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EXPLAINING EXPLAINING: REFIGURING GERTRUDE STEIN'S LECTURES

by

(C) Alan R. Knight

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled .....

.....laining Explaining: Refiguring Gertrude Stein's Lectures.....

.....

submitted by ...Alan R. Knight.....

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature.

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Abstract

In this dissertation I refigure the eight key lectures which Gertrude Stein delivered during her lifetime. These lectures are dealt with both as theoretical discourse and as manifestos. As theoretical discourse they act as texts for recontextualization. As manifestos they are textual acts aimed at forcing the audience into engaging experimental writing.

Each lecture is refigured in the context of an aesthetic question which has become prominent for what is now termed postmodernism. Chapter 1 uses "Composition as Explanation" and deals with the problem of representation. Chapter 2 uses "What is English Literature" and deals with the question of intertextuality. Chapter 3 uses "Plays" and deals with the question of inscribed force. Chapter 4 uses "Pictures" and deals with the question of figuration. Chapter 5 uses "Poetry and Grammar" and deals with the question of authorization. Chapter 6 uses "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans" and deals with the question of self-consciousness. Chapter 7 uses "Portraits and Repetition" and deals with repetition as a figure of force. And Chapter 8 uses "What Are Master-pieces and Why

There Are So Few of Them" and deals with the literary manifesto.

These lectures, because of their internal contradictions and because of their play with paradox and aporia, are well suited to an act of refiguration which places them in a literary context which also valorizes these questions.

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And finally, I would like to thank my wife, Patricia, for her encouragement, support and presence.

Contents

Prelude

pre: (be)fore
ludus: play

Gertrude Stein is difficult to read. Beginning with "Composition As Explanation," delivered at Oxford and Cambridge in 1926, Stein began to write lectures in an effort to explain what she was doing and to make her writings more accessible to a larger audience. Several more lectures followed, the bulk of them written for her American lecture tour of 1934-35. Stein critics, however, differ greatly in their evaluation of the usefulness of these lectures as guides to Stein's writing. Richard Bridgman, for example, warns against reading these lectures as "explications" of "her innovative practices." He prefers to treat them as "emerging out of her experimental period rather than--as she sometimes implied--predetermining it." Her lectures, he argues, "gave her career a symmetry and certitude that it never possessed" (Gertrude Stein in Pieces xv). At the other end of the scale there is Wendy

Steiner, who claims that Stein's "theoretical writings are still the best critical guide to her literary texts, and document a system that went through logical and identifiable stages" (Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance 27). One must be wary of both extremes.

The republication of Lectures in America in 1985 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of their first publication contains an introduction by Wendy Steiner which is, I feel, much more to the point. In her "Introduction" Steiner writes that "Lectures in America suggests still other ways of contextualizing Stein's work, for it is a veritable index to the leading aesthetic ideas of our day. Indeed, the training in paradoxical thinking that pop art and deconstruction recently have provided tends to normalize Stein's writing to a striking extent" (Steiner, Introduction xi). My commentary on Stein's lectures is essentially an attempt at such a recontextualization.

Stein's lectures, however, are the occasion for, rather than the centre of, my commentary. I have reinscribed Stein's lectures within a contemporary theoretical context where to configure the context is as much my desire as to recontextualize Stein's lectures. This is not an exercise in exegesis, nor is it an attempt to attach Stein to a particular theoretical "school"--to claim her for a certain faction. It is an attempt to place certain compelling texts within a field.

I deal with eight lectures: the six contained in

Lectures in America, and the two delivered at Cambridge and Oxford, one in 1926 and one 1936. I have not dealt individually with the four lectures delivered at the University in Chicago in 1935 which were subsequently published in a single volume under the title Narration. These lectures were put together by Stein for a particular classroom situation, and since they overlap much of the material contained in the six lectures she was giving in America at the same time, I refer to them only on occasion rather than using them as an occasion.

In the first group of four chapters I examine four lectures which lead towards an inscription of a context for reading the figures of Stein's writing. To learn to read Stein we must, in effect, learn to read all over again. This begins with the recognition of the problematic of representation (chapter 1: "Composition as Explanation"). Stein and other modernists were faced with the problem of using an inadequate sign system to deal with imponderable problems. Once it is recognized that writing does not represent the world but only itself, the writer must begin to discover what that "self" is. The writer must look both at how writing relates to what has already been written (chapter 2: "What is English Literature") and how writing relates to what it is chasing, the unthought, the silence at the edge of conventionalized meaning (chapter 3: "Plays"). In the gap between what has already been inscribed and the textual interventions of a new writer lie

the figures of intelligibility (chapter 4: "Pictures") which both writer and reader must struggle to discover. In this first group of chapters then, I begin by establishing a problem and then consider the implications that this problem has for our relationship to past texts, possible future texts and our figuration of texts in the present.

CHAPTER ONE

Explaining Composition: the Problem of Representation

I The Marketplace

If we can speak of writing or speaking as being either easy or difficult to understand, it is because we have a solidly entrenched system of linguistic conventions which allows us to make such a judgement. If an act of writing or speaking adheres closely to these conventions, and if the reader or listener is also well versed in these conventions, then understanding, within the limits of the system, comes easily. An act of writing or speaking which does not adhere to these conventions, or any other easily recognized system of conventions, runs the risk of being difficult to understand. In this context, Gertrude Stein's writing can be very difficult to understand.

Publishers, whose job it is to understand and to respond to the desires of their paying customers, have understandably been wary of a writer whose use of language was so

unlike conventional English that it hardly seemed literate. The market forces which influence the publishing industry demand large audiences, the larger the better. And large audiences, according to the publishers Stein approached, could only be acquired with a coherent story, clearly told. Any author who allowed language to get in the way of what was being told by radically deviating from the conventionalized linguistic system was anathema.

The circumstances surrounding the publication of Stein's first collection of stories, Three Lives, in 1909, demonstrate very clearly what she was up against. After trying unsuccessfully for over three years to place the book with a commercial publisher, Stein finally agreed to place it with a vanity press, the Grafton Press of New York. They would print 1000 copies for $600.00, of which 500 were to be bound. However, even though Stein herself was paying for the book to be produced, the publisher, thinking that perhaps she was unfamiliar with the English language, offered to hire an editor to turn it into standard English for her; and, thinking that he was doing her a favor, he kindly offered to "make the charge, of course, as little as possible" (Mellow, Charmed Circle 127). Stein, who knew very well that she was undermining conventions, would have none of this and insisted that it be printed exactly as submitted. Ironically, Three Lives was as close to standard English as she was to come for many years.

By the second decade of the twentieth century traditional linguistic conventions were no longer as sacrosanct as they once had been. The various experiments of the literary avant-garde were gaining more currency and more notoriety. A context was being generated within which such works could be read and understood. It was therefore no longer a case of Stein's works being judged unpublishable because ungrammatical but of their being judged unpublishable because commercial publishers felt that such literary experiments would appeal to too small an audience to be economically viable. Other radical literary experimenters took this for granted and made little or no effort to publish with the large houses. Almost without fail they relied on public manifestations and scandal to create a market for what they were doing, and on publishing themselves ~~or finding patrons~~ who would endow small presses that they could control editorially, to get their work to those who wanted it.

These small presses and literary journals, which were an integral part of the Parisian avant-garde,[1] were not enough for Gertrude Stein; she wanted large commercial success--the sort of success her friends Matisse and Picasso were beginning to enjoy. (The economics of painting are of course much different. High demand and high prices can be generated within a relatively small audience.) In great part, the frustrations she endured during so many years of being unable to find a publisher were due to this

desire for large scale publication. Undermining the conventions of standard English undermined her chances of commercial success. Her enduring ambition and relentless efforts to appear in the pages of the conservative Atlantic Monthly, and her complete lack of success until the serialization of the conventionally accessible Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, is indicative of the power of linguistic convention in the marketplace.

II Creating Demand

Eventually Stein did begin to publish in some of the small journals and with some of the small presses. But her dealings with them were quixotic and querulous and not the sustained and sustaining sort of relationship she wanted to develop with a big press. She believed she was an author who could be understood by everybody and that her books should therefore be made available to everybody. All the publisher had to do was to stick by her and to create a demand. When Stein went to lecture at Oxford and Cambridge in 1926 she was fifty-two years old. But she had finally been given a legitimate opportunity to create demand. She continued her attempts to create demand, and thus a large enough market to make large-scale commercial publication feasible, when she made her lecture tour of America in 1934-35. She set about her task methodically. When she arrived in New York Harbor in 1934, and while she was still on board ship, the journalist Joe Alsop is supposed to have asked her why she

didn't write the way she spoke. She is said to have replied by asking why he didn't read the way she wrote. The problem, she was declaring, had little to do with the way in which she distorted and skewed conventions but with the reading public's discomfort with any use of language which did not adhere to the conventions of standard English. She wanted people to move beyond this discomfort and to feel the challenge and excitement of language when it did not adhere to traditional conventions. Once this happened, she felt, they would be a demanding market.

In order to dispel this discomfort she had to explain what she was doing and why it was that she could be clearly understood. "I do write clearly," she wrote, "I think I write so clearly that I worry about it" (Everybody's Autobiography 171). Every lecture she gave was an attempt to explain the basis of this clarity. When she was in California toward the end of her American tour she went to visit a school at San Rafael. The Mother Superior admitted to Gertrude Stein that she found it difficult to understand Stein's writing. Stein writes: "I said to the mother superior . . . what did it matter if the little ones could" (289). She believed that she could be easily understood, or at least understood in the way she understood understanding, and that perhaps children found it easier because their minds were not yet overly constrained by the conventions of standard English. Many of her early reviewers and critics, however, found it easier to side with the Mother

Superior.

III The Case Against

B.L. Reid is typical of the sort of critic who would have agreed with the attempts of the Grafton Press to conform to the demands of the marketplace by editing Stein into a more accessible English. His sort of criticism is not fruitful in and of itself but his attempt to speak on behalf of all reasonable men provides a clear picture of the context within which Stein worked. According to Reid, critics have responded to Stein's unconventional use of language in three ways. There are "the hyperbolic schools of adoration and vilification [and] . . . the soberer judgements" (Art by Subtraction 6). The first he dismisses as "perfervid votaries" (4); he feels the second is understandably upset but hasn't taken the time to reason things through; and the third has come to "the wholly tenable position that her single really important work was Three Lives," a judgement made valid by the fact that Stein had been attempting a new type of realism (Gertrude Stein's Critics 123). This third category is little more than a reasoned extension of the second. Reid unavoidably recognizes that Stein's writings demand that the critic respond first and foremost to their subversions of linguistic convention. His characterization of possible responses is, however, overly constrained by the force of the extant system of conventions. It is his opinion that if the

response to these subversions is positive then it is necessarily unthinking and not worth the consideration of reasonable men; if the response is negative then it can be either unreasoned but intuitively correct or reasoned and laudable. Thus his three categories are really one: if language is not used conventionally then it can have no possible use or value. This leaves no room for those critics, of whom there are now many, who would attempt to understand and to account for the inevitability of these subversions of convention. Even though few today pay much attention to Reid, what he has done is clearly to state what the early critics who were attempting to understand Stein were up against. They had to struggle in the same linguistic marketplace that she was struggling in. Any attempt to respond to Stein is therefore concomitantly an attempt to bring the subversion of the linguistic conventions of representation into the marketplace.

IV Subverting Convention

Modernists have responded to this problem of representation in more than one way. Many, such as the Imagists, sought to resolve the problem by creating a new classicism. Hulme called for a "period of dry, hard, classical verse" (Speculations 133) whose "great aim is accurate, precise and definite description" (132). The way to achieve this hard objective poetry was to "arrest you and to make you continuously see a physical thing," and the "artist is a

person who is able to convey over the actual things he sees or the emotions he feels" (166).

The Imagists wanted to purify and objectify language by removing from poetic diction all flabbiness and wastefulness. T.S. Eliot, though not an Imagist, similarly argued for an impersonal poetry devoid of the ambiguities of the individual ego and composed of objective correlatives. Archibald MacLeish tried to sum up what was desired by writing that a poem must not mean but be. These writers were fighting uncertainty, ambiguity and the discontinuous universe by attempting to create what Gerald Graff has called the "radical 'autonomy' of the imagination" (Literature Against Itself 5). That is, they tried to outflank uncertainty by defining the limits within which a thing could be considered objective and then by recognizing the irony inherent in those limits. But within the limits or borders, unity and coherence were justifiably to be sought after.

There were other modernists who were not willing to define or accept limits. These writers were more radically experimental, writers who belonged to such movements as Russian Futurism and Dada. What these writers attempted to devise was not a delimited objectivity but a transcendentally pure and universal language. This often involved neologism and pure sound poetry. Thus the dadaist Hugo Ball wrote "Gadji Berri Bimba," the first sound poem, and Alexei Kruchenykh, the Russian Futurist, wrote his manifesto on

transrational language. Ball introduced his poem at the Galerie Dada by saying that, "[i]n these phonetic poems we want to abandon a language ravaged and laid barren by journalism. We must return to the deepest alchemy of the Word, and leave even that behind us, in order to keep safe for poetry its holiest sanctuary" (Richter, Dada 42). And Kruchenykh could define the transrational as:

> a) sung and incanted magic.
> b) "revelation (naming and depicting) of invisible things"--[i.e.] mysticism.
> c) musical-phonetic word creation--[i.e.] orchestration, texture.
>
> (Markov, Russian Futurism 346)

Somewhere between the attempt to control the problem by bracketing it (the manoeuver of phenomenology) and the attempt to escape from the problem into a transcendental language free of convention (the manoeuver of mysticism) lies the field that Stein eventually came to struggle in. It is the field in which uncertainty has somehow to be both acknowledged and exploited.

V Placing Stein

At first, Stein's work elicited such unflattering comments as these:

> Are there still people so impressed by the oracular--who really are so simpleminded that they dare not challenge the unintelligible?
>
> (Marini 365)

> If Miss Stein's useful knowledge points out anything, it is that the loafing mind, equipped with language, can reach a triumph of chaotic imbecility.
>
> (Norman 52)

> After a hundred lines of this [Portrait of Mabel Dodge] I wish to scream, I wish to burn the book, I am in agony . . . . Someone has applied an egg-beater to my brain.
>
> (Flat Prose 432)

and,

> This is an insult to the civilizat[illegible] that with incredible labor united sound and sense.
>
> (Canby 126-27)

This is only a brief sampling of the sort of response that Stein so often received and the sort of response that "hyperbolic adoration" could not adequately "put in its place." The first step towards placing in context such "hyperbolic vilifications" is to recognize that they can be reduced to a single problem: the problem of representation. Stein used language in a way that challenged its status as "silent servant," as transparent medium. She challenged in language the very thing that those who vilified her believed most sacred of all in language: its intelligibility, which is the triumph of order over chaos and our consequent release from the pain of not understanding, in short, its ability to guarantee the union of sound and sense.

To suggest, however, that this was Stein's project from the beginning would be misleading. At the start, like almost all other experimental modernists, her intentions were to use language more objectively, to get closer to pure meaning and to truth. She tells us herself that she "had struggled up to . . . [WWI] with the creation of reality" (Haas, Primer for the Gradual Understanding 18).

Her aim was not to expose the illusion of linguistic reference by exposing the gaps between sound and sense but instead to close the gap. Many of Stein's critics still believe that this struggle to create reality is as far as she ever went and that her increasingly "private" use of language must be seen as an attempt to discover a more precise system of conventions. We as readers, the argument goes, only find her difficult because we have not yet discovered the new conventions she has devised. The problem, according to these critics, is to discover the new system. Once the new codes are discovered we will be able to unravel Stein's texts into discursive meaning, and we will then be able to look for unity and coherence as we have always done.[2] But this is really only Reid's method displaced. It understands subversion not as a questioning of the metaphysical basis of an epistemology but only as the search for a new epistemology.

Stein didn't stick with this struggle for reality for long. Norman Weinstein has written that "[t]he writing of Gertrude Stein can be seen as a consequence of the Wittgensteinian attack on the referential connection between language and what is truly 'out there'" (Literature of the Modern Consciousness 115). Whether or not we accept Weinstein's placing the origin of this insight with Wittgenstein (Nietszche announced that God was dead in The Gay Science in 1882), it is hard to find a contemporary Stein critic who deals with her use of language in the

modernist context who would not agree with this, or with Jayne L. Walker when she echoes Roland Barthes in saying that "the most crucial issue of modernist art . . . [is] the problem of representation" (Making of A Modernist xi). In order to avoid being just another displaced Reid, then, the first thing a Stein critic must do is acknowledge, as Randa Dubnick has put it, that "much misunderstanding of Stein's work is based . . . [on] insisting on finding discursive meaning where none exists" (Structure of Obscurity xv).

