



The True Story of Alice B. Toklas: A Study of Three Autobiographies

Anna Linzie

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In this original and intriguing study, Anna Linzie examines three mid-twentieth-century texts never before treated as interrelated in a book-length work of literary criticism: Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) and Alice B. Toklas's *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* (1954) and *What Is Remembered* (1963). Taking these three texts as intertexts or as an assemblage of the true story of Alice B. Toklas, Linzie challenges assumptions about primary authorship and singular identity that have continued to limit lesbian and feminist rereadings of autobiography as a genre and of Stein and Toklas as writers and historical figures. *The True Story of Alice B. Toklas* explores how the concept of autobiography as a primarily referential genre is challenged and transformed in relation to autobiographical texts written about the same person, the same life, but differently, by different writers, at different points in time. The concept of one true story is deconstructed in the process as Linzie modifies Homi K. Bhabha's "almost the same but not quite/not white" for the purposes of this particular study as "almost the same but not quite/not straight." The investigation moves simultaneously on the planes of textuality and sexuality in order to provisionally articulate a "lesbian autobiographical subject" in Linzie's reading of these three texts. Linzie's study fills a gap in literary criticism where Stein's companion and her work have been more or less neglected, conceptualizing the Stein-Toklas sexual/textual relationship as fundamentally reciprocal. *The True Story of Alice B. Toklas* provides a new critical perspective on Toklas as indispensable to Stein's literary production, a cultural laborer in her own right, and a writer of her own books. Making a significant contribution to recent lesbian/feminist reconceptualizations of the genre of autobiography, this study will fascinate Stein and Toklas scholars as well as those interested in queer and autobiography studies.

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