

# Guide to the Vita Sackville-West Papers

GEN MSS 925



by Beinecke staff

February 2014

P. O. Box 208330  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** GEN MSS 925

**CREATOR:** Sackville-West, V. (Victoria), 1892-1962

**TITLE:** Vita Sackville-West papers

**DATES:** 1866-2003

**BULK DATES:** 1900-1960

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 17.01 linear feet (27 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** Chiefly in English; some materials in French and Italian.

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists chiefly of correspondence, diaries, notebooks, scrapbooks, business and estate records, writings, lectures, and gardening papers. Correspondents include family members such as Lionel Edward Sackville-West, Victoria Sackville, Harold Nicolson, and Nigel Nicolson, and friends and lovers including Rosamund Grosvenor, Hilda Matheson, Gwen St. Aubyn, and Christopher St. John. Writings include typescripts and manuscripts for works including the novels *The Edwardians* and *All Passion Spent*. Gardening papers include horticultural catalogs, files on the National Trust's garden committee, and research materials. The collection documents Vita Sackville-West's family life, love affairs with women including Christopher St. John and Gwen St. Aubyn, her literary life and circle, including both Sackville-West's work and that of friends including Virginia Woolf, and the management of the Sissinghurst Castle estate and gardens.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.vita>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.vita>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Bernard Quaritch, Ltd. on the Chauncey Brewster Tinker Prize Fund, the Frederick W. Hilles Fund, and the Hubert Amer McGuire Memorial Fund, 2012.

June 2017 acquisition: Purchased from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, Inc. on the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection Fund, 2017.

March 2018 acquisition: Purchased from Joan Winterkorn on the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection Fund, 2018.

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### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

The Vita Sackville-West Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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### Preferred Citation

Vita Sackville-West Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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### Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections as they are acquired, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

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### Related Materials

Harold Nicolson Papers (GEN MSS 614). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Victoria Sackville-West Papers (OSB MSS 222). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

## Vita Sackville-West

Vita (Victoria) Sackville-West (1892-1962), was an English author, poet and gardener. She was the daughter of Lionel Sackville-West, 3rd Baron Sackville, and Victoria Sackville-West. She and her husband Sir Harold Nicolson created the gardens at their Sissinghurst Castle estate.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists chiefly of correspondence, diaries, notebooks, scrapbooks, business and estate records, writings, lectures, and gardening papers. Correspondents include family members such as Lionel Edward Sackville-West, Victoria Sackville, Harold Nicolson, and Nigel Nicolson, and friends and lovers including Rosamund Grosvenor, Hilda Matheson, Gwen St. Aubyn, and Christopher St. John. Writings include typescripts and manuscripts for works including the novels *The Edwardians* and *All Passion Spent*. Gardening papers include horticultural catalogs, files on the National Trust's garden committee, and research materials. The collection documents Vita Sackville-West's family life, love affairs with women including Christopher St. John and Gwen St. Aubyn, her literary life and circle, including both Sackville-West's work and that of friends including Virginia Woolf, and the management of the Sissinghurst Castle estate and gardens.

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## Arrangement

Organized into six series: I. Correspondence, 1897-2003. II. Personal papers, 1900s-1960s. III. Writings and lectures, 1920s-1990s. IV. Gardening papers, 1930s-1960s. V. June 2017 acquisition, 1866-1994. VI. March 2018 acquisition, 1916-1991.

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence, 1897–2003

4.0 linear feet (4 boxes)

b.1	<p>Correspondence to and from Vita Sackville-West</p> <p>Includes incoming correspondence from Rosamund Grosvenor, Vita's mother Lady Sackville, Miss Macmillan, Hilda Matheson, and others. Outgoing correspondence includes letters from Vita to Lady Sackville and others, as well as copies of letters to Rosamund Grosvenor. Also includes correspondence documenting the sale of furniture.</p>	1909–1961
b.2	<p>Correspondence from others</p> <p>Includes correspondence from Pat Dansey, Sybil Colefax, Cyril Connolly, Ruth Draper, Rosamund Grosvenor, Eardley Knollys, Lord Lascelles, and others.</p>	1910–1960
b.3	<p>Correspondence from others</p> <p>Includes correspondence from Harold Nicolson, Benedict Nicolson, Nigel Nicolson, Lady Powerscourt, Lady Sackville, Lord (Lionel) Sackville, Gwen St. Aubyn, Christopher St. John, and others, including letters to Vita Sackville-West regarding her mother Lady Sackville. Also includes letters to Lady Sackville from Geoffrey Scott and Lord Sackville.</p>	1904–1957
b.4	<p><a href="#">Correspondence from others</a></p> <p>Includes correspondence to Vita Sackville-West from Margaret Voigt, Mrs. Wilton, Laura James, the staff of the Queen Mother, and others, as well as assorted family correspondence, including condolence letters following the death of Lord Sackville. Also includes photographs of Hilda Matheson, excerpts from correspondence with Margaret Howard, and Nigel Nicolson correspondence and other papers related to his biographical writings.</p>	1897–2003