For Stein the search for a more objective language had been an unstable starting point, which served only to push her further and further from it. Each renewed effort to use words objectively created in her a more marked ambivalence, a greater doubt. She was in this way more like Tristan Tzara, one of the few avant-garde writers who consistently held that language could not be objective (neither through more precise delimitation nor mystical revelation).[3] In the passage quoted above where Stein admits to her early struggle to create reality, she goes on to say that she "then became interested in how you could tell this thing in a way that anybody could understand" (Haas 18). This is echoed in the postcript to "An Elucidation": "I am very busy finding out what people mean by what they say. I used to be very interested in what they were I am now interested in what they say" (Haas 105).

VI The Struggle

Stein's most massive and ambitious work, The Making of Americans, documents this struggle. The book can be roughly divided into three parts. In the first almost three hundred pages she maintains a narrative line with some rigor, as she had done in Q.E.D. and in Three Lives, which records the Stein family's history from the time when they lived in Europe to the time when they lived in Oakland California. In the second part of the book she gets to what she later thought of as the heart of the matter. She begins to hint at what is to come fairly early on: "[s]ome time then there will be every kind of a history of every one who ever can or is or was or will be living" (Making of Americans 179). She was no longer going to write the history of the people in her particular family but a history of all people. By page 220 she announces that this is indeed about to take place. But she only begins her attempt in the middle third of the book when she writes that "[t]here will then be soon very much description of every way one can think of men and women, in their beginning, in their middle living, and their ending" (290). What follows is a self-conscious struggle to bring this ambition into reality. By the last third of the book, however, her self-consciousness has forced her to abandon the idea as unfeasible. While on one level the project seems to be moving positively forward, at the level of authorial intervention she is filled with doubt. And it is the ambiguities of language that force

this doubt upon her. She writes:

> Sometimes one reads a letter that they have been keeping with other letters, and one is not very old then and so it is not that they are old then and forgetting, they are not very old then and they come in cleaning something to reading this letter and it is all full of hot feeling and the one, reading the letter then, has not in them any memory of the person who once wrote that letter to them. This is different, very different from the changing of the feeling and thinking in many who have in them real realization of the meaning of words when they are using them but there is in each case so complete a changing of experience in feeling and thinking, or in time or in something, . . . [t]his is very true then of the feeling and the thinking that makes the meanings in the words one is using, this is very true then that to many of them having in them strongly a sense of realizing the meaning of the words they are using that some words they once were using, later have not any meaning.
>
> (440-41)

This doubt is repeated over and over again: "disillusionment in living is finding that no one can really ever be agreeing with you completely in anything . . . not anyone really is believing, seeing, understanding, thinking anything as you are thinking, believing, seeing, understanding such a thing" (483). And it is all because of language: "I am feeling many ways of using one word . . . different ways of emphasizing can make very different meanings . . . . there can be very different ways of reading the thing I have been writing" (539).

VII Explaining Composition

In "Composition as Explanation," the lecture Stein wrote at the request of Edith Sitwell for delivery in 1926

at Oxford and Cambridge, Stein attempted for the first time to explain why there were "different ways of reading the things she had been writing." It all had to do with time, "the time of and the time in the composition" (29). "[E]ach generation," she writes "has something different at which they are all looking. . . . The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this . . . makes a composition, . . . the thing seen . . . makes a composition" (26). In other words, our compositions explain for us what we do and what we see. As Derrida would say, we are prisoners of our discourse. And each generation sees something different because at the time of composition what has already been said is part of what they see. Thus "the creator of the new composition in the arts is an outlaw until he is a classic" (27) because he is one of "the few who make it as it is made" (26), which is to say that the time in the composition is the present. In the present the writer is seeing what is different. Most writers, however, do not have the present time in their compositions; "the most decided of them usually are prepared" (26). While the time of these compositions is the present, the time in them is definitely in the past. To be in the past is to rely upon the memory to create unity and coherence by getting rid of the gaps in the illusion of wholeness. But for the writer who composes in the present

"[n]aturally one does not know how it happened until it is well over beginning happening" (30) and so the composition is not already "prepared" but "prepared by preparing" (30). "Any one creating the composition in the arts . . . [is] conducting life and that makes their composition what it is, it makes their work compose as it does" (30).

Composition explains for us what is happening and not what has happened. This is why new composition is ugly. We are comfortable with what has already happened because we can impose order upon it and accommodate it within the over scheme of things we have placed our faith in. What happens in the present is unordered and therefore "all beauty in it is denied" (28). But just as surely as "the creator of the new composition in the arts is an outlaw until he is a classic" (27) the beauty denied becomes the "beauty . . . accepted" (29). The change is rapid and startling. It can happen either when a composition has receded far enough into the past (two or three generations) to be accommodated in the prepared for changes in the scheme of things, or it can happen when there occurs an event in the actual world of great enough proportion that we are compelled to live in the present because the past, and its comfortable sense of order, have become meaningless in the present. It happens at a time when we become "contemporary in thought . . . [and] contemporary in self-consciousness" (35); in the actual world it happened "because it became war and so completely needed to be contemporary became completely

contemporary and so created the completed recognition of the contemporary composition" (35). The time of composition has become coincident with the time in composition.

Stein had always been interested in this coincidence of time in and time of. The problem of creating a present composition in time was a problem of "its quality of distribution and equilibration" (37). Stein's answer to the problem required that composition adhere to three constraints, that it present a continuous present, that it be "beginning again and again," and that it be "using everything" (31-32). Following these constraints, "everything being alike then everything very simply everything was naturally simply different" (34-35). If the composition is continuing in the present and beginning again and again, then what is used is perhaps like what has already been used but it is different because it has been used again because everything must be used.

Stein started by setting herself a problem, how to use composition to explain what her generation was looking at. This was a very different problem than that faced by writers who felt it their task to discover and represent the unity and coherence of the world. As Thomas Kuhn has written, "changes in the standards governing permissible problems, concepts, and explanations can transform a science" (Structure of Scientific Revolution 168). The problem explained by Stein in this lecture/manifesto can be separated into three parts. First, composition is explanation; it

explains the world for us by presenting it to us. Second, in order to explain the world as it is she felt she must write o d in the continuous present--this included starting again and again and using everything. Third, understanding comes when the reader matches the time of with the time in, or the context of composition with the context in the composition. "No one is ahead of his time," she writes, "it is only that the particular variety of creating his time is the one that his contemporaries who also are creating their own time refuse to accept" (Composition as Explanation 27). What they refuse to accept or acknowledge is the matching of e context of and the context in.

VIII Expanding the Context

Although there were writers contemporary to Stein, such as the Russian Formalists, who were concerned with and wrote about similar questions and problems, it is not my intention here to place Stein within the context of the thinkers of her historical period. Since Stein prefigures in so many ways contemporary theoretical work, I find it more compelling to place her in the context of contemporary theoretical discourse. However, the question Stein asked is still the question we must ask: how does composition explain the world, or in other words, how does language represent the world?

The language which Stein reacted against (and she was

by no means the first nor the only writer to do so) was the 'common-sense' language of transcendental signifieds. It is the language which unquestioningly places or accepts that thought, or the realm of ideas, exists independently of and is therefore prior to language. Such a point of view sees as the task of language the matching of signifiers to signifieds, which is to say, the generation of binary oppositions which allow ideas and things to be unambiguously differentiated. This is a dualist metaphysics with thought on one side and language on the other.[4] As Derrida has pointed out, this transcendental signified was an exigency of classical metaphysics (Positions 17).

When modernists recognized that the problem of representation was their key problem, what they recognized was that the infinite regress of ambiguity inherent in language was challenging the metaphysical assumptions behind this dualistic overdetermination of meaning, an overdetermination which attempts to do away with ambiguity and to see in language the capacity to mirror the world. The last serious attempt to make such an argument was Wittgenstein's Tractatus. But by 1933/4 Wittgenstein himself had reversed his position and in the Blue Book was arguing that language had no essence and no unifying force. Where there is inevitable ambiguity or mise en abime or aporia then we have run up against "one of language's sins, . . . a kind of ontological lack" (Thiher, Words in Reflection 14), a lack which challenges the priority of thought over language.

The transcendental signified gives essence or presence to meaning by dividing the world of things and ideas into discrete components. To recognize a lack in the ontological status of the relationship between signifiers and the supposedly discrete components which they supposedly signify or represent is to subvert the ability of language to represent presence. Which is not to say that there is no ideal. We can conceive of ideality but the ideality is empty. There is absence or non-presence at its centre.

That thought is constitutive of language becomes just another myth. It becomes necessary to see "[m]eaning [as] organized within the space of language itself" (Thiher 24). Language is no longer a function of a transcendent spiritual world. The subject, the person who uses language, is not a discrete component present in the world; he delimits the world. Discourse shapes reality; thought is based on rhetoric, it is not prior to it. Only what we say can delimit what we think. "[T]hought can claim to set up universal categories," writes Derrida, "but . . . categories are always categories of a particular language" (Margins 181). Thought and language are merged in a monism of discourse, as are time in and time of composition; they are no longer separated in the dualism of a logic-based metaphysics.

Representation is no longer equal to reference. With no presence and no external unifying principle then what representation refers to is itself. It folds back onto

itself. Representation is not a reference to a discrete category or component but an instance of something inscribed in the discourse (Herrnstein Smith, On the Margins 8-9). And if the sacred equals the conditions for the possibility of meaning, then discourse itself becomes the location of what is sacred. Language is not an instrument for exposing the ideal; instead, idealization is a linguistic act. No single language can be considered a natural language if natural means the generation of a language in response to transcendent categories; what is natural is the possibility of constituting codes, "independent of any substance" (Derrida, Positions 21), either transcendent or material. Thus the modernist search for greater objectivity through greater precision or through revelation can only lead back into the infinite regress of ambiguity because it "inevitably becomes a search for a language that is more than language" (Thiher 37).

IX The Cognitive Playground

With discourse in control, "composition," in Stein's terms, "explains composition." The marketplace Stein found herself in was predominantly a marketplace of "readerly texts." She was composing "writerly texts," texts which caused discomfort, texts which did not so much generate new conventions as examine the constitution of conventions (Barthes, S/Z 4-6). To create demand for the writerly text, Stein had to explain the composition of the writerly text.

Stein worked in the continuous present, beginning again and again and using everything because she realized that language could not present something logically prepared and expect it to represent unassailable wholeness. Ambiguity means that any use of language is a rupture with such totality (Derrida, Writing and Difference 71). Language, as a system of differences, "generates forms of play whose meaning always surpasses any attempt to limit their possibility" (Thiher 87). So Stein stayed in the present, playing at the edge of these limits, starting again and again with whatever was at hand to defer or push away the demands of convention that she close the gaps.

Any work, of course, that physically displaces, has the effect of delimitation. But to avoid the trap of accepting physical delimitation as transcendental delimitation, a writer must somehow contrive to evoke the constituting of those limits by playing at their edge. To do this is to play at the edge of death and madness and sense (or non-sense) (Derrida, Living On 94-96). For Derrida this means playing with grams, which he considers to be the basic concept of semiotics. The gram is that bit of language that generates traces of meaning by being different from other bits while at the same time deferring adherence to those relational differences by generating supplementary (both as replacement of and as addition to) relational differences. What a text presents to us is traces, or the formal play of differences. The trace of meaning is the writers' and the

readers' contact with language.

Stein was protesting against convention from within by continuously following traces. She refused to use neologism, unlike Hugo Ball and Alexei Kruchenykh and the many concrete and sound poets who have followed, because to do so was to attempt to escape discourse in the search for a revelation of the transcendent. For Stein, composition in the continuous present represented an instance of discourse in process; she did not want to represent discourse as prepared product. She played with "grams," with the différance of language. Presence and prepared product bracket the play of differences until traces are solidified into essences. Beginning again and again replaces essences with similarities; it presents things that are always the same but always different; it is continually intervening by grafting onto the begun discourse new beginnings (Culler, On Deconstruction 141). It is necessary to begin again and again because the trace disappears under "erasure;" the word once found no longer belongs to the finder. The writer who would play with traces becomes the "bricoleur" who must use whatever is at hand.

The reader of this bricolage must discover the merged context in and context of the writerly text. He must, in other words, frame his "cognitive playground" (Herrnstein Smith 119). This framing action is not disinterested. The reader assumes reward. The text is for him linguistic currency from which he will fashion figures of power that

will serve his cognitive needs and desires--whether they be for pleasure or utility.

Textual meaning is, as Culler has put it, "context bound, but context is boundless" (On Deconstruction 123). Thus the reader must acknowledge and choose the contextual category constraints evoked by a text while at the same time acknowledging that he can never finally limit context. The contexts chosen are those within the cognitive frame which delimit not only the text but also the needs of the reader. For to read, as Harold Bloom has put it, is to make one's own figurations of power (Breaking of Form 6). In the writerly text these figures of power are not secure within figures of traditional power but are placed at the edge of death, madness and sense; their power is derived not from any absolute authority but from the ability to go on living at the edge without succumbing. The text is simply the instrument of this performance of figuration.

But still, the text evokes, and the figures must be inferable from the text. While the reader brings a cognitive frame to the text he can only do so in response to the ways in which the text constrains his interpretive action. To discover the constraints is to discover "correct compliance classes" (Herrnstein Smith 11) which delimit possible contexts. The fitness and the plausibility of the figures of interpretation are answerable to these textual constraints. Obvious misinterpretations are obvious mistakes in the categories of contextual constraint (49). But

since context is boundless, meaning can always be varied by the generation of new and plausible specifications of context.

For a readerly text, the final reward which is assumed by the reader is the acknowledgement of a pattern of coherence which allows the reader to sustain the myth that he has come to a greater understanding of reality. For a reader of a writerly text, such as one by Stein, the assumed final reward will not be a set meaning or acknowledgment of coherence and understanding but only the pleasure of the "cognitive experience" (Herrnstein Smith 44). Derrida has divided the critical field in two: the reader can choose to 1) decipher, or 2) to affirm free play (Structure Sign and Play 264). To do the first is to accept representation as a system of transcendental signifieds. To do the second is to accept that discourse delimits what we think. The first activity is inscribed in the discourse of the readerly text. The second activity is inscribed in the discourse of the writerly text. To explain the second activity is to explain how it is possible to feel if not completely comfortable at least not completely uncomfortable with the writerly text. In attempting such an explanation, Stein was trying to create a desire for the writerly text in the marketplace.

Chapter Two

"What is Chosen": Influence and Intertextuality and Grafting

I Text/Site and Field

Every writer, and indeed every reader, must in some way deal with the massive accumulation of prior texts. To write is unavoidably to inscribe within the existing textual field, that is, within what Derrida calls the texte général. There is no way to avoid connection with this general text; any attempt to do so would be as futile as trying to breathe in a vacuum.

A much desired element of Stein criticism is the discovery of appropriate points of connection between Stein's texts and the texte général; and much of the variety to be found in existing Stein criticism can be attributed to this struggle to find the appropriate points of connection. Before connections can be discovered, however, we must first consider what it is that constitutes a connection and what factors influence the relations between any given

text and the field of other texts that it finds itself connected to. Figuring out the nature of this relationship is perhaps especially crucial to any response to Gertrude Stein. For much of what Stein has written seems devoid of any clear and substantial relationship to what precedes and surrounds it. The way in which we conceive of the relationship between any one writer's texts and all other texts is therefore crucial, both to our understanding of writing writing and of reading writing. The contemporary reader of Stein must place these efforts to discover appropriate points of connection within both the context of contemporary reconceptualizations of the connections between text and field and within the field of Stein's own conceptualization of the relationship of text to field.

Traditionally, the relationship between a text and its prior texts has been labelled, "influence." Recent literary theory has added two words to this traditional one: intertextuality and grafting. These three words are often confused. However, if we place all of these words under the sway of the words "field" and "site" perhaps some sense of their interplay can be arrived at.

Traditionally, the word "influence" has been used to signal the study of literary sources, that is, the effect, in sequence, of one text upon another. This search for origins is hierarchical and epistemologically centered. A text is studied as the imaginative bringing together and culmination of elements from a series of other texts in a

cause/effect sequence. The analysis is linear and historical, but not single-lined: separate lines of influence--from the textual field--could converge in a given text--the textual site. Intertextuality is often confusedly reduced to this.[1]

This confusion, though perhaps not due to the "influence" of Harold Bloom is perhaps best exemplified by him. Bloom, although he developed his theory after the word intertextuality had gained currency, uses the word influence in a way that places it on the borderline between the newer concept of intertextuality and the traditional concept of influence. He, in effect, moved back a step or two from intertextuality and created a theory which contributed, especially in North America, to the possibilities for confusion.

