

Mothering the Art - Virginia Woolf's Literary Love Relationship with Vita Sackville-West-

作家となるために

- ヴァージニア・ウルフのヴィタ・サクヴィル-ウエストとの文学的恋愛関係 -

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作家ヴァージニア・ウルフのヴィタ・サクヴィル-ウエストとの関係は、ウルフの文学への探求によって始まり深められた。彼女たちの関係は 1920 年代初期から 1941 年のウルフの死まで続く。ウルフは、作家としての自身の母親的な保護者としてサクヴィル-ウエストを求め、成長を遂げる。作家であることが人生そのものであったウルフにとって、サクヴィル-ウエストとの恋愛関係もまた、彼女の文学そのものであったのであろう。

I. Introduction

Virginia Woolf's relationship with Vita Sackville-West was developed by her quest for literature. Their friendship started in the early 1920's and lasted until Woolf's death in 1941. Since the beginning of their friendship, Woolf had produced more literary works than ever and eventually became a renowned writer. By her nature as a writer, Woolf invited Sackville-West into her literary world and used the relationship to enrich her own works. Their relationship, in part, seemed to be a scandalous love affair between two female writers; however, Woolf needed Sackville-West as a mother to nurture her literary talent, and Sackville-West's love for Woolf's literary nature enabled her to grow into a mature writer.

II. Sackville-West as a Literary Mother

Virginia Woolf sought a mother figure and in terms of critiquing Woolf's novels, Sackville-West seemed to take over Woolf's own mother's role. During the period of their intimate relationship, Woolf asked Sackville-West for her appraisal of every new novel and had expressed relief at Sackville-West's letter informing how she valued it. This evokes Woolf's childhood concern about her mother's reaction to her writing. When she was nine years old, Woolf, along with her siblings, started to write for the weekly family paper, *Hyde Park Gate News*, and eagerly sought her mother's approval. Woolf's writing career is primarily motivated by a desire to satisfy the mother, and Sackville-West takes over her role, which accounts for Woolf's sensitiveness to Sackville-West's reception of her novels. Thus, Woolf seeks to satisfy her substitute mother for whom she writes, and aspires for Sackville-West's love and appreciation.

III. Re-Production as *Orlando* (1928)

It is known that many of Woolf's novels are biographical, and Woolf's life itself formed her literature. The novel *Orlando* is a product of the years of Woolf's relationship with Sackville-West. During that time, Sackville-West was a part of Woolf's daily life and subsequently became a part of

her literature. *Orlando* is a “biography” of Vita Sackville-West and known as the “longest and most charming love-letter in literature” (Nicolson, *Portrait* 202). During Woolf’s writing of *Orlando*, she “could think of nothing now but *Orlando*,” and its completion occurred almost simultaneously with the end of the most intimate period of their relationship (Glendinning 182). As she always did, Woolf recreated her life with Sackville-West in her novel. It was her nature as a writer.

IV. Literary Love Relationship

Woolf’s love for Sackville-West was stirred by her desire for writing. Since she was a child, Woolf had been longing to become a writer, and her life has been filled with a desire for literature. Her relationship with Sackville-West was maintained in this context.

Sackville-West was already a significant literary figure when Woolf met her for the first time. Woolf and her husband, Leonard, arranged a meeting on December 14, 1922 to ask her to write a book for the Hogarth Press. Woolf and Sackville-West’s first private meeting occurred late in March of 1923. After that, their relationship continued—driven by Woolf’s sense of need and Sackville-West’s admiration of Woolf’s writing accomplishments over 19 years.

Woolf’s desire for writing and Sackville-West’s respect for it develop their love and passion for each other. Despite her being known as a reckless lesbian having close friendships with several women, Sackville-West was attracted by Woolf’s nature as a writer. She wrote to her husband about her feelings for Virginia: “... her friendship does enrich me so, and she is so completely un-silly. I absolutely long for you to know her better. I don’t think I have ever loved anybody so much, in the way of friendship; in fact, of course I haven’t” (Nicolson, *Vita and Harold* 175). Sackville-West was overwhelmed and influenced by Virginia’s art and intellectuality. Woolf’s literature was the heart of their relationship, and writing was a form of love to them both.

V. Conclusion

Virginia Woolf was a natural, talented writer and art was an integrated part of her life. Her desire for Sackville-West as her literary guardian, and their love relationship existed within Woolf’s literature. Woolf wrote *Orlando* as an outpouring of love for Sackville-West. After she finished *Orlando* in March of 1928, Woolf wrote to Sackville-West: “The question now is, will my feeling for you be changed? I’ve lived in you all these months—coming out, what are you really like? Do you exist? Have I made you up?” (Woolf 474). To Woolf, Sackville-West is a part of her literature, and writing is the only way to return her love.

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