A Story of the 'Improper' Man in *Jacob's Room*

「ふさわしくない」男の物語としての『ジェイコブの部屋』

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ヴァージニア・ウルフは、家族や伝統といったそれ以前の小説の主題を用いずに『ジェイコブの部屋』（1922）を完成させた。この小説における若い主人公ジェイコブは、彼に想いを寄せる家庭の天使的な女性との関係を成就させず、売春婦や既婚女性といった「ふさわしくない」女性との関係を続け、自身の家庭を得ることなく戦争で死んでしまう。「ふさわしい」男への成長を拒絶するジェイコブ像に、ウルフの 1904 年頃からのブルームズベリー・グループでのリベラルな知識人との関係を通じた、伝統的な性の概念やヴィクトリア朝的イデオロギーからの解放を読む。

Virginia Woolf's novel *Jacob's Room* (1922) breaks Woolf's pattern of writing about family and conventions. Differing from her early novels such as *Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1920), which have Victorian settings with female protagonists whose lives are greatly influenced by their own or their families' aspirations for their marriages, *Jacob's Room* portrays a life that does not embrace conventional family and marriage. The novel empathetically depicts characters who do not meet the Victorian norms of sexuality, and the young male protagonist, Jacob, dies without forming his own family. The novel is widely recognized as an elegy to Woolf's brother Thoby Stephen, and the connections between Thoby and *Jacob's Room*'s Cambridge settings enable us to evoke Thoby's habit of inviting his Cambridge friends to the Thursday evenings, the precursor of the Bloomsbury group. Woolf reflects not only her brother's life but also challenges readers to envisage lives free from the constraints of Victorian family life as well as a freedom she has experienced on days at the Bloomsbury group.

Woolf's life in the earlier Bloomsbury group are symbolized as both mental and sexual freedom from the conventional life of the Victorian era. Woolf starts writing her recollection of the earlier Bloomsbury group, "Old Bloomsbury" (1976), by contracting the dark Victorian atmosphere of her life at 22 Hyde Park Gate, where she had lived with her typical Victorian parents, with her new, free life at 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury: "46 Gordon Square could never have meant what it did had not 22 Hyde Park Gate preceded it" (182). While as Woolf describes them as "elusive as smoke," the conversations among Cambridge intellectuals at Bloomsbury (starting around 1904) were broad and abstract in terms of its themes, and it "had such tremendous results upon the lives and characters of the two Miss Stephens," which refer to Virginia Woolf and her sister Vanessa Bell (187). At Bloomsbury, experiencing the liberal atmosphere of "not wearing white satin or seed-peals" (189), witnessing several marriages and both heterosexual and homosexual love affairs, and overcoming the death of her patriarchal father, Leslie Stephen, Woolf physically and mentally liberated herself from her Victorian conventional life.

Woolf reflected this spiritual liberation from conventional sexuality and marriage in her third novel, *Jacob's Room*. In this novel, the young male protagonist, Jacob Flanders, never successfully fulfils the conventional gender role expected of a man in the Victorian era. After

leaving his mother's house for Cambridge, Jacob meets Clara Durrant, a friend's sister. At their first meeting, both characters seem to be attracted to each other, but Clara thinks, "[...] he must not say that he loved her. No, no, no" (63). Even though Clara seems to be an obedient angel-in-the-house type woman and a proper candidate for his wife, who even says, "I like Jacob Flanders" (71), Jacob does not display any intention to marry Clara.

Despite a 'proper' woman, Clara, having affectionate feeling towards him, Jacob is attracted by some other 'improper' women and rejects Clara and the chance to grow into a mature man. Jacob meets a prostitute, Florinda, and maintains an unemotional and unproductive relationship with her. While Jacob looks down upon Florinda as a "a stupid woman" (82), Jacob still becomes resentful when he sees Florinda walking with another man. Florinda's eventual pregnancy to the other man even ironically emphasizes Jacob's incapability of forming a proper relationship with a woman. Also, Jacob's love of a married woman, Sandra Wentworth Williams, whom he meets in Greece, retards the development of young Jacob's life. While Jacob seems to be love in with Sandra, she in turn does not seem to expect him to have any serious relationship, considering "him of being a mere bumpkin" (153) and even seeing Jacob as a small boy, comparing him with her own child. Jacob's unproductive relationships with both Florinda and Sandra emphasize his innocence and prevent him from properly growing into a mature man.

Jacob's death means that he never becomes a good family man or fulfills the Victorian gender role for a man. Keeping these relationships between Jacob and women unproductive and aimless, the novel ends by implicitly describing Jacob's sudden death in war. After Jacob's death, his friend Richard Bonamy visits Jacob's empty room. Richard seems to be secretly in love with Jacob. Contrasted with Clara, who loves Jacob but never notices his death, the presence of the homosexual friend who finally traces the Jacob's life empathetically concludes failure to have any fulfilling heterosexual relationship. Although some critics such as Judy Little discuss this novel as a Bildungsroman that follows "the traditional male growth-pattern full of great expectation" (105), Jacob does not show any remarkable spiritual growth or achievement to meet the Victorian ideological expectations.

In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf challenged herself to depict a life liberated from the Victorian ideology. She wrote a story of a man who rejected growth and could not complete a traditional man's life. Woolf's life at Bloomsbury with the liberal Cambridge intellectuals (and subsequent life events) brought about great changes in Woolf and enabled her to write beyond her traditional life with her parents. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf separates herself from her female precursors who wrote about the traditional lives of women, marking the start of Woolf's new stage as a writer.

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