Bloom revised the traditional conceptualization of influence in at least three ways. 1) The chain of influence remained linear but was reduced to the single line of an Oedipal conflict (you can only have one father) with the strong of one generation overcoming the strong of the preceding generation. Jonathan Culler calls Bloom's theory a family romance and refers to it as a genetic theory (Pursuit of Signs 109). To this point Bloom's theory, since it accepts the idea that the textual site uses texts within the field as "models," appears to be compatible with the traditional concept of influence. 2) But what at first appears to be a reduction to a more precise hierarchy and

dogma at the service of canonization is somewhat relieved of this reductionist impulse by Bloom's second change. The cause/effect sequence of traditional influence is transmuted to an inscription/re-inscription sequence. The nature of the change is therefore not homogeneous and towards unity but heterogeneous and dialectical--in the Marxist sense not the Hegelian sense: that is, thesis and antithesis are not resolved into synthesis but rather, antithesis is found to be inherent in each thesis. Bloom's "influence" is not evolutionary but revisionary. "[T]he poet," writes Bloom, "must misinterpret the father" (Map of Misreading 19). He uses the word "misprision," which he defines as creative correction; and what must be corrected or misinterpreted are the texts of the prior poet (Anxiety of Influence 30). The precursor's poem is an intolerable presence (Map 71) that the strong poet turns into absence through the dialectical process (finding inherent antithesis turns presence into absence). The strong poet sees the conventions of the old poem as idealizing and therefore blocking (since anything static [i.e., ideal] blocks the "movement" of creative misreading) (Map 28). His new, stronger poem revises the old in a gnostic (i.e., nonrational) "unbinding" of the old knowledge (Agon 4-5). Since the mystery and power of gnosis are behind misprision, it is the dialectical performance itself and not the resulting thesis (or prosthesis as Derrida will call it) of the dialectical performance that is privileged. Thus

there is a "priority of figurative language over meaning" (Agon 336). 3) We therefore have the third change: the site of the text is displaced from the material artifact (as centered location of the culmination of influences) to the variable figures produced by each reader, or writer, in the cognitive space of the relationship between parent text and offspring text. Misprision "is thus a disease of self-consciousness" (Anxiety 29). "[T]here are no texts, but only relationships between texts." Influence, for Bloom, is the trope of that relationship, the trope of "intra-textual differences" (Map 79). Thus, of the two most important characteristics of traditional studies of influence, hierarchy and centered presence, one, hierarchy, is retained and the other, centered presence, is refuted. When these two characteristics are not separately identified, confusion results.

II Text/Self and Field/Other

For Julia Kristeva, the first person to use the word, intertextuality is also this trope of relationship and difference, but the field within which these relationships and differences can be found is much larger than for Bloom because not restricted by hierarchies of strong poets. Even though Kristeva was writing about intertextuality well before Bloom was writing about influence (1966-67 as compared to 1973), her theory is the more extensive one. Kristeva's theory draws upon Bakhtin's idea of the dialogi-

cal text as a non-static performance generated in relationship to "others." The intertextual field is the limitless field of possible relationships. As with Bloom, the text is not a fixed point but a relationship, an intersection of surfaces (Desire in Language 65). And also, as with Bloom, the text is not "caused" by prior texts but is equally capable of affecting the predecessor texts; the new text absorbs and transforms the other texts (66).

For Bakhtin the "other" is the constantly available multiplicity of signs whose constantly shifting meanings the self of the text must constantly relate to and be related to. The fact that the ground is shifting, which implies that the self affects the other as much as the other affects the self, indicates that the textual condition is one of heteroglossia. The text is not an unchangeable homologous statement, but a self which is changeable depending upon its placement in relation to possible others. Thus the context (the multiplicity of others and the codes of those others) and not the text, as monolithic self, becomes the necessary condition of (figured) meaning.

An unchangeable text, a static text strictly tied to one system of meaning, is a monological text; a text whose meanings are found in the ongoing and shifting dialogue between the self of text and the others of context is a dialogical text. A monological text is susceptible to the exegesis of linear genealogies where homologous texts are paradigmatically related; the dialogical text opens into a

syntagmatic field of relations which Julia Kristeva chose to call the intertextual field.

The self is the textual site; the others are the textual field. But a dialogical relationship is more than just the relationship between two monological units, one named "self" and the other named "other." The other or "we" is no more definite than the self or "I." The self or the "I" as Barthes writes is a plurality of other texts and of other codes (S/Z 15-16). And so is every "other." As Jonathan Culler has written, significance is "not essentially or even primarily a question of what the other knows, certainly not a question of what he has in mind" (Pursuit of Signs 102). The figures of meaning are found in the relation between the two. We participate in a discursive space; sources and origins are therefore anonymous and paradoxical. Here we can speak of what Culler calls presupposition and pretexts (Pursuit 111) but not as origins, only as proprietor (reader, writer) controlled (through interest and desire) conditions and conventions. The search for origins is displaced by the search for proprietary controls.

III Blending and Clashing

The linguistic capital of the speech act or transaction, whether we label it "word" or "gram" or whatever, is therefore the intersection of surfaces and not a fixed point (Desire 65). And the intertext is the place where

texts absorb and transform each other, a joining of axes in the same space (66). In this way, all writing is a reading of other texts (69). Intertextuality is dialogue and not the search for source and influence. And since the very nature of dialogue is ambivalence (i.e., a multiplicity of possible meanings), as opposed to single-mindedness, the "we" and not the "I" (74), then monological writing is theological while dialogical writing in the intertext is anti-theological (77-78). Where the monological text is a text aspiring to transcendence, the dialogical text is a text of transformations (89). Any one textual site is therefore a re-distribution and permutation of the textual field or general text or culture (36). To speak of influence, to speak of paradigms, sources and origins is problematic; we have been forced into an ambivalent, dialogical, syntagmatic field. Therefore the text as "intertextual construct . . . [is] a product of various cultural discourses on which it relies for its intelligibility" (Culler, On Deconstruction 32). As Barthes has put it, the intertextual field is "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Image, Music, Text 146).

The act of inscribing, whether by writer or reader, becomes the site of this blending and clashing, or what Derrida has called grafting. As Culler has put it, grafting is contiguous binding, it "binds two discourses side by side" (On Deconstruction 136). Thus where there is grafting

we are never, can never be, in control of the implications for meaning; grafting is a denial of unity (182). The graft is in the margin, not at the centre; it is a textual prosthesis (not thesis, not antithesis); it is "self" imposing itself on "others" as well as "others" imposing themselves on "others;" it is name changing. Where in the traditional sense of influence a writer was seen to bring into unified presentation material from diverse sources, the critic now sees the writer as inscribing grafts in the margins of the intertextual field. Thus grafting is an act of dissemination (see Derrida's book of the same name); it is an act of combination, insertion, proliferation, intervention; it is a speech act, a linguistic performance within the intertextual field which, when we study it, gives us the scope for probabilistic commentary. Thus Culler's intelligibility is Derrida's deconstruction, is the discovery of grafts. Barthes agrees with this in The Pleasure of the Text where he writes that the task of semiotics is to "recognize the slightest resistences in the text" (37); for what is the use of using criticism to chase origins when the intertext signifies the impossibility of living outside of the infinite text (36).

Influence is the authoritative and named genealogy of a given text. The relationship of site to field is hierarchic, paradigmatic and centered. Intertextuality is the anonymous (non-centered) relationship of a text's "self" to "others" in a syntagmatic field. Chosen elements from the

field do not give birth to the new text (site); rather the new site is an inherent possibility of the field: the new site expands the field and changes our response to the already material elements of the field. Intertextuality is not historical, cause and effect relations but dialogic and socio/cultural relations. The graft is the material intervention of a new text upon the field. Within the textual field then, or what Derrida calls the 'texte général', a given site's intertextuality is the sum of its grafting actions, actions which absorb and relativize all probable (present and future) patterns of influence.

IV Stein's History of English Literature

Gertrude Stein describes for us her vision of the textual field within which she was inscribing her texts in her lecture, "What is English Literature." The most outstanding thing about this lecture, or at least, that thing which stands out the most, is her claim that "there is a great deal of literature but not so much but that one can know it. And that is the pleasant the delightful the fascinating the peaceful thing about literature that there is a great deal of it but that one can all one's life know all of it" (11). She is of course speaking figuratively and not literally, but it is the type of factual statement from which we expect only literalness and therefore causes us to inquire more deeply into what exactly is her context for such a claim, what is the context of this figure. Stein's

context is embodied in a series of key terms: God/Mammon, inside/outside, completion/separation-incompleteness-confusion-connection, history and choice. A look at these terms will provide the context for Stein's claim.

We can begin with the writer's choice between serving God and serving Mammon, a choice which does not "of course mean religion in any sense" (19). It is choosing either to say things directly (God) or indirectly (Mammon) (24). When writing directly there is completion (24); serving Mammon brings separateness and incompletion (26). Completion occurs inside; confusion and separateness occur outside (21). Thus to serve Mammon is to try to say what you believe the outside (others) want you to say (i.e., to attempt to respond to the perceived desires of the marketplace). Since what is outside can never be complete and since it is separated from the self writing, the result is bound to be confusion. To serve God is to write directly from what has been internalized, from what the self knows ("knowledge is the thing you know" [11]), and is therefore, in terms of the "self" writing, to be complete. Writing for Mammon is an attempt to write what has already been written, writing for God is writing as writing (54). In order for Stein to make the claim she makes at the beginning of this lecture, she must be serving God and writing directly of an internal sense of completeness. This sense of writing directly structures her lecture.

This too secure formulation of writing (a formulation

which props up this lecture) appears, however, to be disrupted by Stein's historical analysis of English literature. There are two types of history and two types of literature she tells us, there is "the literature as it is a history of it and the literature as it is a history of you" (13). Since for Stein, English Literature is what she knows about it, it is possible for her to know all of it (12). It is therefore not the "it" of English Literature that is inside her but the "feeling of the way English literature feels inside" her (17). The history of English literature she is about to give us, then, is an internal and complete history of "her" not of "it". She is careful to acknowledge, however, that there are other things than a "self's" complete insideness, and that for those "who have an active need to be completely completed" (20), "[a]nything is true enough" (37).

Stein's capsule history of English literature underlines this arbitrariness of completeness and its fragility. For there are two types of confusion and incompleteness. When "the confusion comes . . . from the outside it is soon over and if not over then absorbed" (20) by that completeness for which anything is true enough if it is what is inside and what one knows. But Stein also recognizes that "when the confusion comes from the inside then it is very confused confusion" (20).

Her history of literature has four periods, referred to as centuries; and two definite stages, which are marked by

the shift of confusion from the outside to the inside and by the kinds of choices that mark this shift. She sums up the history of English literature in this way: "[o]ne century has words, another century chooses words, another century uses words, and then another century using the words no longer has them" (27). For Stein, of course, a century is not necessarily one hundred years but rather an indefinite unit of time identified by the continuation of a period of literature.

In more detail then, her history sounds like this: "[y]ou do remember Chaucer . . . not how it looks but how it sounds, how simply it sounds as it sounds. That is as I say because the words were there. They had not yet to be chosen, they had only as yet to be there just there. . . . [T]hey are not chosen as words, they are already there. . . . They did not care so much about what they said . . . but they liked the words" (29-30). During the "sixteenth century [the next century according to Stein] . . . they chose the words, they chose them with so much choice that everything made the song they chose to sing. It was no longer just a song it was a song of words that were chosen . . . . [C]hoosing was a lively occupation. . . . [I]t was the specific word next to the specific word. . . . There was no confusion" (30-31). There was no confusion because they were concerned with what they were choosing, that is, with the material, and not with what they were saying. Next comes a century of confusion, the age of Milton, Pope,

Gibbon, Swift, and Johnson. During this century "they began to think more of how they wanted to say what they had come to decide to say than they did of choosing words to say what they chose the words to say. . . . They no longer chose the words to be next to each other but they did choose and clearly chose all the words that were to go together. . . . There was choosing but there was the choosing of a completed thing and so there was no completing it" (32-33). These first three centuries, the fourteenth, the sixteenth and the eighteenth, take up five hundred years. And so far the progression seems systematic. First, words were simply there and were used by artisan-like writers just as any other artisan would use his material. Instruction, or utility, and delight seemed to be unquestioningly balanced. Next, the material itself, and the choosing of the material became the focus. Aesthetic delight in the material itself seems to have gained ascendence over utility. Then came an overbearing concern with what was being said. Utility reversed the scales on delight. The movement progressed from no thought of choice to a consciousness of choice and a subsequent struggle between the choices.

After the Napoleonic wars, according to Stein, everything changed and the second stage, comprised of her fourth century, began. The idea of choice, and not the objects of choice, became the focus. After the Napoleonic wars everything began to change very quickly. "That words were there

by themselves simply was gone." "[T]he confusion of how and what was the way that any one at that time had to find was the way to say what they had to say was gone." "And the clarity of something having completion that too was gone completely gone." "[W]e are still in the shadow" of this (37). The nineteenth century, then, was no longer a time of description, of describing completeness, but instead a time when "explaining was invented" (40). "In the nineteenth century what they thought was not what they said, but they said what they thought and they were thinking about what they thought" (39-40). Writing became self-conscious. And since "if you think about what you are thinking you are not thinking about a whole thing," thinking in the nineteenth century became separated, fragmented and "something that can only be expressed by phrases, neither by words nor by sentences" (43-44). "[T]hey were beginning not to know everything about . . . everything that was existing outside of them" (47). And so even choosing phrases was not enough. Paragraphs were needed. For "paragraphs [do not] . . . express an emotion but . . . they register or limit an emotion" (48). Since the phrase "no longer soothed," something more was needed (49). This brings Stein to the twentieth century, which is still the nineteenth century in terms of Stein's periodization but also separated because at this time English literature is taken over by American literature. The twentieth century brings us back to a sixteenth century type of choosing, but the choosing moves

inside from the outside. "There is inside it as separation, a separation from what is chosen to what is that from which it has been chosen" (51). This separation is not connection but disconnection: "the disembodied way of disconnecting something from anything and anything from something" (53). Stein's too secure formulation of inside completeness and outside incompleteness lasts only to the end of her third period, the eighteenth century. After that the confusion which is really confused moves inside because, through the process of questioning choice, the parts, that when internalized made soothing wholes, no longer soothed.

V Two Contradictions

But in this lecture of Stein's, it is precisely this formulation which allows completeness to exist inside which gives structure to her explanation of the "whole" of the history of English literature. Two contradictions therefore come to the surface, both of which lead us into the contemporary theory of intertextuality. First, inside and outside are no longer separated. They are now both inside in the form of internalized questioning of the process of choice. Where the inside used to be the domain of the mind and the outside used to be daily living, and where the inside used to account for that outside, that daily living (i.e., to represent it), representing the outside is now no longer the object of the inside, which is to say of the mind and its vehicle of exteriorization, writing, because

the inside no longer has a "connection with living and daily living" (54). Writing is now concerned with how choosing is done, in other words, with writing itself, with inscribing and re-inscribing within the field of existing inscription. When the inside and outside were separate, Stein could claim to know all about English literature because what she knew was all she knew. When the incompleteness and confusion of the outside come inside, this claim loses any figurative meaning it might have had.

The second contradiction has to do with the choice between serving God and serving Mammon. In the first three centuries, or periods, of the four in Stein's history (i.e., the fourteenth to the eighteenth), making a choice between serving God and serving Mammon was an important one. Beginning in the nineteenth century, however, "mammon and god were interchangeable" (emphasized by the interchanged word order) (45). This, however, only holds for the writer who has internalized the outside and no longer represents daily living. For such a writer both writing as you are writing (writing directly) and writing what has been written (writing indirectly) are the same thing because they are both acts of inscribing in the margins and not of theologically motivated representation, which is to say, that representation is dialogized; there is no longer a text that can be considered monological because the necessary philosophical support has disappeared. We must assume, or read into Stein, that for the writer who still

represents daily living, the writer who still writes for a pre-nineteenth century audience (i.e., struggles to monologically represent the real), the distinction and the choice still hold. But Stein is writing for a twentieth century audience in the margins of a textual field contemporary to her. Her claim to be writing writing directly (i.e., to be inscribing internal completeness) is therefore undermined.