**Series II: Personal papers, 1900s-1960s**

4.42 linear feet (9 boxes)

b. 5	<a href="#">Diaries and notebooks</a> Includes travel diaries, daybooks, and gardening notebooks. Also contains news clippings and Christopher St. John's "horrifying document," a manuscript notebook detailing the end of her affair with Sackville-West in 1933.	1950-1962
b. 6	Diaries and notebooks Includes travel diaries, daybooks, and gardening notebooks. Also contains at least one datebook kept by Lady Sackville.	1900s-1960s
b. 7	Diaries and notebooks	1931-1955
b. 8	Estate managment and financial records Financial statements and correspondence documenting the managment of the Sissinghurst Castle estate, personal property, and Lady Sackville's death.	1930s-1960s
b. 9	Scrapbooks Includes news clippings covering Vita Sackville-West's publications and one scrapbook with clippings about Virginia Woolf.	1920s-1930s
b. 10 (Oversize)	Scrapbook Includes news clippings relating to <i>Heritage</i> , <i>The Dragon in Shallow Waters</i> , <i>Orchard and Vinyard</i> , <i>Grand Canyon</i> , <i>The Eagle and the Dove</i> , and other publications.	1919-1922
b. 11 (Oversize)	Scrapbooks Includes clippings from <i>The Edwardians</i> , <i>All Passions Spent</i> , <i>The Dark Island</i> , and other publications.	1929-1935
b. 12 (Oversize)	Scrapbook Includes clippings from "Country Notes" for the <i>New Statesman</i> .	1938-1941
b. 13	Honors and business papers Documentation of honors and distinctions awarded Vita Sackville-West, with correspondence. Also includes records of a loan to her son Nigel Nicolson's publishing company.	1940s-1960s

**Series III: Writings and lectures, 1920s-1990s**

3.42 linear feet (5 boxes)

b. 14	Typescripts, manuscripts, clippings, and correspondence Material from <i>The Edwardians</i> , <i>Faces: Profiles of Dogs</i> , <i>The Eagle and the Dove</i> , <i>All Passion Spent</i> , <i>The Easter Party</i> , and other publications; notes from national broadcast talks.	1920s-1960s
b. 15	Typescripts, manuscripts, clippings, and correspondence Material from <i>Family History</i> , <i>The Grand Canyon</i> , <i>Passenger to Tehran</i> , <i>Nursery Rhymes</i> and other publications; also includes material from "The Metaphysical School", "Is it Still a Disadvantage to be a Woman" lectures and other talks and lectures.	1920s-1960s
b. 16	Typescripts, manuscripts, notes, and correspondence Mostly material from lectures, talks and presentations given in person and on radio throughout the UK and Europe.	1920s-1960s
b. 17	Business correspondence relating to publishing and royalties	1930s-1950s
b. 18	Writings by others about Vita Sackville-West	1990s



**Series IV: Gardening papers, 1930s-1960s**

*1.0 linear feet (1 box)*

Horticultural catalogs, files on The National Trust's garden committee, gardening research and material on ornamental fauna.

b.19

**Series V: June 2017 acquisition, 1866–1994***4.0 linear feet (7 boxes)*

This addition to the collection consists of correspondence, writings, notebooks, newspaper clippings and sketches relating to Vita Sackville-West, the Sackville-West family, and the Nicolson family.

Purchased from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, Inc. on the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection Fund, 2017.

Organized into three sub-series: I. Writings, circa 1909-1946. II. Correspondence, 1866-1994. III. Newspaper clippings, sketches, and other papers, 1912-1942, undated.

Writings circa 1909–1946  
*1.04 linear feet (3 boxes)*

Writings mostly consist of manuscript and typescript drafts of poems and essays, many heavily annotated.

