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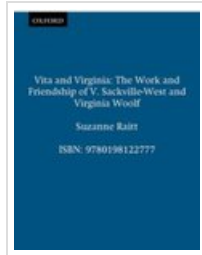


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## ARTS & SCIENCES BOOK CHAPTERS



### Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf

[Suzanne Raitt](#), *College of William and Mary*

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#### Document Type

Book Chapter

#### Department/Program

English

#### Publication Date

1993

#### Book Title

Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf

#### Role

author

#### Publisher

Oxford University Press

#### City

New York

#### Abstract

This book examines the creative intimacy between Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, interpreting both their relationship and their work in the light of their experience as married lesbians. The contradictions and conflicts of their situation are worked out through the construction of different narratives of femininity, in letters, novels, diaries, and other texts. *Vita and Virginia* looks at the two women's continual renegotiation of what it means to be female, and suggests that the mutual exchange of different versions of "womanhood" is crucial to the development of their friendship. *Orlando*, for example, was Virginia Woolf's way of threatening Sackville-West with the extent of her own knowledge about her, as well as the celebratory love-letter it is usually assumed to be. The book also offers readings of both women's autobiographical texts, and a long-overdue study of Vita Sackville-West's work as a biographer and a novelist. Emphasizing also wider contexts, this study examines the links between homosexual desire and literary innovation, public politics and private lives. It provides an invaluable perspective on the relations between sexuality and feminism in modernism.

#### ISBN

978-0198122777

#### Recommended Citation

Raitt, S. (1993). Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/asbookchapters/15>

Vita and Virginia looks at the two women's continual renegotiation of what it means to be female, and suggests that the mutual exchange of different versions of "womanhood" is crucial to the development of their friendship. Orlando, for example, was Virginia Woolf's way of threatening Sackville-West with the extent of her own knowledge about her, as well as the celebratory love-letter it is usually assumed to be. The book also offers readings of both women's autobiographical texts, and a long-overdue study of Vita Sackville-West's work as a biographer and a noveli... Original Title. Vita & Virginia - The Work And Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. ISBN. 0198122772 (ISBN13: 9780198122777). Sackville-West's son, Nigel Nicolson, chronicles their relationship with great reverence and sensitivity in his 1973 book *Portrait of a Marriage: Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson* (public library), drawing on his mother's letters and diaries to illuminate the enormity of the love the two women shared from the day they first met to the day Vita learned of Virginia's death — a love that remained every bit as alive even in her moving letter of condolence to Woolf's husband. Their uncommon bond began in December of 1922, when Virginia was forty and her first literary success, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Woolf, Virginia, 1882-1941 -- Criticism and interpretation, Woolf, Virginia, 1882-1941 -- Friends and associates, Sackville-West, V. (Victoria), 1892-1962 -- Criticism and interpretation, Sackville-West, V. (Victoria), 1892-1962 -- Friends and associates, Authors, English -- 20th century -- Biography. Openlibrary\_work. OL499964W. Pages. In other famous cases, however—like that of Virginia Woolf and her friend and lover Vita Sackville-West—an affair doesn't end in tragedy but simply in a cooling of passions into a beautiful, lasting friendship. While prudish outsiders may have been scandalized, neither Woolf's nor Sackville-West's husband found the relationship shocking. Leonard Woolf, his wife reported, regarded the affair as "rather a bore... but not enough to worry him." Vita and her aristocratic husband Harold Nicolson, writes the Virginia Woolf blog, "were both bisexual and... had an open marriage." Furthermore, the bohemian