We can defuse these defusing contradictions, however, if we take into account the performative nature of writing writing. By over-determining meaning (by claiming completeness) while at the same time internalizing incompleteness, or indeterminacy, and by presenting choice as the subject of textual inscription, Stein is acknowledging that to claim completeness is to over-determine meaning and yet at the same time a desired act for a self which must intervene, or graft itself onto, the existing textual field. It is a self-contextualizing act of audacious renaming which challenges the field precisely because the field demands to be challenged. Thus when we read this lecture of Stein's we cannot read it as a monolithically complete and over-determined theory of the history of English literature; rather, we must read it as a site in relation to the field. Her history as a complete history of literature does not stand on its own but only as a trope, as a figure, whose internal contradictions help to guide us to appropriate points of connection with the field. What she has inside of

her is a history of literature which comprises for her the field within which she can place her textual site. Her claim to know everything is the figure of the relation between field and site that allows her to act, to perform textually. She is careful to claim this as "her" history, "the history of you" and not as the definitive external history, "the history of it" (13).

She has explained to us a syntagmatic field of "others" that have gone into her textual performing, not specific influential texts, sources and origins, but a way of thinking about the choices to be made from other texts. Thus, to connect a Stein text to a nineteenth century text is to consider the choices open to and made by that text's writer (according to extant conventions) in relation to the choices available to and made by Stein, in relation to the choices available and made by the "self" reading Stein reading the nineteenth century.

VI Filling the Margins

Many of Stein's texts give the reader a head start in selecting appropriate connections to the textual field which, now that we have a context within which to read these connections, can be fruitfully explored. Q.E.D. can be considered in relation to Henry James. Three Lives can be considered in relation to Flaubert's Trois Contes. Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded, Friendship Faded can be considered in relation to the poems of Georges Hugnet.

The portraits can be related to the portrait as genre; the plays to play as genre; The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas to the conventions of autobiography; Blood on the Dining Room Floor to the conventions of detective fiction. This list could be continued at length. Of course, to suggest that such connections can be made is hardly revolutionary. But the context of appropriateness is. For we are no longer looking at how Stein's texts relate to prior "models" but at how they relate to the the conventions which influenced choice. Barthes' points of resistance to the general text become privileged over any attempt to create genealogies.

A good example of this re-inscribing of the points of resistance, of grafts, is bp Nichol's commentary on a passage from Ida (figure 1). We might re-inscribe this yet again. Nichol's commentary is visually presented as marginalia. And it is very much an inscription of his "self" at the points where he grafts that self onto Stein's self which becomes an element in Nichol's other. In his comment on orange blossoms, for example, Nichol tells us that his "mother's wedding ring had them clustered on it."

On the page of commentary by Nichol that I have chosen to copy, he makes four marginal notes. Let me consider them one by one.

1) "Stein makes use": Tuesday, as Nichol has pointed out earlier in his commentary is really "two's day." But there is no two in Stein's counting system, only the doubleness

Stein makes use of the doubleness of this little logic loop. Everything here is not Two, yet is Two + yet, too, is one. Really, of course, it [illegible] 1. But it is not Two.

Indeed here is a third "I" who restates the theme of I + I's desire to dIalogue with self. I talks to I. Thus for any of us there is an experience within self of "I?" "da?". Q+A.

One day it was not Tuesday, two people came to see her great-aunt. They came in very carefully. They did not come in together. First one came and then the other one. One of them had some orange blossoms in her hand. That made Ida feel funny. Who were they? She did not know and she did not like to follow them in. A third one came along, this one was a man and he had orange blossoms in his hat brim. He took off his hat and he said to himself here I am, I wish to speak to myself. Here I am. Then he went on into the house.

Ida remembered that an old woman had once told her that she Ida would come to be so much older that not anybody could be older, although, said the old woman, there was one who was older.

Orange blossoms were + are associated with marriage (my mother's wedding ring had them clustered on it) + thus a third fruit/tree/sexual +/or romantic word is added (i refer here to its associational net + not some private symbolism of Stein's). The "or" of "orange" (part of the "either/or" two term formulation) is also important.

This reiterates a point Stein made in THE MAKING OF AMERICANS, that we are never to ourselves as anything other than young men + women in our consciousness of self. That the idea of "older" is something only the "old" can convey to us. This is underlined later in the text by Ida's growing older leading to her being sixteen. It is those for whom time is almost over that the concept "old" is fully revealed to.

Figure 1

of one plus one. Nichol is remembering here Stein's insistence in Useful Knowledge and many other places that "all parts are principal parts" (11). We begin again and again; there is no sequence apart from combination. Therefore we shouldn't count one, two, three, but instead, one, one, one. Stein is resisting ordered sequence; Nichol is resisting the resistance of the "logical loop" of Stein's resistance. Two is two and yet it is not two.

2) "Indeed here is a third I": The third "I" restating, grafting on, another "I + I's desire to dIalogue" is Nichol himself, inserting his own self into Stein's text as other. (He is doubling the "I" of the third man with the orange blossoms in his hat for he is an "I" that himself brings a reference to orange blossoms, his mother's, to the text.) He is claiming the contiguity of one more one. There is a question and answer, a point of resistance and resulting graft, for every "I" that experiences the "'I?' 'da'" (yes me) of Ida.

3) "Orange blossoms": The "associational net" of orange is privileged, not "some private symbolism of Stein's." The orange as "third fruit/tree" refers back to Nichol's own commentary (see Nichol 51) on pear trees and cherry trees. He expands the textual field here by grafting on references to the sexual/romantic connotations of these trees and their fruit: thus the "associational net" (with which to catch the fruit). The point here is that Nichol, through his marginal insertion has become his own proprietor of

the text; he has brought his own associations. He is not looking for authorial intentions and "private symbolisms." And then there is the "either/or" of orange. If the cherry is associated with deflowering, then it is implied here that the "or" "ange" (French for angel) is associated with the condition before deflowering. Thus the orange blossom is the flower carried at the wedding ceremony (according to Nichol). Derrida's play with the word "hymen" might be grafted on here (see Dissemination).

4) "This reiterates": And in fact could be reiterated ad infinitum in any manner of way. The compelling word is "old." Stein considers it. Nichol considers it again and refers to another Stein consideration of it. In the copied passage from Ida Stein plays on the slipperiness of any superlative--here the 'oldest'. Nichol grafts onto this the cliché that we are only as old as we feel and that we only feel old when mortality can no longer be pushed into the future. Nichol rationalizes the part he plays in this dialogue, and the inclusion of the material that seems to concern him more than it concerns the text quoted, by drawing attention to other Stein texts where his concern is shared by her. Thus the single concern of the quoted passage is brought into the whole field of concerns about age and aging. And the point which Nichol chooses to emphasize in his dialogue with the text identifies his particular proprietary action.

And so the commentary continues, is continuous.

Chapter Three

"What Happened": Knowing the Meaning of Force

I Clarity and Force

In the Henry James section of Four in America Gertrude Stein writes:

> Mr. Owen Young made a mistake, he said the only thing he wished his son to have was the power of clearly expressing his ideas. Not at all. It is not clarity that is desirable but force.
>
> Clarity is of no importance because nobody listens and nobody knows what you mean no matter what you mean, nor how clearly you mean what you mean. But if you have vitality enough of knowing enough of what you mean, somebody and sometime and sometimes a great many will have to realize that you know what you mean and so they will agree that you mean what you know, what you know you mean, which is as near as anybody can come to understanding any one.
>
> (127-28)

This clarity that Stein disparages is the systematic and coherent exposition of knowledge which is prior to the exposition itself. This clarity requires a transparent language which is at the service of knowledge.[1] But for Stein, expression is not dependent upon prior knowing; on

the contrary, knowing is dependent upon expressing. Force is more important because it has to do with the process of knowing what you mean, and of communicating not the knowledge itself but rather the understanding that "you know what you mean."[2]

"What is knowledge"? she asks in her lecture "Plays." Her answer: "[o]f course knowledge is what you know and what you know is what you do know" (94). And what you know is what you compose, and "one does not know how it [the composition] happened until it is well over beginning" (Stein, Composition as Explanation 24). Clarity is prepared unity of thought. Force is unprepared knowing. What you know is not an "answer" but an action. Stein forces this upon us by repeating "what you know is what you know," changing the phrase only to add the verb "do," a verb used intransitively in the present indicative which insists upon the activity rather than the object. In "A Vocabulary of Thinking" she writes: "[it] is a pleasure to converse without an answer" (How To Write 351). "Clarity is of no importance" where answers are not the source of pleasure and are therefore not desired.

II Energeia and Enargeia

The concept of force, vitality, or energy is not a new concept in the discussion of literature. However, unlike Stein, who places it (clearly) in opposition to clarity of expression (i.e., different from and deferring clarity),

traditional theorists have seen force as an agent of teleology and have placed it in apposition to clarity. It has been at the service of clarity of expression. Traditionally, force is seen to animate the source or seed in which the end is inscribed. Aristotle called this creative force, energeia. As a champion of the value of the material world, unlike Plato, who placed the ideal at the pinnacle of his hierarchy, thereby diminishing the value of everything placed beneath it, Aristotle invoked energeia in order to explain the relationship between the material world and the ideal world of metaphysics in more positive terms than Plato's, whose conceptualization of imitation was pejorative. Aristotle did this by suggesting that energeia was a life force or energizing entity which made biology or the natural world a part of metaphysics.[3] Energeia (force) was a substance which animated biological life and made it a facet of or a stage in the evolution towards the ideal, rather than an inadequate imitation of it.

Attempts to explain this life force constitute the branch of philosophy known as vitalism. Naive early formulations claimed that the energizing entity of life was to be found in such substances as "breath," "the bodily fluids," "blood," or "a fiery spirit." A more sophisticated Aristotle thought that it was contained within the psyche. Thus energeia became an entelechy: a life animating substance undiscoverable by science but none-the-less materially present. But no matter what this substance was

called or where it was thought to exist, its purpose was always to animate, achieve, and maintain organic wholeness. The energizing entity was that which moved the seed towards full growth and which guaranteed that the form of that full growth was contained within the seed. Gertrude Stein saw no reason to believe that the seed and full growth were organically related. Even though this common sense view of things seems irrefutable Stein believed that the present condition was always somehow different from the past condition and not dependent upon it. This is apparent in one of her most often quoted lines: "[w]hat is the use of being a little boy if you are going to grow up to be a man" (Geographical History of America 22). In her view, the boy and the man were not causally connected so why must the one always be forced into a dependent relationship with the other. To anybody who unknowingly accepts entelechy, this is obvious nonsense. But it is the sort of nonsense that separates the modern from the pre-modern.

Plutarch can be presented as a spokesman for the pre-modern. He suggested that energeia finds a natural culmination not only in biological life but also in art. He emphasized the importance of the animating substance of life to art by calling the verisimilitudinous imitation of the organic wholeness of energized matter, enargeia (see Steiner, Colors of Rhetoric 12-13). Enargeia represented the wholeness that energeia engendered. Thus both Aristotle's energeia and Plutarch's enargeia are forces of

clarity and both attempt to explain the presence within matter of transcendent order. The force of this vitalism is therefore not a rupturing force, as is the force demanded by Stein who would separate in our minds the boy from the man, but a constraining force, a force which patrols the borders of epistemology. This concept of energeia, and its relationship to transcendent order, was easily accommodated by both classically oriented artists, who believed in discovering and prescribing ideal aesthetic forms, and by romantically oriented artists, who believed in a multiplicity of individually inspired, organically generated forms which provided access to transcendent order.

III Three Modernisms

Vitalism, however, was just as easily accommodated by modernism. The energy was still there and still necessary, we had just mistaken its direction. We had been too quick to accept that it, like everything else, was headed in the direction of the metaphysical centre when in reality, like language, it was far less constrained. While this energy could force fragments into continuity it could also render those same fragments discontinuous. Thus, with regard to vitalism, we can heuristically divide the modernist field in three: 1) a non-mechanistic, heroic and inevitably apocalyptic world; 2) a consciously and intentionally created mechanical world superior (because deserving of a greater measure of assent) to the unavoidable chaos of the real

world; and, 3) a world where inherently elusive order becomes the locus of desire and pleasure.

Vitalism entered the non-mechanistic world through the figure of the hero, through Carlyle, the German Idealists and a misreading of Nietzsche. As Eric Bentley writes, it was "a religion of Dionysian life and energy" (Cult of the Superman 233). It was a world peopled by the Carlylean heroes of Heroes and Hero Worship and by Nietzsche's Dionysian overman. It was more than Aristotle's energeia because it was a force that could be both positive and creative and negative and destructive. It was the exuberance of carnival and Bacchic revel which has its roots in undermining authority. The hero was the man of action, an elite man set apart who had great individual sources of power to draw upon. He was a renegade who admitted to no influences. He was capable of irresponsibility. He was rebellious. The artist was, in Bentley's terms, an "Heroic Vitalist." This "Heroic Vitalism" has, however, a teleology: apocalyptic revelation. What we have and the ways in which we explain ourselves to ourselves are inadequate and worthy of contempt. This breeds rebellion amongst those with the will to be heroes, and ushers in an age of overmen who possess the will to power and who recognize their revealed apocalyptic condition. Such artists have a vision which surpasses and is not limited by the material end inherent in apocalypse. But in the end, we discover that the greater vision of "the vitalists sought

the reunification of self-mind and body, passions and intellect" (John, Supreme Fictions 5). The apocalypse is nothing more than the revelation of a divine creator and a more just organicism. This Heroic Vitalism is to be found in such modernist writers as Bernard Shaw, D.H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats, and Wallace Stevens. It can also be found in the mysticism inherent to such movements as Russian Futurism and Zurich Dada.

Mechanistic modernists see this rupturing force not as apocalypse and revealed end but as initial separation. The first words of T.E. Hulme's Speculations are emblematic:

> One of the main achievements of the nineteenth century was the elaboration and universal application of the principal of continuity. The destruction of this conception is, on the contrary, an urgent necessity of the present.
>
> (3)

The sense of rupture and discontinuity here, however, does not lead to apocalypse as it does for the heroic vitalists; it is the periodic rupture which Foucault concerns himself with in The Order of Things. Vitality, energy and force are needed at the end of one period in order to break into the new period. Vitality, energy and force are the qualities which allow the artist to expose the discontinuity in the appearance of continuity, and to fragment the apparent wholeness of extant systems of belief. Where before there was a continuity of elements in a coherent system now there are fragments in discontinuity. As Stein would say, nothing has changed but the way in which we see things. The old

systems have been ruptured: we no longer have the pots themselves but only the shards of those pots--even though we may have all the necessary shards for reconstruction, the reconstructed pot would no longer be adequate to our "needs," our "desires." The fragment is what is left when, as Yeats has written, "the centre cannot hold." The centre, the a priori which supports belief, is removed and "the falcon cannot hear the falconer." When the elements in a system cannot communicate with the centre they become discontinuous fragments even though they have not changed intrinsically. But unlike Yeats, who sought a greater revealed myth, the mechanistic vitalists worked to create a conscious fiction worthy of assent (a fiction, because conscious, being more real than nature).

After the rupture the question becomes one of what to do with the remaining fragments. The fragment itself and discontinuity are the focus. Force and vitality, rupture and fragmentation, as for all modernists, are elemental to the ongoing condition, they do not simply signal a point of departure. Hulme, drawing upon Bergson's "élan vital," the force of change in the material world, and upon the facilitation of logic (geometrically arranged fragments of thought) in fragmented (because spatialized) durational time, influenced artists to use fragments in a forceful and geometrical (logical) way. Humanist ideologies drew upon absolute values. But, he argued, since there are no absolute values, only vital things, we must use these inde-

pendent vital things in geometric forms (Speculations 4). Philosophy and art had to become the science of appearances as appearances (i.e., conscious fictions) and not the (false) expression of absolutes (i.e., representations of reality). The scientific and the geometric represent what is present in our consciousness and not what might be ideally. The absolute is arbitrary because ideal; the scientific, because limited by consciousness, is merely contingent. The geometric configuration of fragments is as close to objectivity as we can get. The result is a call for a new classicism, a classicism sympathetic to the geometric images of abstractionism. The new art is geometrical and not organic; it is science and not naturalism.

This non-absolute geometrical relation of the fragments of appearance leads to the modernism of the autonomous artifact. More directly it led to Imagism. Indirectly it can be seen in Eliot and the high modernism of the Anglo-American tradition that surrounds him. The initial sense of rupture, fragment and discontinuity, however, can also be seen in many of the avant-garde movements that glorified the machine without ever arriving at a classical sense of the autonomous artifact. Vorticism and Italian Futurism are prime examples. The vortex, according to the Vorticists, was a fixed geometric axis. Energy was harnessed by the intellect into machine forms which were better than natural forms. The Italian Futurists saw aesthetics in terms of numbers (as did the Pythagoreans). Art was not to serve

emotional gush but rather machines, mathem[redacted] and science.

