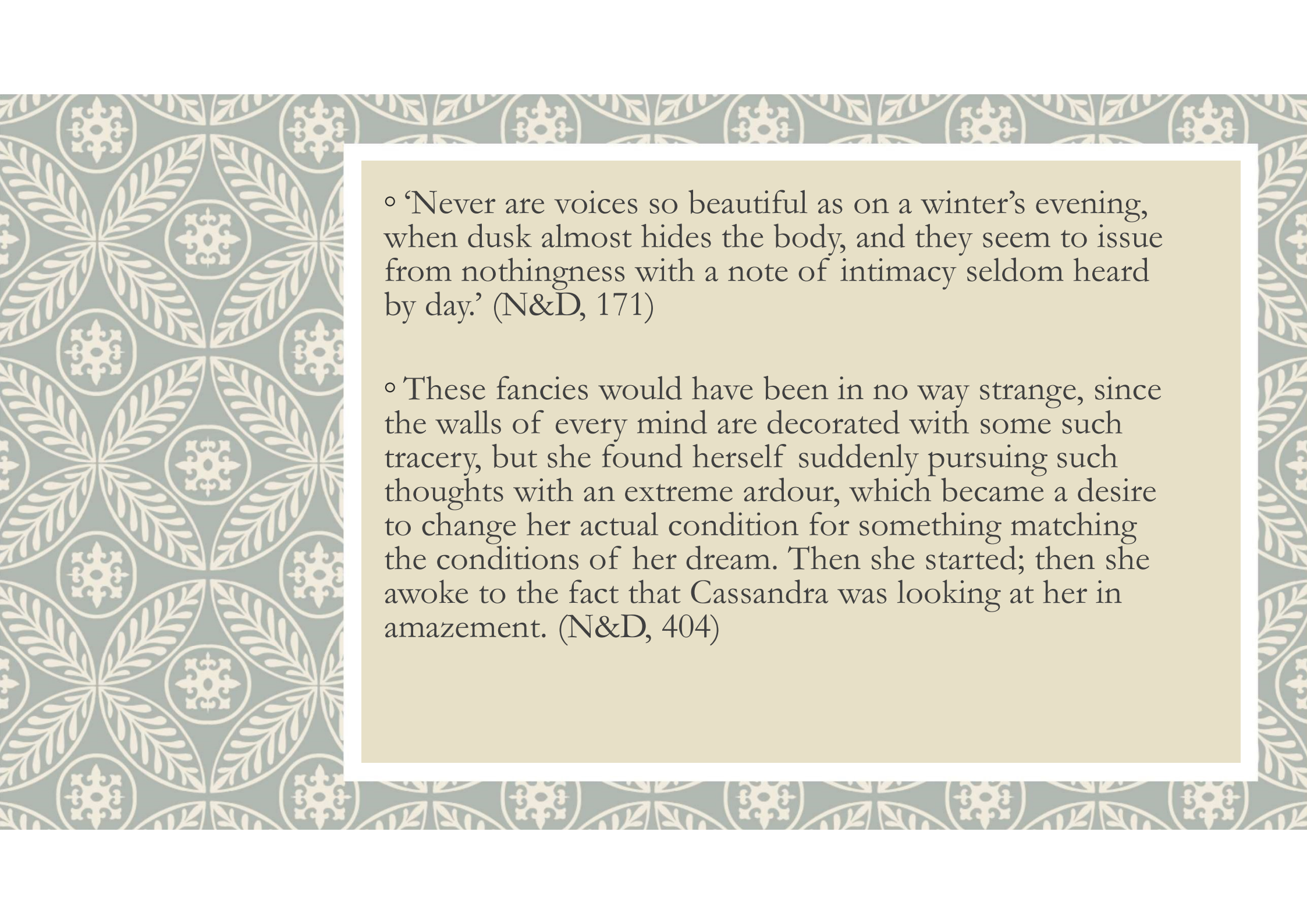


## **II. ‘One filament of his mind upon them’ (N&D 58): Discreet Bonds**

- ‘So saying, Katharine drew back the curtain in order, perhaps, to conceal the momentary flush of pleasure which is caused by coming perceptibly nearer to another person.’ (N&D, 54)
- His most daring liberty was taken with her mind, which, for reasons of his own, he desired to be exalted and infallible, and of such independence that it was only in the case of Ralph Denham that it swerved from its high, swift flight, but where he was concerned, though fastidious at first, she finally swooped from her eminence to crown him with her approval. (N&D, 21)

## II. ‘One filament of his mind upon them’ (N&D 58): Discreet Bonds

- ‘How far she saw Denham, and how far she confused him with some hero of fiction, it would be hard to say.’ (N&D, 141)
- ‘Often she had seemed to herself to be moving among them, an invisible ghost among the living, better acquainted with them than with her own friends, because she knew their secrets and possessed a divine foreknowledge of their destiny.’ (ND, 104)



◦ ‘Never are voices so beautiful as on a winter’s evening, when dusk almost hides the body, and they seem to issue from nothingness with a note of intimacy seldom heard by day.’ (N&D, 171)

◦ These fancies would have been in no way strange, since the walls of every mind are decorated with some such tracery, but she found herself suddenly pursuing such thoughts with an extreme ardour, which became a desire to change her actual condition for something matching the conditions of her dream. Then she started; then she awoke to the fact that Cassandra was looking at her in amazement. (N&D, 404)



### **III. Towards a Politics of Intimacy**

- ‘Thus, changing from the stagnant to the fluid, from the rigid to the flexible, the Hilbery house, and consequently, the fictional world in its entirety, is re-created from an old-fashioned space to a modern, liberating space’. (Okumura, 15)
- ‘I doubt that one human being ever understands another.’ (N&D, 235)

- ‘The conviction that he was thus strange to her filled her with despondency, and illustrated quite beyond doubt the infinite loneliness of human beings. (N&D, 263-4)
- ‘To say of intimacy that it is a ‘political concept’ means two things: 1) the possibility of being intimate with someone depends on political conditions... 2) intimacy is the source of a protest..., a critical reserve which enables someone to challenge the deficiencies of the established order.’ (Joseph, 31)
- ‘The determination that when he spoke he should speak worthily, made him put off the moment of speaking till he had found the exact words and even the place that best suited him. The Strand was too busy. There was too much risk, also, of finding an empty cab. (N&D, 274)

- ‘I’m convinced,’ he said, ‘that there are cases in which perfect sincerity is possible – cases where there’s no relationship, though the people live together, if you like, where each is free, where there’s no obligation upon either side.’ (N&D, 313)
- Spiritually there was certainly no human being with whom she could claim comradeship; no dream that satisfied her as she was used to be satisfied; nothing remained in whose reality she could believe, save those abstract ideas – figures, laws, stars, facts, which she could hardly hold to for lack of knowledge and a kind of shame. (264)
- ‘In an ideal state of things, in a decent community even, there’s no doubt you shouldn’t have anything to do with me – seriously, that is. / You forget that I’m not an ideal character either,’ said Mary.’ (N&D, 213)