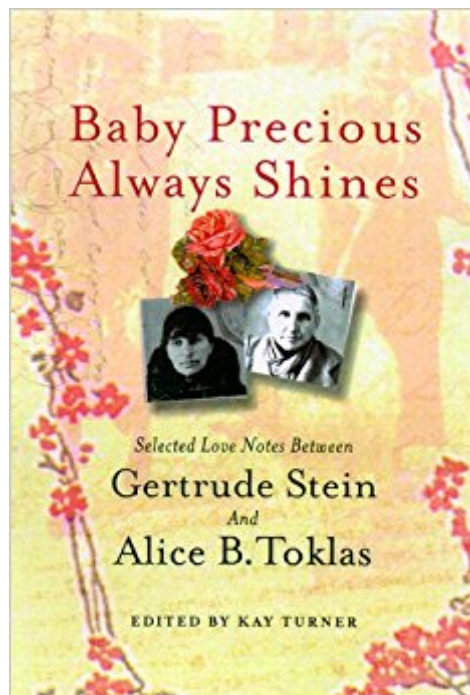




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Baby Precious Always Shines: Selected Love Notes Between Gertrude Stein And Alice B. Toklas



Synopsis

Off and on, during the entire period they were together, Gertrude and Alice wrote each other little love notes. Calling her "wifey" and most often addressing her as "baby precious," Stein scribbled her love for Toklas in quick moments of unselfconscious desire, notes that are small but significant testimonies to her long-lived love. And on occasion, Toklas penned or typed letters back to her "husband." These notes are brief, mantra-like enticements: tender, beseeching, caring and confessing, funny and game, sexually-charged and sincere, quotidian and queer, but always passionate. Each one marks the pleasures--infrequently, the pains--of married love. When fitted together, the notes create a tantalizing mosaic of a marriage between two women that was built to last.

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Customer Reviews

Baby Precious Always Shines, a delightful selection from the 300 love notes that Alice B. Toklas accidentally deposited with the rest of Gertrude Stein's papers in the Beinecke Library at Yale, would not have been possible before the 1980s, when the locked cabinet in which they were kept was finally opened to scholars. In her excellent introduction, Kay Turner (whose other books include *I Dream of Madonna: Women's Dreams of the Goddess of Pop*) explains that with their baby talk and constant blessings, the notes provide "a tantalizing mosaic of a marriage between two women that was built to last." Composed in the "word-inverted, long-breathed, rolling, repetitive, reflowing style that Stein invented," they touch on everyday events in the Stein-Toklas household and

reiterate Stein's love and desire for Toklas. Many seem to have been left for Toklas to find in the morning beside the manuscripts that Stein had written during the night. A few were written by Toklas to Stein. Turner also offers a convincing new reading of Stein's famously obscure "cows" (in *A Book Concluding with As a Wife Has a Cow: A Love Story* and elsewhere), previously thought to signify female orgasm; she argues that Stein and Toklas subscribed to the "cult of regularity" that swept Europe in the first decades of the 20th century. Indeed, the love notes, despite their Steinian verbal play, leave little doubt that the recurring cows, "now sweet smelly and complete," are bowel movements--further evidence, for Turner, of the women's extraordinary intimacy, their love "express[ing] itself daily in the rituals of bodily caretaking."

Before she retired after a long night of writing, American modernist Gertrude Stein often scribbled tender notes to her longtime companion, Alice B. Toklas. The two met in Paris in 1907 and lived together until Stein's death in 1946. These poetic missives, published with nine of Toklas's replies, reveal a loving pair sharing a private language of endearments. While intimate correspondence often doesn't galvanize those outside the relationship, Stein's incantations demonstrate her playful language and liberal use of double entendres. Too often, however, they sink into mere repetition: a few rounds of "Baby precious [Stein's nickname for Toklas], oh dear baby so precious, sweet kissed baby so precious" will drive more than a few readers to distraction. The only new facet of Stein's personality to come to the fore, highlighted by Turner's introduction, is Stein's obsession with Toklas's bodily functions. Apparently, Stein's many references to "having a cow" ("*As a Wife Has a Cow a Love Story*," etc.) have a meaning other than the orgasmic connotations that many Stein scholars have attached to them. Indeed, they are Stein's imprecations for Toklas to have a bowel movement. Those scholars and readers who have focused on the butch/femme identities of this famous lesbian couple may be shocked to discover that Stein's theories of "bottom nature" may boil down to those who are regular and those who are not. Illustrations. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Just imagine having your love notes found, analyzed and published for the world to see? Well, this is it. One of the world's most famous and iconic couples' lyrical notes to each other are here for all to share. Should it have been done? Some may say 'no', but considering the fact that they are by Stein, one of the most well-known, unread writers in history, and Toklas, whose place in history largely hinges on her hashish fudge, I'd say 'why not?' These ladies have long been used to public curiosity and scrutiny and became household names during their 1934-35 visit to the US. The

introductory essay alone, though scholarly, is worth the price of admission---"Having a cow" will take on a whole new meaning in your vocabulary!

Nice and valuable. excellent. very comfortable and very fine . This product cuts through bread like a hot product through butter. Great product! my family ,

How wonderful to read about the emotions of what is sometimes considered to be "deviant" love. I believe they would each be honored to know that their true relationship is public and, for the most part, that people are touched by their genuine caring for each other. I highly recommend this book, especially for those people who find it hard to understand relationships between same-sex couples.

Excellent!!

What a hoot! Kay Turner has done it again, producing a book that's both entertaining and eye-opening -- a delightful-as-usual combination of the scholarly and hilarious. Brava! A wonderful gift for and/or from yer girlfriend.

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