Although both the Heroic Vitalists and the Mechanistic Vitalists accept the force of fragmentation and discontinuity, they see it as something that art, in acknowledging, must somehow dominate. The third group see these efforts at domination as timidity. What must be overcome by the overman is not discontinuity but the timid desire to dominate discontinuity.

IV The Covering Cherub

Harold Bloom is one contemporary critic who deals very much with the issue of power. He is most often thought of as the critic who, in The Anxiety of Influence and subsequent related works, establishes a canon according to the poet's ability to forcefully misread his strong predecessors. Bloom privileges the power of misprision. But his theory of power also concerns itself with the present. Dealing with the past, that is with existing texts, is to deal with and to overpower the Sphinx and his riddles. Dealing with the future apparent in the present is to force oneself past the Cherub, the holder of life; it is to uncover the Cherub, the demon of continuity. The poet is a prophet of discontinuity. The Cherub is a Cartesian covering of "the dumbfounding abyss between ourselves and the object." The Covering Cherub as demon of continuity "imprisons the present in the past, and reduces a world of differences into a grayness of uniformity." Bloom insists

that "poetry must leap, it must locate itself in the discontinuous universe," for, "[d]iscontinuity is freedom" (Anxiety of Influence 38-39). "[T]he Cherub is creative anxiety." He is "the blocking agent who obstructs creativity" (36). The artist needs force, persistance and remorselessness to get past him. In this context, knowledge of a poem (in the Cartesian sense--i.e., a discovery of the continuity of the intending cogito) is "the loss of the poem's power" (43).

The artist chasing the Cherub is the artist always in contest with the chaos of reality, in agon: the Greek word for contest privileged by Nietzsche and which later became, significantly, the title of one of Bloom's books. In this contest the forceful artist recognizes that "the secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is, to live dangerously" (Nietzsche, Gay Science 112). To be independent is to sacrifice faith for freedom (Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil 57). And although independence is a dangerous game (52), such "independence . . . is the privilege of the strong" (42). So the poet here is a Nietzschean overman, but an overman concerned only with power over self, not with power which is solely over others. This overman contests the uncanny, the shadowy elusive entity always at the edge of perception that can never be brought into focus, and not the canny overman who organizes the chaos of his passions in order to attain worldly power. (For Nietzsche, Socrates was more worthy of

emulation than Nero even though Socrates ended his life in prison, sentenced to death. Socrates' power over self was a liberating power; Nero's power was over others.) The artists who do enter the contest and who do confront the uncanny have a passion for knowledge which requires painful experiments (121). Those who do not have the force to enter the contest, that is, those timid ones who depend on the sort of clarity derived from the rules that result from faith (100), are those unwilling to sacrifice the security of that faith for the nothingness that takes its place (i.e., the absence or lack of presence).

V Stein's Knowing

For Stein this action of knowing as a contest with nothing was essential to her understanding of writing. She was not interested in revealing, bit by bit, in suspenseful narrative, that which was already known. She wanted the suspense to be hers and not just her audience's. She wasn't narrating stories, but rather, narrating knowing. "Everybody knows so many stories what is the use of telling another story" (Plays 118), she complains. "[W]hat I wanted to do in my play was what everybody did not always know nor always tell" (119). She wanted to live dangerously and to challenge the uncanny. "I wanted still more to tell what could be told if one did not tell anything," she writes (119). She wanted to express knowing "without telling what happened" (119). She was at the edge of knowing and she was

telling about it. For it is "quite exciting to hear something unknown really unknown" (117). She took risks and experimented. She was trying to force herself past the Covering Cherub. Her plays just happened to be the works through which she attempted to explain this but, as she tells us: "I have of course always been struggling with this thing, to say what you nor I nor nobody knows" (121).

This third modernist sense of force is an emancipation of meaning. Force here is opposite to the "accomplished, the constituted, the constructed" writes Derrida (Writing and Difference 5); and "[f]orm fascinates only when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself. That is, to create" (4-5). We don't need clarity, says Stein, we need to understand the vitality of someone knowing what they mean. Finding totality and anchoring oneself to it is a loss of force, it indicates an impotence to go further. Because force is not an encasing, that is, a discovery of beginning middle and end, but an enduring of successive, contiguous fragments (22). "[F]orce is a certain pure and infinite equivocality which gives signified meaning no respite" (25). And since there can be nothing which is pure the text of force is a text about nothing. It is not what we speak of or about but what we speak around.

VI The Force of Knowing

This is all very interesting and even forceful but if taken to its logical (clear and impotent) conclusion are we

not left impotent? What then can be written (critically as well as creatively)? Of what does "nothing" exist? (Can such an oxymoron really mean anything?) Is everything reduced to babble and prattle of no value? Are all texts (from masterpiece to doggerel) thus thrown into the same tasteless soup? If force got us into this then, if we are to save the text without succumbing to (force-denying-avoiding) impotence, force must get us out.

We can begin with Derrida where he writes that "writ-[ing] . . . like pure force, . . . has . . . a relationship to . . . exterior, to visible form, to structure . . . to . . . death" (29). It has, in other words, a relationship to the past. But the freedom of writing is the freedom to augur, to use the present to enter the future rather than to recapture the past. "[W]riting is <u>inaugural</u>." It is dangerous and anguishing. It <u>is</u> the future in the present. "To write is to know what has not yet been produced [and] . . . has no other dwelling place. . . . Meaning must await being . . . [writing is] written to inhabit itself" (11). To write or inscribe a text is "to lower meaning while simultaneously elevating inscription" (10). Force inhabits the space forced open by present inscription between past and future meaning (see Derrida, Of Grammatology 112). It is the act of knowing as Stein has put it. To be a critic of such writing is to be a critic of the force of knowing. It is to create a recognition of and an understanding of that knowing.

This continuity of meaning-deferred inscription with form and structure is important. It is a necessary part of the shadow of the uncanny. As with Nietzsche, the Dionysian alone comes to nothing; it must always create within view of, that is, within a field that also admits the Apollonian. If force is inscribing within a difference, there must be something within which to be different. That something is the past and so the text necessarily plays off, or grafts itself onto, this field of mimetic representation; but only to violently force upon us the "pathos of mimetic desire and envy" (Hartman, Saving the Text 120). Texts do join things but not within present ideologies. And so inevitably we see "epiphanic raptures . . . replaced by epistemic ruptures" (xx). But these ruptures can't be allowed simply to disappear into some great black hole that swallows all presumptions of textual creation. "To call a text literary," suggests Geoffrey Hartman "is to trust that it will make sense eventually . . . . It is a way of 'saving the phenomena' of words that are out of the ordinary or bordering on the nonsensical" (xxi).

The "sense" that we trustingly believe will be there can be called the text's identity. This identity is a naming agreed upon by text and reader. Language names. Naming within inscribed difference, however, can no longer be thought of as imitation; it is dissemination. The fragments of a text are a bricolage. Any attempt to move beyond this bricolage is an attempt to unify, which is self-

defeating since the search for totality is the desire to be without desire that strips the text of its power to come into being (Hartman 65; 97). The total text is the impotent text. (It is, in effect, a text which has never come into being. The claims that it has, as deconstruction has shown, are false. Thus new ways of reading do not depend upon new texts. Existing texts are simply re-read; gaps are exposed where none were thought to exist.) Forceful texts, on the other hand, are texts born of desire which generate desire and are, as Hartman calls them, "wild pairings without a priest" (48).

There is still a problem to be faced. If there is a silence at the edge of madness (non-sense) where nothing can be spoken, where there is no presence, how then do we name (identify) this nothing (absence of presence)--even though we know where to find it and what it places itself in difference to? Is it enough to say that the culmination of desire is a provisional act of mastery, a "wild pairing without a priest"?

Geoffrey Hartman talks of recognition or acknowledgement in opposition to the exact sciences which require an identity to be an absolute truth. We, as readers can either accept or refuse to accept (recognize or acknowledge) the "sense" of discontinuity (non-sense) (155). Truth is absolute; truthfullness is that which is recognized. "Truthfullness" is therefore a somewhat misleading term since it indicates an evasion. But it is also useful since it re-

minds us of the nature of what we are evading; such a reminder is a useful prod to recognition when inscription is within that which it ruptures. We recognize within this (non?)sense of inscription a doubleness that becomes very useful to our search for identity. Hartman develops this sense of doubleness with a series of terms which play off against each other: bind/bond; wound/heal; curse/blessing. The Derridean double bind becomes also a double bonding: these are different forms of the same word but meaning runs the gamut from forced constraint (binding) to contingent joining (bonding), from totality to bricolage. Madness, the state of mind at the edge of nothingness becomes a frenzy of simultaneously wounding and healing (Hartman 124). Language is simultaneously our curse and our blessing. The difference is inscribed within and therefore any dialectical synthesis is the deferred uncanny presence.

VII The Seam Between

What we are left with is a textual erotics of force which must create forceful figures of knowing meaning (identities) from within this gap between sense and nonsense. Roland Barthes attempted such an erotics in The Pleasure of the Text. Interestingly, this short work can be read as a grafting onto much of what Stein writes in her lecture "Plays." In the section of his text titled "Edges" Barthes writes:

> Whence, perhaps, a means of evaluating the works of our modernity: their value would

> proceed from their duplicity. By which it must be understood that they always have two edges. The subversive edge may seem privileged because it is the edge of violence; but it is not violence which affects pleasure, nor is it destruction which interests it; what pleasure wants is the site of a loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation, the dissolve which seizes the subject in the midst of bliss. Culture thus recurs as an edge: in no matter what form. (8)

The figures of identity are located within this site of loss. Barthes differentiates between the text of pleasure and the text of bliss. The text of pleasure is the comfortable text of accumulation--a sticking to one edge and gathering together of material well-being as it were. The text of bliss is a text whose site is that of erotic sensation where bliss is momentary and does not, cannot, accumulate. Where pleasure adds to what is already "present," bliss is the loss of illusory presence. Pleasure respects the whole, bliss does not and cannot. Bliss occurs when what happens (the meaning of inscription) disappears as soon as it happens (appears). Such inscription leaves "nothing" in the site of bliss; it only passes through it (13).

What the reader voyeuristically enjoys are "the abrasions . . . upon the fine surface" (11-12). One edge will not do, two are needed: both form and the subversion of form; binding and bonding; wounding and healing; cursing and blessing. The text needs a bit of an ideology, a bit of shadow, a palimpsest, a chiaroscuro. Without this it is "a text without fecundity." There is then no second edge, no

partner (32). "Neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so" (7). These two abrasive edges are not the conflicting actions in a story which constitute an enigma to be solved; the edges are in convention and the use of convention. The gap is in the expressing, not the space between expressed narrative units.

How can we recognize these edges? By looking at the text's relationship to convention. "[A]ny completed [i.e., wholly conventional] utterance runs the risk of being ideological," (50) of reducing itself to a single edge. The sentence, according to Barthes, runs this risk because it completes things. The paragraph, on the other hand, is open. Stein, without the complex theoretical intertext available to her that was available to Barthes and to us, provides an astoundingly clear echo (for her present day readers) of this. She makes this distinction in her lecture entitled "Plays;" it is a distinction that she had previously puzzled with in "Sentences and Paragraphs" written in 1930 and published in the Plain Editions How to Write in 1931. The conclusion: "sentences are not emotional and . . . paragraphs are" (93). The reason: "the emotional paragraphs are made up of unemotional sentences" (93). A sentence, by itself, is a single edge. Emotion, or force, comes from the combination of edges, of sentences, into paragraphs. This combination (not contradiction) is once again a problem of living in present composition (104), and

of knowing what you know (94). The trouble with the then current theater was that there was always a syncopation, a lack of coordination between what was happening on stage and what the audience was seeing. It was a question of uncoordinated tempos. The theater, as Stein saw it, was more concerned with establishing narrative enigmas to be solved than with presenting present knowing. Thus there is nervous excitement and not emotional excitement. "In the real thing it is a completion of the excitement, in the theater it is a relief from the excitement" (96). What Stein is looking for in the theater is not exciting action but exciting emotion (108). Exciting action is just nervousness; real excitement, the excitement of emotion requires being strangers, not real strangers but the strangeness of "the contradiction between the way you know the people . . . and the way they are acting or feeling or talking" (106). In the theater one has to feel "two things going on at one time" (114). Theater (and literature in general) should not be a cycle of nervousness and relief but of excitement forcing the two edges of strangeness together into knowing. Since writing is struggling "to say what you nor I nor nobody knows" (121), a play should be a landscape where things are put in relation (125) and which expresses knowing without telling what happened (119). The gap between the edges is where the struggle and excitement of trying to say the things one knows takes place.

The task of the critic, then, according to Barthes, and

of the semiotician in particular, is to recognize the sites of resistance to the ordered edge. That is, to respond to where the inscribed "defiguring" (the wound) (Pleasure of the Text 37) and re-configuring (the healing--which leaves no sign of the wound nor itself) take place (56), by producing a[n] (identifying) profile, that is, a figuration, of these erotic sites.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Unreal Enough to be Unreal": The Figures of Writing

I Gertrude and the Painters of Paris

That Gertrude Stein was influenced by painters and painting is undeniable. When she arrived in Paris in 1903 she had written little and published nothing.[1] She only began to be known to the Parisian artistic community and to become part of it when, first under the guidance of her brother Leo and then increasingly on her own until she and Leo separated in 1912, she began to buy the more radical paintings being produced in Paris at the time. In what seems in retrospect to be an orderly progression, she moved from buying Cézannes to buying Matisses and then by 1905 to buying Picassos. And since at this time these painters were more or less unknown, and were certainly not commercially successful, she was able, with a modest income, to buy an appreciable number of pictures. Within a few years of arriving in Paris the studio of the flat at 27 Rue de

Fleurus where she and her brother Leo lived had become, in effect, the most advanced gallery of modern art in Paris, with regular public viewings on Saturday evenings. And Gertrude Stein's place in the artistic community had become prominent. She had also begun to take herself seriously as a writer and to promote, within the artistic community, the idea that writing and not art collecting was her métier.

It was inevitable that early appreciations of her writing were closely linked to the aesthetics of painters such as Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso. She did nothing to deny such influence. In 1913, when the city of New York brought modern art to the United States in a big way with the Armory Show, Mabel Dodge, who was involved with the organization of the exhibition, took the opportunity to promote Gertrude Stein at the same time as pre-eminent among a new breed of "cubist" writers. Stein was delighted--although as much for the publicity as for the substance of what Mabel Dodge had written about her.[2] Stein herself, when she came to consider her aesthetics in a series of lectures given during a tour of the States in 1934/35, admitted that she had been influenced by painters and painting when she wrote: "[a]nd then slowly through all this and looking at many many pictures I came to Cézanne and there you were, at least there I was, not all at once but as soon as I got used to it" (Pictures 76). "This then was a great relief to me and I began my writing" (77). The question which arises out of this admission and which

concerns me here is: what was it that she found in painting that gave her this sense of relief and which motivated her to write in the way in which she wrote? To answer this question it is useful to place it in the context of comparison between the visual arts and literature.

II Of Content and Form

Traditionally, since the object of both painting and literature was held to be the just representation of the real, and since both art forms were representing the same reality, there has been ample ground for interartistic comparison. The general feeling about the question is perhaps best summed up in Horace's dictum in Ars Poetica: ut pictura poesis, as is painting so is poetry.

The basis for comparison was Aristotle's mimesis. If both art forms were just to nature, which is to say that if both art forms represented only those noble human actions and things which were the just object of representation, then it was inevitable, the argument went, that they would both represent the same unities and therefore both bear the same relationship to the ideal. They were not to wander astray, to represent incidental actions or objects, but to represent only those actions or objects which contributed directly to realizing an expression of the ideal. The purpose of this mimetic process was to instruct and delight. The art work was to instruct how to live in a way compatible with the ideal (since moral order was a reflec-

tion of both natural order and metaphysical order); and it was to delight by representing beauty which, as the Neo-Platonist Plotinus defined it, was that which mirrored the ideal.