Arranged alphabetically by title or first line.

b. 21	"A la maniere de...Henri de Regnier"	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"Alors, je sourira..."	undated
b. 21	"An Anthology"	1914 May 31
b. 21	"Antoning"	1909 September 23
b. 21	"As one grows old..."	circa 1909–1940
b. 21	"B is the Sultan Bayazid"	circa 1909–1940
b. 21	"The ballad of the last rider"	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"The battle of Kent"	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"The beauty of September..."	circa 1909–1940
b. 21	"Bereavement"	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"Chatterton, A Drama, in three acts", copy, draft, and correspondence <i>3 Folders</i>	circa 1908–1909
b. 21	"A child"	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"Christmas Eve"	circa 1909–1940
b. 21	"Civilisation"	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"Conversation"	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"Contact with beauty, for me, is direct and immediate..."	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"Convalescence."	circa 1909–1922
b. 21	"Dear Max, there are several Maxes"	circa 1909–1940
b. 21	"Dedication"	circa 1909–1940

## Writings (continued)

b. 21	"Diary poem"	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"Did you feel a fool..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"DIG-DOG"	1941
b. 21	"The disappointed heron fly..."	undated
b. 21	"Dissonance", partial typescript	undated
b. 21	"Distant years!"	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"Ditany: I am"	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"Downs"	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"The Eagle and the Dove"	1943
b. 21	"East Wind cried to North Wind, Brother!"	1917 July
b. 21	"The Elderly Sage to his Heart"	1922 October 22
b. 21	"Elegy on the death of a dog"	undated
b. 21	"ENGLAND"	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"Epithalamion"	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"El Escorial"	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"Fiesole procession"	1912
b. 21	"For Richard Rumbold"	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"Giuliano"	1917
b. 21	"He was my guest..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"How welcome..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"A hunchback..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"I grasped at a fleeting cloud..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"I might [?] in an aunt who is a nun..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"I now see how to write my book..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"I suppose other people endure..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"I will lie at my ease..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 21	"I woke to daylight..."	1912 June 4
b. 21	"If I had better known my love..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 21	"If she were dead..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"In the attic"	circa 1909-1940

## Writings (continued)

b. 22	"In the country"	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"In love"	1917 July 11
b. 22	"Indecent Recollections"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"The intellectual to his puppy"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Is it shed, the tear of inevitable sorrow?"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"It is reported that flocks of wood pigeons..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Jealousy"	[1919?]
b. 22	"Joy"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"TO KATHERINE DRUMMOND", rejected version	1946
b. 22	"Last spring, I sold some trees"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Lavender", two copies	1914 August 9, 1918 January 15
b. 22	"A leave train"	1917 August 5
b. 22	"Let us think always of the living..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"And life with all its rich perplexing art"	1918 September 14
b. 22	"And the little elves round your footsteps...."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Little one, what art thou eating?"	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"The loneliness of soul is separate..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Looking through arrow slits..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Manhattan Loch"	1914 May
b. 22	"Mars and wars..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Morning Song"	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"My wounded dog", two copies	1914 March 17
b. 22	"No captive but a peasant once again"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Not these alone, in robe and sandalled feet..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Obscurity"	1922 December 5
b. 22	"Oh, you American states with lovely names..." and poem fragments	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Orchards"	1917 August 5
b. 22	"Parted", autograph and typescript	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Personal Valour", autograph and typescript	1939-1941

## Writings (continued)

b. 22	"PLANTING ROSES"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Poets that sing to you..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"The poet's world"	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"The priest's voice..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Prisoner"	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Prologue"	[1917?]
b. 22	"Rabbits"	1914 October
b. 22	"RECRUITED 1914"	undated
b. 22	"Rise with the sun and behold all his glories unfolding..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Rondel. To Benedict, on his fourth birthday"	1917 August 17
b. 22	"SEPTEMBER 1939" (1938), autograph and transcript	1938-1941
b. 22	"Shaking the plum trees"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"She looked into two stormy eyes..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Singer and poet..."	[1916?]
b. 22	"SISSINGHURST. DECEMBER NIGHT."	1935 January
b. 22	"The sixth young pigeon..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Solitude. Night.", draft and in-laid pages <i>2 Folders</i>	circa 1931
b. 22	"Something ahead..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"SONNET"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Soul to the body saith...", autograph poem and letter	undated, 1912 November 23
b. 22	"Speed", autograph and typescript	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Tapestry"	1917 July 13- August 2
b. 22	"Thanksgiving", autograph and typescript	1917 November 28
b. 22	"That is what I loved him for..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"There was a young lady in Spain..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"They saw the bishop's swelling sleeves..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"They were three, the woman, the poet, and the boy..."	1914 May 16-18
b. 22	"This was a dream in the night..."	circa 1909-1922

