

Peter Sparks

A Room of Her Own

- 1860 My home, my space,
 except for nanny and the maids,
 my needlework,
 the duty to be paying calls,
 attending prayer
 and, dressed for dinner,
 waiting for the gong
 and one day to be asked.
- 1873 My own—a set of two—
 shared only with my Euclid
 and Thucydides.
 My visitors all knock.
 We share hot chocolate,
 play tennis on the lawn,
 talk of equality and love,
 the fight to win our rights.
- 1928 We have the vote,
 a royal charter too,
 no need to hide behind anon
 or to reflect a man
 at twice his natural size.
 This is my space for scholarship
 to read and pen and thrive,
 even without degree.
- 1947 My maths proves useful:
 I can assess my scanty nuts of coke,
 apportion rationed quires and dilute ink.
 The snow has reached the window ledge.
 No promise of a BA gown
 can keep me warm,
 but I shall not despair
 now men can come to tea.

2013

An eco-room.
A modern phoenix
risen from old coal-grate ash
so I can shift my gaze
from keys to coots
while trying to turn a phrase
or check a reference on-line.
This is the en-suite life.

2020

I thought I'd fledged,
abandoned the embarrassment of home,
but now I'm back
to teddy and a baby brother's cry.
The virus makes me look
for virtue in the virtual
but supervision faces
seem too near—and yet too far.