Lessing, with the publication of his Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry in 1766, is generally agreed to have been the first writer to have insisted upon the difference, rather than the similarity, between painting and literature. He did so by resorting to what was ostensibly a formal argument. He argued that painting was concerned with spatial forms and that literature was concerned with temporal forms. Although this distinction was not all that original--Aristotle had recognized this but had argued that painting could be dynamic (i.e., contain an element of time awareness) by suggesting movement (still life therefore becoming the lowest order of painting) and that literature, through the use of vivid imagery, could be spatial. Lessing, however, resolutely separated space from time and considered them irreconcilable. Since the structures of painting and poetry confined them to representing different unities, they could not be compared. The unities in question, however, were not, strictly speaking, formal unities but unities of content which had achieved formal expression. What Lessing was in effect saying was that painting and literature were not in fact representing the same objects because an object is defined by the coherence discoverable in it. At best, they

were representing different facets of the same objects. Thus his argument was not truly a formal argument, where structure is equal in value to content, but an argument based on the greater importance of content.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the status of the formal qualities of artistic structures had not really increased in spite of the fact that they had become a stumbling block for interartistic comparisons. Form had progressed from being the transparent, pre-ordained structures which served the expression of universal order, to being individual, self-consciously organic structures which served to express the same universal order. Formal conventions were still at the service of transcendent ideals. By acknowledging that formal conventions were relative rather than universal and transparent man was acknowledging the ambiguity inherent in art. But he was saying that this ambiguity was due to man's inadequacy, since man was the creator of artistic forms. The ideality of content was still unassailed; with the discovery of the ideal form, art could still express the unambiguous. Form was therefore still subordinate to content and was not yet a fully acknowledged partner. Form only gained this equal status towards the end of the nineteenth century when Nietzsche announced that God was dead and when content too was made relative. To say that content is relative is to say that it too is under the sway of conventional and not universal order. Thus the very concept

of conventionality, which is a formal concept, became the new basis for interartistic comparisons.

III Conventionality

The study of form, in whatever guise, is the study of the ways in which the signs in a given form or structure are related. Semiotics, or the science of sign sets, provides an organized framework within which to study these structures. Patterns of sign relations can be considered at two levels: syntax (the old form), which is to say the internal textual relations; and semantics (the old content or meaning), which is to say the relation of the textual configurations to the meanings which can be extracted from them. These two levels overlap, inasmuch as both are subject to the conventions of representation they inscribe and are inscribed within. They can never be wholly discrete now that conventionality has assumed the authority once held by hierarchy.

Whether we are considering syntax or semantics, we must always begin with the sign itself, that is, with the conjunction of signifier and the signified. C.S. Peirce divided the field of signs into three types: the icon, the index and the symbol. The icon is said to have presence in that it visually imitates that which it represents; the relationship between the signifier and the signified is said to be direct. The index points to presence but does not possess it in and of itself; the relationship between

the signifier and the signified is said to be indirect but still connected, as for example, a dark cloud indicates that rain is coming but does not imitate the presence of rain itself. The symbol has no presence; there is said to be only an arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified. All language signs are therefore symbols since they bear no necessary relationship to what they are said to represent. However, all signs, even icons, are imitations or translations of the [illegible] nature. They are connected to what they represent by convention.

Following this division of the field it seems logical enough to suggest that painting is iconic and indexical, since there is visual verisimilitude, and that literature is symbolic, since language signs bear no direct or verisimilitudinous relationship to what they represent. The attempt to compare painting and literature on the basis of content can only happen when all signs--icon, index and symbol--are seen as natural signs, that is, as signs with transcendental signifieds. It is to deny that all signs, even icons, are artifice. Content based comparisons of the arts are therefore an attempt to view all semiotic signs including the symbols of language as capable of direct referentiality. To do this is to discount the possibility of ambiguity or misinterpretation; it is to attempt to show that there is a natural, as opposed to an artificial or culturally conventionalized, relationship between signifier and signified; it is to attempt to show that the signified

directly motivates the signifier.

Of the two broadly conceived schools of semiotics, the universalists and the relativists, it is the universalists, such as Jakobson and the members of the Prague School, who, in their continued attempts to discover the universalized motivations of the symbol, continue to work within such an idealist metaphysics. The relativists do not; they work within a conceptual field which, in contrast, relativizes motivation. The universalists deploy the study of signs and structure to support interpretations of substance much as did Kant and Hegel. Here, the study of structure is not really the study of structural relations per se but rather of how structural relations support and are derived from the universal. Their effort is expended towards proving that signs can be understood as directly motivated. Thus they compare painting and literature as representations of the real. They are, in effect, reverting to neo-classical Platonism.

Given the incapacity of scientific man to transcend even the simplest of ambiguities in any final way, this is a large wager and is disputed by relativist semioticians. These semioticians study sign relations not as a means of discovering universal patterns but as a fertile field of study in a world where all meaning is problematic. The movement is towards demonstrating that all signs are conventional, that even Peirce's icons are actually related to nature only by artificial or cultural conventions and

that they are therefore in an important, if not always recognizable, sense arbitrary and symbolic. Where the universalists attempt to turn artifice into nature, the relativists attempt to show that all art is cultural artifice.

Thus the interest in convention is not only an interest in the conventions by which the signs within an artistic structure are internally related, but also in the conventions by which the signs of an artistic structure are related to the real. For the relativist, art is not related to reality by direct, natural motivations but by artificial, arbitrary and cultural motivations. Art organizes reality for us. It does not imitate it. (And any such organization is therefore subject to the cognitive constraints of the human activity of organizing and is not a plugging into universal order.) The confusion between natural and artificial sign motivation arises when a system of conventions for imitation becomes so entrenched that the conventions become invisible and we begin to think that A does = A. We forget, or fail to see, that A is actually only represented by A'. When change occurs at a pace which we cannot ignore however, it becomes much easier to notice that relationships are controlled by convention.

To underline that the transparency of language is an illusion, the relativist semiotician makes a distinction between diachronic and synchronic sets of signs (a distinction which Jakobson, as universalist, has tried to under-

mine by showing that the diachronic is contained within the synchronic). Once again these two terms are not wholly discrete (as Saussure seems to have suggested, giving Jakobson fuel for his argument) but indications of emphasis. Past changes are contained within the present set but they must also be seen as changes over time. Historically, the diachronic study has been dominant. Its purpose is to understand the origins of signs and thus their direct, natural motivations. The relativist concentrates his research in the synchronic field, emphasizing that the quest for origins is illusory and that it is more useful to deal with the inherited set of signs we must live with. He is then able to analyze the sets which constitute our shared competence (linguistic as well as literary and painterly) and which allow us to show--albeit incompletely and with ambiguity--as much as we can share. What we share and what our competence allows us to recognize and manipulate, is not the dictionary denotations of individual signs, but the codes which influence the connotations of signs in relation. We share these signs by grouping them in figures which correspond to conventions and which allow us to understand more from the signs than the sum total of their dictionary meanings. In short, we draw on codes inscribed within our competence in order to "figure" a text or a painting out.

IV Figuring Out

The word "figure" is a key word. In the visual arts the figure is both the object in nature and the representation of that natural object in a work of art. No matter how far removed the figure represented appears to be from its representation, a connection between the two is always assumed. In semiotics the word "figure" signals not the two end points in the relation but the relation itself. Groups of linguistic signs or visual fragments form into syntactic combinations. This is the material configuration of the work of art. The domain of the relationship between the object represented and its artistic configuration is the semantic relationship. This is the secondary level of structuration, the level where coherence and message and theme are conventionally discovered. Semiotic figures are therefore those provisional and illusory moments of perceived coherence. Semiotic figures are the figures of human artifice and not of nature.

This concept of figuration does a number of things. First it provides a coherent and sharable way of interpreting artistic texts. Second, and more relevant to this essay, it allows us a basis for comparing the various artistic media. We are no longer forced to separate the visual arts from the literary arts because one is spatially constrained and the other temporally constrained. We can now look at the artistic impulse, in whatever medium, as an impulse to figure, to manipulate signs within the concep-

tual horizon provided by the codes and conventions which influence the ways in which those signs can be related.

V Stein and Painting

Gertrude Stein found it impossible to accept as transparent any set of conventions of representation. She always recognized, sometimes painfully so, the "unreality" of convention. To read "Pictures," her lecture on painting written for her 1934/35 American tour and published in 1935 in Lectures in America, is to read a manifesto on [redacted] opposition between the real and the artificial. She opens the lecture with deceptive naiveté. When asked what she feels about modern art she replies: "I like to look at it" (59). If we go back to the context in which the question was asked (it was in response to a questionnaire printed in the last number of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap's Little Review[3] we see that this apparent non-statement is actually a strong statement which indicates her refusal to be coerced into providing any sort of once-and-for-all answer, the sort of answer the naiveté of the question begs for. What it was that she liked to look at and which held her attention, she goes on to tell us, is "oil paints on a flat surface" (59). A painting is not a universalized icon of what it purportedly represents. It is a two dimensional configuration. What she likes is not "representation" but "the presentation of anything in oil on a flat surface" (60).

"When I look at landscape or people or flowers they do not look to me like pictures," nor do pictures "have to look like flowers or people or landscapes . . . . They can, they often do, but they do not have to" (60). A painting is something that "has achieved an existence in and for itself" (61). The objects in a painting, even though iconic, are just signs, and as such are artificial. She thought the same thing of linguistic signs. In Everybody's Autobiography she wrote: "I used to think the name of anybody was very important and the name made you . . . but still there are so many names and anybody nowadays can call anybody any name they like" (10). The name is not the person. She liked to look at paintings "because an oil painting is something that looking at it it looks as it is, an oil painting" (Pictures 67). She perhaps summed this up best when she wrote: "I concluded that the Boticellis being really so like the flowers in the country . . . being that they looked so like the flowers in the country, they were artificial. You know what I mean artificial flowers. And I literally mean just that" (71). Verisimilitude had bothered her until she realized this artificiality, until she realized that "they were not real enough to be real and not unreal enough to be unreal" (73). This is an instructive rewriting of the old cliché that truth is stranger than fiction. What she is saying is that a fiction has not been made unreal enough to be recognized as a fiction. At least modern art allowed the unreal to be seen

as unreal.

This is not to say that verisimilitudinous painting is no longer to be considered painting but rather that it is a deception that would try to disguise the fact from us that it is indeed "oil paints on a flat surface" and so is seldom recognized as "painting" per se but instead only as a stand-in for the real. Tradition has become so entrenched that the conventions have become transparent. "[R]esemblance" she tells us "is always a pleasurable sensation and so a resemblance is almost always there," but our fondness for it "is just a pleasant human weakness" (79). But if one really likes "painting" then "one likes to be deceived but not for too long" (67).

Painting is a thing in itself inasmuch as it is artifice and not nature and yet "it [is] filled with association[s]" (69). Paintings must deal with some subject matter. "There are first of all three things which they deal with she tells us, "people, objects which include flowers and fruits, [and] landscapes" (83). These associations, or as the semiotician would say, correspondences, are influenced by the codes and conventions of the art of painting which make "you see the thing in the way it the oil painting resembles it" (80). In recognizing the unreal as unreal what we are feeling when we see oil paint on a flat surface are the ways in which the codes and conventions of correspondence have been used and manipulated in order to figure forth the objects in the painting. And how

do we learn to recognize these feelings, these things? We look at so many pictures that we gradually become "more and more familiar . . . with oil paintings" (79), and begin "to become educated aesthetically" (66). "And so one comes to any oil painting through any other oil painting" (72). Using the lexicon of the semiotician, one learns the codes and becomes a competent member of the audience.

VI Stein and Painting and Writing

When Gertrude Stein turned to do her own writing, she had been influenced by looking at paintings and coming to an understanding of convention. It was inevitable that she would bring this understanding into literature and thus provide ample ground for comparison between the arts. The painter who influenced her most was undoubtedly Cézanne. What she learned from Cézanne, and what began her writing of Three Lives, was that in a work of art (for Cézanne painting, for Stein writing) each part is as important as any other. This removes centre and focus. In a painting it forces one to acknowledge that a painting is "oils on a flat surface," in literature removing centre and focus undermines hierarchy and time. To remove hierarchy is to remove the universal behind any metaphysical formulation--as well as all of the things that we take for granted only because they are silently propped up by the accepted metaphysics. To remove time is to remove historical sequencing, and therefore the significance of remembering these

sequences as well as using them to silently prop up cause/effect relations. While historical time is gotten rid of, discourse time is not.

When each moment is as important as the next and historical time is gotten rid of then there can be no beginning, middle or end in the conventional narrative sense. What we are left with, as Randa Dubnick has pointed out, is "the elimination of chronological narrative" (Structure of Obscurity 19) and thus, in effect, word heaps which are related in terms of simultaneity. Stein calls this sense of simultaneity the continuous present. It is both spatial and temporal--but temporal only as an act of creation or perception (the time of discourse). In semiotics it would be called cognitive space (as opposed to the more limited idea of visual space). Discourse is the surface where signs are juxtaposed such that communication is only achieved if those things juxtaposed are perceived simultaneously in the same cognitive space. The continuous present is the chain of fragmented yet continuing moments in which contrasts and connections are perceived, which is to say, are "figured" out.

In a way Carl Van Vechten realized this as early as 1914 when he wrote that "it is worthy of note that almost everyone tries to make sense out of Miss Stein just as everyone insists on making photographs out of drawings . . . when the essential . . . is that . . . [she] is getting away from the photographic" (How to Read 556). The photo-

graph gives the illusion of representing reality (as did the Boticellis). Centre and focus are provided by perspective and depth perception. The art of surfaces is the art of symbols placed in relationship in which it is inappropriate, if not always impossible, to look for a photographic type of meaning. Literature is also two dimensional. Stein herself made this distinction when she wrote: "a painter's idea of action always has to do with something else moving rather than the centre of a picture." In the past a writer's idea of action was just the opposite, "everything else could be quiet, except the central thing which has to move" (Pictures 90). But she is not such a writer for "[o]f course the best writers that is the writers who feel writing the most as well as the best painters that is the painters who feel painting the most do not have literary ideas" (89). They approach their respective media in the same way to make the unreal recognizably unreal. Paint can be used like language. As she wrote in Four in America, "a painter painting pictures . . . is like an actor who sees himself speaking" (93). The self-conscious sense of artifice is always present in the work of art when that work of art deals with surfaces.

In the art of surfaces, whether painting or literature, the signs are evocative of objects but do not define them. Objects are presented with no intent to allegorize or generalize (Katz, Diss. 151). It is an art of what Wendy Steiner calls "immediate evocation," whether visual or

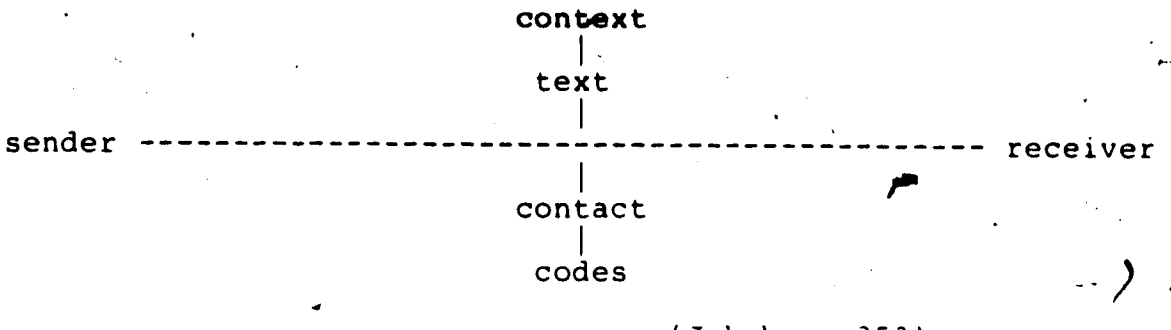
aural (Exact Resemblance 42). This art of surfaces has a reality in its own right and is not a lesser thing because not an imitation of a reality higher on the scale of universal values. It is evocative of objects only because it deals with the semantic relationship between art and the world. Leon Katz has written that "for Gertrude Stein, Cézanne's Portrait of Madame Cezanne [the painting that apparently inspired her to begin writing Three Lives and in sight of which she wrote it] manifested an altogether revolutionary sense of composition, whose 'realism' superseded the reality of the objects represented" (Four in America 52). When reality is not being represented in art but a new reality presented then, as Wendy Steiner has pointed out, the distinction between fiction and non-fiction disappears, inasmuch as the fiction itself is real (Exact Resemblance 186). To therefore say that there are "natural discourses" and "fictive discourses" is to set up an illusory distinction. Its reality is its natural fictive reality.