## Writings (continued)

b. 22	"To any octogenarian"	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"To Margaret on the sea-shore..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"To my friends at Christmas (or at any other time)"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"To us it just..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"TO THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND", autograph and typescript	[1917?]
b. 22	"Two dogs"	circa 1909-1940
b. 22	"Two upright posts stood on a windswept plain..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 22	"Unwilling Captive"	1917 November 22
b. 23	"Venice"	1917 November
b. 23	"Village Children", two copies	1917 August 12
b. 23	"We should have calm at the core..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 23	"We will sound the gong in the village street..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 23	"When I have uttered all the things..."	1916 April 6
b. 23	"WINTER AFTERNOON", from "Selected Poems"	1941
b. 23	"With mystery's aid..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 23	"You never liked me; I was shy with you..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 23	"You tossed the light command to me..."	circa 1909-1940
b. 23	"The young German captain..."	circa 1909-1922
b. 23	"Youth to whom joy is a night..."	circa 1909-1940
	Other writings	circa 1918-1923, undated
b. 23	Poems, notebooks <i>2 Folders</i>	circa 1918-1923, undated
b. 23	Several poems, finished and partial, and a sketch	circa 1909-1940
	Correspondence <i>1.04 linear feet (3 boxes)</i> Correspondence consists of letters to Harold Nicolson, Victoria Sackville-West (Lady Sackville), and Vita Sackville-West, as well as unidentified correspondence.	1866-1994
	Letters to Harold Nicolson Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.	1911-1920
b. 24	General, A to Z	1912-1913, 1920, undated

## Correspondence &gt; Letters to Harold Nicolson (continued)

b. 24	Nicolson, Arthur <i>4 Folders</i>	1912-1913
b. 24	Nicolson, Katharine	1912-1913, undated
b. 24	Nicolson, Mary	circa 1913
b. 24	Rubeus, Lady Rosamund	12 October
b. 24	Sackville-West, Vita, postcards	undated
b. 24	St Aubyn, Gwen	1912, undated
b. 24	Envelopes	1911-1913, undated
	Letters to Victoria Sackville-West (Lady Sackville) Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.	1911-1923
b. 25	General, A to Z <i>5 Folders</i>	1913-1923, undated
b. 25	Lutyens, Sir Edwin L.	1918
b. 25	Nicolson family members	1913-1923, undated
b. 25	Sackville-West, Charles	1917-1921
b. 25	Sackville-West, Edward	1923
b. 25	Sackville-West, Lionel <i>9 Folders</i>	1911-1923, undated
b. 25	Sackville-West, Vita	1922-1924, undated
b. 25	Sackville-West, Vita, photocopies <i>3 Folders</i>	1918-1922, undated
b. 25	Sackville-West, Vita and Nicolson, Ben	undated
b. 25	Envelopes	1922
	Letters to Vita Sackville-West Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.	1916-1938
b. 26	General, A to Z	1921-1925, undated
b. 26	Astor, W. W.	1916 January 6
b. 26	Pemberton, Percy Leigh	1922 January 23
b. 26	Nicolson, Ben	1922, 1938
b. 26	Sackville-West, Lionel, postcard	undated

## Correspondence &gt; Letters to Vita Sackville-West (continued)

b. 26	Sackville-West, Victoria	1932-1936
b. 26	Other correspondence	1866-1994
	Newspaper clippings, sketches, and other papers <i>1.88 linear feet (2 boxes)</i> This series consists of clippings, sketches, and other papers related to Vita Sackville-West.	1912-1942, undated
b. 26	Church bulletin for Peter Nicolson's funeral	1942 August 24
b. 26	"Violet", printed paper	undated
b. 26	Newspaper clipping and advertisement for book	1917 March 9
b. 26	Note	1922 November 22
b. 26	<i>The Fortnightly Library</i> , photocopy of "Some Notable Verse" review	1930 June
b. 26	Newspaper clippings relating to Sackville-West family, photocopies	1934
b. 26	Photographic prints, portraits of Vita Sackville-West	undated
b. 26	Sketch of a tin opener	undated
b. 27	Sketch sent to Cecil Woolf	1914
b. 27	Map, Bataille de Viza-Lule Burgas	1912



**Series VI: March 2018 acquisition , 1916–1961**

*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

Purchased from Joan Winterkorn on the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection Fund, 2018.

b. 20

Diaries and notebooks

1916–1961

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## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Authors, English -- 20th Century -- Archives  
Gardening -- England  
Lesbian authors -- England  
Lesbians -- England  
LGBTQ resource  
Women authors

### Geographic Names

Sissinghurst Castle (England)

### Genres / Formats

Diaries -- England -- 20th Century

### Names

Grosvenor, Rosamund, 1888-1944  
Matheson, Hilda, 1888-1940  
Nicolson, Harold, 1886-1968  
Nicolson, Nigel  
Sackville, Lionel Edward Sackville-West, Baron,  
1867-1928  
Sackville, Victoria Josephine Sackville-West,  
Lady, 1862-1936  
Sackville-West, V. (Victoria), 1892-1962  
St. Aubyn, Gwen  
St. John, Christopher (Christopher Marie)  
Woolf, Virginia, 1882-1941