

Favored Strangers: Gertrude Stein and Her Family



The standard version of Gertrude Steins life the story of the idiosyncratic art collector and writer, ruling the expatriates in Paris with her immense personal power has been told so often that it has become a piece of Americana, burnished to a high gloss through repetition. Inspired by extensive original research, Linda Wagner-Martin breaks with that tradition in this major new biography. Here we find Gertrude Stein as we have never seen her before: as a member of her German-Jewish patriarchal family, as an undergraduate at Radcliffe, as an odd sort of feminist, as a medical student at Johns Hopkins University, as a lesbian and a lover, as an art collector, as a war survivor, and much more as a person and not just a modernist icon. Throughout, her relationship with two of her older brothers Michael and Leo shaped her emotional existence, just as her commitment to writing shaped her intellectual life. This fascinating portrait of Gertrude Steins life (1874-1946) offers a rich history of The Stein Corporation. Wagner-Martin provides new insight into the influence of Alice B. Toklas, a look into the economic side of the familys existence, and the intimate story of the Steins relationships with Matisse, Picasso, Gris, and other painters; and later, of Gertrude Steins relationships with Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Virgil Thomson, Thornton Wilder, Janet Flanner, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and many other colorful modernist writers and artists in the rue de Fleurus salon. This biography also gives us a previously untold but chilling account of Gertrude Steins and Alice Toklass survival during World War II in France, and Leo Steins in Italy. Favored Strangers is a story of survival creative, psychological, cultural, sexual that opens our eyes to what being a female and an outsider at the turn of the century, and through much of its turbulent early years, truly meant. If you thought you knew the story of Gertrude

Stein, this book proves you wrong. Linda Wagner-Martin is Hanes Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina. She has written or edited more than thirty-five books, including *Sylvia Math: A Biography* and *Telling Womens Lives: The New Biography* (Rutgers University Press).

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