In this fictive reality, this discourse of surface, narrative sequence (historical time) is replaced, as Neil Schmitz has pointed out, by the narrative of the experiencing of language and the drama of the writing experience which records the play of the mind (Stein as Post-Modernist 1203-04). The painters who were influenced by Cézanne (and Stein thought that the main impetus was Cézanne and that Picasso's cubism could not have happened without Cézanne)

recorded the same drama of the mind, only in paint (Walker, Making of a Modernist xviii). Marjorie Perloff, borrowing from E. H. Gombrich, has written that Cubism decomposes the object or figure but leaves "representational traces" (Poetics of Indeterminacy 71). The signs used bear conventional relations to objects in the real world and are presented in a two dimensional surface such that in any single cognitive space or moment in the continuum we perceive "traces" of those real world objects. These traces, are perceived as "figures" and are the product of placing the relation of the signs used within the context or conceptual horizon of reflexively used or consciously chosen conventions. And these "traces" are perceived not in historical time but in discourse time.

VII The Play of Convention

Discourse time is the time of the play of convention and so the play of convention in literature can be compared with the play of convention in the visual arts. This discourse time or cognitive space is the time/space of what Jakobson called the act of communication. If we look at his model for this act, we will have a context within which to look for comparisons between the two arts. The act is divided into six parts on two axes. The horizontal axis runs from sender to receiver. The crossing vertical axis is constituted of context, contact, text and codes.



(Jakobson 353)

The context concerns itself with the time and place of textual production; the contact concerns itself with the time and place of the communicative act. The text is the material configuration; and the codes are the systems of cultural convention which allow us to figure out the message.

A brief look at a passage from Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons and at Picasso's Still Life (Bouteille Rhum Paillée, Compotier sur une table) (see figure 2) should show how such a comparison can be made. From Stein I have chosen the section entitled "Apple."

> Apple plum, carpet steak, seed clam, colored wine, calm
> seen, cold cream, best shake, potato, potato and no no gold work with pet, a green seen is called bake and change sweet is bready, a little piece a little piece please.
> A little piece please. Cane again to the presupposed and ready eucalyptus tree, count out sherry and ripe plates and little corners of a kind of ham.
>
> (48)

Let me refer briefly to each of the four items on the vertical axis.

Context: The time and place of composition, or deictics of composition, will influence what the artist

creates. Sometimes this time and place will be very apparent in the work, as is the case with Picasso's still life, where the objects presented are the objects of a specific time and place, at other times the objects presented, as seems to be the case with Stein's Tender Buttons, will be generalized out of time and place. When the deictics are not clearly encoded within the text critics often go to external historical and biographical evidence to support their interpretations. Stein worked on Tender Buttons in Spain in 1911 and in Paris in 1912; Picasso painted his still life in the south of France in 1914. These were the years when the various avant-garde movements were very much in vogue. They were the years of cubism, not the first wave of cubism, which is to say analytic cubism, but rather the second wave, known as synthetic cubism. Each perception was not analyzed and separated but accepted and presented in collage form. We can see this collage effect both in Stein's minimal word heaps and in Picasso's still life.

It was cubism that first brought the sense of two dimensional art to a large public. If it can be said that Gertrude Stein's writing developed a synthetic cubist style, it was during the second phase of her career, after Three Lives, The Making of Americans and the early portraits (Three Lives and The Making of Americans are often considered in the context of analytic cubism). She did not feel that she had been influenced by Picasso but that they had both been influenced by Cézanne; they did not

Figure 2

so much influence one another as share a common influence.

Such a knowledge of context often provides us with a short-cut for finding the codes appropriate to a given text or painting.

Text: The material configurations of these two works are the same in one important way. In both cases the illusion of verisimilitude is shattered through the use of a discontinuous syntax. The gaps in what we call intelligibility--by which we mean the gaps in the re-imaging or mimicking of the natural world--are too great to sustain the illusion that the natural is coherent and unified. Stein achieves this by giving us sentence fragments and minimal word heaps; Picasso achieves this by painting in two dimensions, by not painting onto a flat surface the illusion of perspective, and by fragmenting the represented objects.

Codes: Codes constitute the semantic/syntactic universe or field of activity or conceptual horizon that our competency allows us to share. They relate to a given socio-semiotic community which has fallen heir to and has transformed to its own ends a series of rules for the signs it uses which allow messages to be produced and shared. We share these signs by grouping them into figures which correspond to the rules and which allow us to understand more from the signs than the sum total of their dictionary meanings. In short, we draw on cultural codes to "figure" out sign relations.

This is the field in which we most often search for meaning. The codes are numerous and include any area of life which is subject to conventionalization. Some of the more common codes found in literary criticism include moral codes and codes of behaviour and conduct, generic codes, aesthetic or philosophical codes, codes of religion, historical codes, codes of class distinction, codes of dress, the list can be almost endless. By showing the parallels between the conventions of a code and the conventions used in a work of art we draw conclusions which allow us to discover themes and character patterns, and to suggest meaning. If we look at these two works we could attempt to recreate the illusion of unity by devising from the limited number of clues given to us what would amount to its storybook meaning or photographic coherence. But for two works such as these whose structures undermine such commonplace illusions of coherence any attempt to discover storybook or photographic coherence would tend towards parody of the critical act.

Let me look only at one type of code, the generic, to compare the ways in which Stein and Picasso have responded to existing codes. Picasso, ostensibly, has painted a still life. Stein, ostensibly, has written descriptive prose. But neither have followed extant generic conventions. To consider these works in terms of genre is to discover the figures or groups of relations which set them apart from the genres they claim or manifest allegiance to.

In a still life there are no people, only the objects of nature and the works of artisans: bounty such as fruit, vegetables, flowers, game and so on, and artefacts of beauty and interest such as musical instruments or furniture. These objects are depicted in high detail, in perspective and with depth of field. Depending on the particular school of still life, different geometric shapes (stars, triangles, etc.) are used to arrange and provide focus for the painting. The colors are complementary and the shapes of individual objects are often thematically repeated. Picasso has chosen conventional objects but his treatment is very unconventional. First, there are only two dimensions and not three. There is no apparent geometrical shape informing the arrangement of the objects. There is a lack of detail, and what detail there is, such as the surface texture of the bread, is often only hinted at, in this case by lines, or is presented out of proportion, such as the white outlined goblet. The objects are often incomplete--the rum bottle is only partially there--and they are often fragmented--the glass with the anchor is in two parts. There are, however, at least two ways in which this still life is structurally conventional. The section of door frame or window frame on the left side in the upper half of the painting and the "compotier" in the upper right are both three dimensional. Shadows are used to give the illusion of depth of field. Also, certain shapes are repeated in a thematic way. Glass openings, of which there

are three, are indicated by one oval within another. And the almost pointillist dotting of squares and rectangles is used to indicate floors and other flat horizontal surfaces, while the vertical surfaces such as walls and chair backs are a flat brown. These anomalous agreements with convention, however, seem to serve his purpose rather than defeat it, for they serve to place in context and make more noticeable his contraventions of the code.

Stein's Tender Buttons does not seem to fit easily into any of the large literary genres that undergraduate courses are designed around. It is not a novel; it is not a poem or a series of poems (although we might try to consider it as a series of prose poems); it is not a play; it is neither a biography nor a memoir; and it is not an essay. These same undergraduates, however, have probably also taken a composition course in which they learn to distinguish between such modes as descriptive writing, narrative writing, expository writing, and argumentative writing. These modes (we might call them sub-genres) are at the service of the larger literary genres. A typical novel will contain all modes. Descriptive writing appears to me to be the closest relative to the fragments of objects that Stein has given us.

Descriptive writing translates sensory experience into language--in this case, as is the case with the still life, the sensory experience of objects. In descriptive writing, as in still life, there is an organizing principle or

geometric shape. Detail is used to support and bring into focus the object. The sentences are organized to establish the centrality of this object. Sequence is important. It provides the sense that the description is moving towards an inevitable conclusion. It distinguishes the central object through a process of comparing and contrasting its details to other objects which, if not adequately separated, would make the central figure uncomfortably ambiguous.

Like Picasso, Stein has chosen to accept the semic and symbolic conventions which codify the objects that the work of art will relate to, but to contravene the generic conventions which concern the structuration of the work. She deals with objects and indicates what those objects are in the title of each section but she does not present a sequentially organized array of detail that will bring us inevitably to the unambiguous realization of a central object. Like Picasso, she eschews an underlying geometric organizing principle, including, however, a couple of conventional phrases--"A little piece please"--that remind us of the codes she is playing against. And like Picasso, the details are given to us not as configurations of integrated objects but as fragments of those objects. In "Apple" we are first presented with a series of what, syntactically at least, are either comparisons or contrasts: "apple plum, carpet steak, seed clam." Later, after an interlude in which the potato is prominent (a potato in French being an

earth apple) we return, without syntactic connection, to another fragment on the apple, "a green seen is called bake," which gives us the colour and the apple in an altered form, baked. But these compared and contrasted objects give us no sense of the uniqueness of the apple. Fragments are simply placed in the same cognitive space. Thus the figures that we read in these sections of Tender Buttons are not the supposed whole and distinct figures that a well organized and focussed description would present to us as inevitable would-be icons, but a collection of perceived objects without unifying focus.

To look at these deviations from the generic conventions is to apply those conventions to describing deviation. We see that both of these works are consistent with the relativist revolt against the universal that both Stein and Picasso first recognized in Cezanne, where every part of a painting is as important as any other part and where the flat surfaces of a moment of cognitive space are privileged over the need to create the illusion that individual fragments are united in coherent, centered, wholes. The message we have figured out of both of these works is that there is a discontinuity to the natural world that we would ignore if we could. The unreal is made more important than creating illusions of the real. The unreal is unreal enough to be its own reality.

Contact: Today we are able to share the cultural codes which have allowed me to say what I have said and to find

spate in the artistic field for Stein's text and Picasso's still life. If this still life and this text had been seen by a farmer in Kansas in 1915--or even, I am sure, in 1985--it would be subjected to a far different shared competence and would undoubtedly be discarded as nonsense. Semiotics has enabled us to share the recognition of a similar correspondence between both painting and literature and conventionalized nature, and to share a little of the relative sense in this nonsense.

Interlude

inter: between
ludus: play

These next four chapters are extensions, repetitions, grafts. They parallel the concerns of the first four chapters, in each case, changing the focus slightly, skewing the emphasis and insistently differ/deferring.

Thus chapter 5, which deals with the question of textual authorization ("Poetry and Grammar"), grows out of the questions surrounding the problem of representation (chapter 1). What and how can meaning be authorized in the sanctioned Babel. Chapter 6, on self-consciousness ("The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans"), deals with the "self" and the "other" in the context of the relationship between the text and the reader/writer, an extension of the concern in chapter 2 with intertextuality where the "self" and "other" (or site and field) are considered in terms of the relationship between the text and other texts. Chapter 7 looks at repetition as a figure of force ("Portraits and

Repetition"), which was considered in general in chapter 3. And chapter 8 deals with the figuring of meaning in the mundane "business of living" context ("What Are Masterpieces and Why Are There So Few Of Them"), rather than in the aesthetic and "masterpiece" context of chapter 4. As well, chapter 8 returns to chapter 1 by returning to a concern with the literary marketplace.

The second group of four mirrors (not single mirror but an assemblage of mirrors) and folds back onto the first group of four. There is much tracing backwards and forward. But this tracing is not the sort of tracing that leaves solid lines in its wake. It is tracing under erasure.

Chapter Five

"One Very Nice Quality": the Problem of Authorization

I The Paradox

In her lecture "Poetry and Grammar," Gertrude Stein extols the virtues of verbs and adverbs. "[T]hey have one very nice quality" she writes, "and that is that they can be so mistaken" (211). This statement offers the same sort of paradox as that attributed to Eubulides, the Cretan liar: "A man says that he is lying. Is what he says true or false?" When Gertrude Stein tells us that "to be mistaken" is "one very nice quality," she is making a value judgement. To be able to be mistaken is good; to be unable to be mistaken is bad. But if what she says is of value then it must be capable of being mistaken. Is it then, true or false? If it is true then it is of no value because it is incapable of being mistaken. If it is false then it is of no value because it must then be incapable of error to be of value.[1] But this is to reduce what Stein has written to

what we know of the mechanisms of logic. To read Stein demands that we respond to just this sort of internal contradiction constantly. If we are to find pleasure in these texts, we must find some way to contend with what Barthes, in The Pleasure of the Text, calls "the supreme disgrace: self-contradiction." We must somehow learn to "[endure] contradiction without shame" and find pleasure in this "sanctioned Babel" (3-4). What this means is that our criteria of judgement must change. Valorizing a text's performance according to externally located values for good and bad, true and false, is no longer adequate for the text which moves self-consciously within the sanctioned Babel.

II Given the Problematic

Truth and value as externally located concepts are inextricably bound to their expression in language and to the rules or grammars which guide their expression. The modernist relationship to language begins by acknowledging the problematic of the traditional theories of externalized truth, which is to say, of both the correspondence and the coherence theories of truth. In the correspondence theory the signifier is directly motivated by and fully represents the signified. In the coherence theory the search is for the ideal system which can adequately account for all signifiers and all signifieds, a system in which the signifier has no independent signification and exists only to mark off a certain portion of the whole--the whole being

all of conceptual thought which is prior to and thus exterior to expression. Both of these theories depend upon establishing links between the present state of a language's grammar (both lexicon and syntax) and the origins of language inasmuch as origins represent the source and validation of external authority and wholeness.

Leonard Bloomfield, in his authoritative, early twentieth century work, An Introduction to the Study of Language, gives us a short account of how man has conceived of the origins of language. At first language was thought to be a divine gift; next, it was believed that language was the brilliant idea of a primitive genius. In both cases the signifier was thought to correspond to the signified (hence the correspondence theory of truth) whether in the Stoic sense of the sound directly imitating what it denoted or in the Epicurean sense of the signifier being an emotional response to the experience. In both cases there was a Platonic relation of language to the ideal forms. The coherence theory of truth, favored by Bloomfield, saw a quite other source of language. First, sound was the accompaniment of gestural expression; and then when the gestures were dropped and the sounds came into independent use, language began. Through the further unlimited development of associational shifts we arrived at the language we use today. The correct archeology would show that all of the complexities of language can be traced back to the grunts and sighs which originally accompanied gestural expressions

(13-20). And since the signification of one grunt can only be differentiated from the signification of another grunt by being placed within the system of relations, the discrete grunt, or symbol of expression, is tied into the system of expression and cannot exist independently of it. The grunt was associational; it did not "correspond" directly to the signified.

The question then arises: given a textual performance which exists outside of the controls of logic, which is to say outside of both of these theories of truth, to what extent can we judge its value and what is the source (when the source is no longer the origins of the system) of the authority from which such judgements follow?[2] If we take it as given that there does not exist a Platonic one-to-one relation between the signifier and the signified, between the symbol of expression and the ideal form expressed by the symbol, and that there does not exist the ideal and complete system, which is to say, such posited universal grammars as those of Bertrand Russell or Noam Chomsky, then we must begin our search for textual authorization within the system of differences which constitutes a language. That is, we must begin with the grammar of the culturally manifested language. This culturally manifest grammar is the "descriptive" grammar of language as we have it and not the ideal grammar of an equally ideal language. It is a pragmatic grammar, a grammar which will inevitably contain contradictions.

III Stein's Grammar

For Stein, grammar is not a closed and ideal system but rather the choices made according to "how you are feeling inside you to the words that are coming out to be outside of you" (Poetry and Grammar 209). And although the conventional wisdom is that "[g]rammar makes no mistakes" (How to Write 81), Stein knows that "[g]rammar is mistaken at times" (84). And that this is what makes grammar "very exciting" (Poetry and Grammar 210).

Stein divides her field of inquiry into three areas: words, punctuation, and sentences and paragraphs. She doesn't deal with syntax per se. Syntax is a constraining system which depends upon external truths. Instead, she wanted her sentences be balanced, which is to say, not professionally constrained such that there was no room for play (224-25). Her sentences had to have a "balance of a space completely not filled but created" (225). Her grammar of sentences and of syntax was an open grammar not responsible to any complete system but always creating itself. This is why she liked "the feeling the everlasting feeling of sentences as they diagram themselves" (211).[3] For Stein, then, the systemization of grammar is unimportant. She had no interest in rewriting the rules of syntax, or even in acknowledging any dependence upon existing rules. What interested her was the character of the bits and pieces that were available to her and which she could place one

after another to create a space. In "Poetry and Grammar," Stein therefore spends most of her time providing character sketches of the various words types and punctuation marks.

In general, words that try to limit and constrain meaning are judged to be uninteresting and unexciting while words that are less definite and can be mistaken are judged to be interesting and exciting. "Nouns are the name of anything and just naming names is alright when you want to call a roll but is it good for anything else" (210). "[N]ouns as I say even by definition are completely not interesting, the same thing is true of adjectives. Adjectives are not really and truly interesting" (211). A noun is "so unfortunately so completely the name of something . . . [that] nouns cannot please" (212). This is Stein's description of the ordinary noun used for ordinary communication. And Stein hopes that "now no one can have any illusion about [such] a noun or about the adjective that goes with the noun" (213). The use of nouns in poetry is something else however. In ordinary communication people have decided "not to get around them" (228), that is, not to challenge nouns and adjectives and the illusions they support. But in her poetry Stein tells us that she decided "to meet them, to handle in short to refuse them by using them" (228). "Nouns are the name of anything and anything is named, that is what Adam and Eve did and if you like it is what anybody does, but do they go on just using the name until perhaps they do not know what the name is or . . . do

not care about what the name is" (229). The poet creates sense with the same authority as Adam and Eve, she does not perpetuate the conventions of some other Adam or Eve. And since "it is impossible that a vocabulary does not make sense. . . . Poetry has to do with vocabulary . . . [and] is a vocabulary entirely based on the noun . . . [thus] poetry is concerned with using and abusing nouns . . . with wanting, with denying with avoiding with adoring with replacing the noun" (230-31). The noun or name will not become "senseless" by being repeatedly displaced and recreated. But sense must be constantly renewed and recreated; if not, then "once you know its name the enjoyment of naming it is over" (231). This does not mean that she created neologisms but rather that nouns were used as if they were new. "[T]he name was not new but the thing being alive was always new" (237). The noun is inadequate and unexciting only when it is already named and consequently carries the burden of the illusion of not being mistaken. But it can be made alive again in poetry when poetry becomes the process of naming.

"Verbs and adverbs," on the other hand, "are more [naturally] interesting" because "they have one very nice quality and that is that they can be mistaken" (211). They are words of action and process and therefore do not suffer from the inherent inactivity of named names. Verbs and adverbs can be mistaken "endlessly, both as to what they do and how they agree or disagree with whatever they

do" (211-12). "[T]hey are, so to speak on the move" (212). Other parts of speech which connect, relate and "move" are similarly characterized. Thus prepositions "can of all things be most mistaken" and can be "everlastingly enjoying" (212). Articles are interesting because unlike nouns they are "not so unfortunately so completely unfortunately the name of something" (212). And the conjunction is exciting because "it has a force" (213). "Conjunctions have made themselves live by their work" (213). All of these then are words that live and go on. They are not named but aid in the process of naming.

A punctuation mark is judged good or bad according to whether or not it interferes with the "going on" of writing. "[I]f writing should go on what had colons and semi-colons to do with it, what had commas to do with it, what had periods to do with it" (217). Marks that kept writing from going on were servile. "As I say commas are servile . . . [they keep] you from living your life as actively as you should lead it" (219-20). Periods however escape this general proscription because "[s]topping sometime did not really keep one from going on, it was nothing that interfered, it was only something that happened, and as it happened as a perfectly natural happening, I did believe in periods and I used them" (217). "[P]eriods had come to have for me completely a life of their own" (218). While the period is given a stay of execution, other ending or stopping marks are less fortunate. Exclamation marks,

question marks and quotation marks are no good because they stop life unnecessarily. Apostrophes, however, are somewhat interesting because they have possession as does living. And "dashes and dots . . . these might be interesting spaces" (216) because spaces are not stopping but going on.[4]

This grammar which places no value in syntactic systems nor in characters that stop life from going on, and which valorizes gaps, the process of naming, going on and feeling sentences diagram themselves, is definitely a grammar that valorizes the capacity for being mistaken. But the paradox still exists: how can so much be valorized if so much value is placed in the capacity for error?

IV Truth, Truthfulness: Judging/Knowing

To find something intelligible we must first valorize it. We must make judgements about what is true and what is false in a statement. These judgements require support from something which allows us to feel secure in our conclusions. As I have pointed out, for the correspondence and the coherence theories of truth this support is external. But when external truths are denied, we must look inside the text itself for support for our judgements of intelligibility. We can begin with Geoffrey Hartman's distinction, in Saving the Text, between "truth" and "truthfulness." Truth is absolute and external; truthfulness recognizes what he calls "the mediacy of words," it is internal and

relational (155). Lacan, when he is considering the gap which he calls the unconscious and when he is looking at the ways in which consciousness (or language [Hartman's mediacy]) confronts this gap, also distinguishes "the function of the subject of certainty from the search for truth" (Four Fundamental Concepts 39). Certainty and truthfulness are just that, a function of the subject. They are the particulars of what a pragmatist might call fixed opinion (truthfulness) rather than a fixity of opinion (truth). J. L. Austin, in demonstrating the essentially performative character of the constative (which is to say, that type of statement which purportedly describes a true or false fact), points out that by saying something is true, you are actually saying that it is "true for certain intents and purposes" (my italics) and that "the intents and purposes of the utterance and its context are important; what is judged true in a school book may not be so judged in a work of historical research" (How To Do Things With Words 143). What is called truth, as Culler points out, even when it is believed to be absolute, is discovered to be controlled by pragmatic norms (On Deconstruction 153). Because of the mediacy of language, truth can in all cases be reduced to truthfulness.

Truth (in the character of truthfulness) then, has no independent (externally supported) assertive meaning. Any distinction in meaning and in truthfulness must therefore come from the differences in linguistic practice. The truth

of truthfulness is that which suits the practice, in other words, that which is expedient. But although the expedient can limit, it cannot wholly determine. It is a case, as Derrida points out in "Signature Event Context," "that the field of equivocality covered by the word communication permits itself to be reduced massively by the limits of what is called a context" (Margins 310). But this context contains within itself its own rupture, which gives to truthfulness an air of infinite regress, of différance. Thus according to Derrida, the three essential predicates of minimal determination for writing (1. a mark which remains; 2. the sign carries the force of its own breaking; and, 3. this force is due to the gaps which constitute the sign) demonstrate this rupturability. Whether or not the sign and our judgement of its truth value is thought to be a public act or a private one is unimportant since the sign as representative of truth and factuality must in both cases equal reality. In both cases we are limited by the mediacy of language: in the public sense because we "communicate" through the agency of language; in the private sense because, as Lacan has formulated it, the consciousness is subject to the same restrictions as a language and even our private thinking is limited by these restrictions.

What I have been saying is that in looking at the concept of truth and in authorizing the conclusion that absolute truth is not possible, we can only implicate

ourselves in truthfulness. Language really has nothing to do with truth at all; in short, our belief in language's capacity to describe truth is false. Thus we can conclude with Umberto Eco that the study of language and sign systems in general, which is to say semiotics, "is in principle the discipline of studying everything which can be used in order to lie" (A Theory of Semiotics 7). The lie exists in the gap between the name and what the name supposedly stands for, between the symbol and its referent. The gap will always turn the relation into a lie. For in this gap lies madness, absence, aporia and as Lacan has told us, the unconscious (Four Fundamental Concepts of 25). This absence always intervenes in our attempts to tell the truth (Derrida Margins 315). As Stein wrote in the "Henry James" section of Four in America, "[Y]ou can think of a name as a name or not a name" (153). If you think of a name as only a name then you are thinking only of language and of truthfulness as opposed to truth. If you think of a name not as a name then you are trying to relate the name to a truth. In both cases you will be forced by the gap to lie, to be mistaken.

We can extend this one step further. The search for truth, as pragmatism has taught us, is the search for belief. Even though we are on our guard and are aware of the mediacy of language we still "trust that it [the text] will make sense" (Hartman xxi). We trust (or believe) in the face of all odds. Such belief, however, can be more

sophisticated than at first might appear to be the case. For as Derrida points out, the self must be able to convince itself of meaning, however provisionally, in order to stave off madness. It is a crisis, as Derrida says, "in which reason is madder than madness" (Writing and Difference 62). So belief, faith and trust, like truth, also become somewhat less than what they claim to be; belief, faith and trust become authority figures rather than absolutes. The fact is no longer that which is unquestioned but that which fosters expedient belief. no longer judge a thing to be true or false but instea a belief in our knowing its truthfulness.

Belief is therefore no longer constative, which is to say reducible to externally supported true/false statements. It is performed knowing and limited instead by felicity of action and affect. There is a connection here to Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, where textual acts are valorized according to their motivation, which is to say in response to the needs and desire of and for belief (Dialogic Imagination 278).

V System/Network

Both Austin's theory of performative utterances and Bakhtin's theory of dialogism were posited in order to offer an alternative to unitary theories of truth. In the case of the performative, an alternative to the fact-describing constative; in the case of dialogism, an alternative to the monological text. The monological text re-

quires support from the unquestioned authority of a universal grammar. Bakhtin rejects this support when he writes:

> Aristotelian poetics, the poetics of Augustine, the poetics of the medieval church, of "the one language of truth," the Cartesian poetics of neoclassicism, the abstract grammatical universalism of Leibniz (the idea of a "universal grammar"), Humboldt's insistence on the concrete--all these . . . give expression to the same . . . forces; . . . they serve one and the same project of centralizing and unifying . . . . The victory [is] of one reigning language (dialect) [grammar] over the others, the supplanting of languages, their enslavement, the process of illuminating them with the True Word.
>
> (Dialogic Imagination 271)

The monological, unitary text under the sway of the "true" and universal grammar is a text which in Stein's terms cannot be mistaken and is therefore not alive, which is to say, it is not going on in time. Stein reveals her awareness of this problem in Everybody's Autobiography when she comments on Utopias. "That is the trouble with any Utopia, any system, as soon as it is a system it is not a distraction and so it does not any longer make it possible not to know the passage of time" (59). Perhaps the key word here is the word "system." All universal grammars, utopias, neoclassical poetics and so on, are monological "systems." Stein, in her concentration on the characteristics of the component particles of a grammar, refuses to accept the authority of any system. When Stein talks of seeing a sentence diagram itself she is not entering a system but what Lacan calls "a network formed by random and contiguous associations" (Four Fundamental Concepts 46).

A universal system cannot afford such random contiguity. Derrida, in commenting on Husserl's interest in universal grammars, points out that "the system of rules of a universal grammar . . . will[s] to know, by an epistemic intention, by a conscious relation to the object as an object of knowledge within a horizon of truth" (Margins 320). When the object of textual expression is "truth" then the grammatical system is centered by the presence of truth; this center also becomes the horizon; it is, in short, the beginning and the end joined by the middle which is the expression of the beginning and the end. Therefore every utterance analyzed within the horizon of a universal grammar is subject to teleological analysis. Here again Stein shows herself repeatedly to be against systems. Over and over again in her writings she repeats the utterance that "anyway there is no beginning and no end" (Everybody's Autobiography 87). Because, as she points out in Useful Knowledge, when you end you realize that there is no truth (113). The conclusion she reached because of this is "that whole thing [which is to say a system] is not interesting" (Geographical History 115). Geoffrey Hartman sums it up well when he writes that systems or "doctrinal effectiveness [are] . . . accommodating rather than awe-inspiring" (Saving the Text 120). Stein was after excitement and awe, not accommodation. The monological text and the universal system necessary for its support were not exciting.

A monological system is a canonized ideology, or belief

system (Bakhtin, Dialogic 271). It is also the case, however, that every utterance carries with it ideological baggage. As Culler points out, meanings and variations of meanings come from "specifications of context" (On Deconstruction 131). These specifications are the ideological bearings of the context, bearings which limit the possible interpretations of meaning and thus intelligibility. When a reader reads, he is bringing remembered contexts to the text. And remembering always involves limiting the text (Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts 40), an action which constitutes the ideological baggage of a remembered context. It is in this way that the nouns and names which Stein rejects in "Poetry and Grammar" become the fixed facts (the names that don't go on) that she equally rejects (Four in America 39).

If, as Derrida writes, all communication is organized by priority and privilege (Margins 310), in other words by the ideologically priorized concepts and thus privileged limits of a context, can an utterance avoid systemization? Barthes suggests one way out in The Pleasure of the Text when he suggests that the text of pleasure or of Hartman's awe is a text which places these systems, or as he calls them fictions, in a struggle for power such that no one fiction dominates (27). Bakhtin,of course, comes to a similar conclusion in his theory of dialogism.

For Bakhtin, an utterance is never unitary. There is always an ambiguity that comes from a double voicedness,

from opposing, dialogized systems. Thus there is both centralization and decentralization. He writes:

> Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity.
>
> (Dialogic Imagination 272)

Thus systems, because decentered, while nominally maintaining the status of system, become consumed in Lacan's non-systematic networks. They don't disappear but they are relativized by force. For as Derrida points out, form is opposed to force (Writing 4).

So far then we have words as intersecting surfaces rather than as fixed points (Kristeva, Desire in Language 65). The center is posited but decentered and deferred, yet also remembered from the the past. The center is beginning and end but not the indefinite in-between of Stein's continuing present, her going on. The codes that define the contexts and their ideological baggage are never quite in the present. They are as Culler says, borrowing from Sartre in What is Literature?, the déjà lu and the yet to be read (Pursuit of Signs 102). The dialogized utterance in the now constitutes a consciousness of language which is, as Bakhtin puts it, fully de-centered (Dialogic Imagination 378). This decenteredness, this absence at the centre, is, paradoxically, the source of the desire that structures our

utterances (Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts 25). Language is a rupture with totality, and the desire is to describe this rupture. Yet every effort to describe the rupture ends by stealing structural echoes from absence avoiding systems.[5]

The performed utterance and its desire to fill the silent spaces, to challenge the gaps, becomes the focus. The analysis of the utterance is no longer keyed to a system, an ideology, a grammar, but to the conflicting structures to be found within a network of contiguous signs. The diagrammed network of an utterance takes place in Derrida's general text, but can also be more conveniently packaged in what Bakhtin calls the zone and what Lacan calls the praxis of a speaking voice (Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination 316; Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts 6-9). Zones are speaker dominated parts of the field (Bakhtin 302-307). They are the location of a concerted human action to represent the real by the symbolic (Lacan 6). An utterance does not therefore yield hermeneutic truths but only the semantic horizons of its interventions (Derrida, Writing 329).

The process of understanding, of finding intelligibility in an utterance, of making communication work, entails the reader's implicating himself in the network of the speaker/writer (Lacan 46). Thus we are not bringing a system to the utterance but looking for the internally authorized limits indicated by an utterance's network. We

are only scientific, Barthes tells us, that is, we only resort to imposing systems upon texts, because we lack the necessary subtlety to do otherwise (Pleasure of the Text 61). Subtlety comes with the recognition of intervention. Thus in Useful Knowledge Stein tells us that grammar is all a festival (7), not the system but the disruptions of system. It is the balance of creating that we are looking for (Poetry and Grammar 225) and not unitary truths. Or as Julia Kristeva has put it, we look for transformations and harmonies and not transcendence (Desire in Language 89).

VI Authorizing/Valorizing

Transcendence requires the truth values discoverable by hermeneutics. This truth is a privileged object that exists exterior to the text, to the utterance. Thus the codes which systematize these truths have no value in themselves; their value is derived from the privileged truths which they codify.

Value comes from assuming privilege. Inasmuch as any statement is ideological (Barthes, Pleasure of the Text 50), value must always be present. The centered presence of authoritative discourse permits no play of meaning, does not allow for the possibility of Steinian mistakes (Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination 342). As Culler points out, with presence there is no motion, no Steinian going on (On Deconstruction 94). Any univocal meaning ends the possibility for play (131). However, the assignment of rank and

value according to privilege needn't be perceived as permanent and transcendent; it can be perceived as temporary and pragmatic. What is present can be present as an act of knowing and not in the form of centering presence. Each utterance, in effect, canonizes its own language. In this sense, to valorize is, as Derrida points out in "Signature Event Context," to authorize (310). Thus for Benveniste the performative utterance is an act of authority (Problems in General Linguistics 236). Shoshana Felman has translated this to mean that the performative utterance refers to a reality that it constitutes (and thus authorizes) itself (The Literary Speech Act 21). And as Culler has pointed out, even deconstruction privileges, or authorizes certain themes (On Deconstruction 212).

As Stein writes in Four in America, "[w]hatever you mean you can like or not like to mean" (115). For a sentence "[p]leases by its sense. This is a fashion in sentences" (How to Write 27). The writer sets up the network, establishes the zone of his voice and authorizes his own meaning. The text is not responsible to a transcendent truth but to itself. The other, the reader, attempts to implicate himself in this self-authorization and, as Stein writes, "[a]ny one whom I convince is convinced" (Four in America 170).

The source of value is the certainty of the self in the face of absence (a certainty which must be able to be mistaken). Stein's certainty is her claim to know what she

knows (and not to know what is known). These images of certainty are the images that are continually re-accentuated (Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination 410). For as Derrida writes, "[t]o write is to produce a mark that will constitute a kind of machine that . . . yield[s] itself to reading and rewriting. . . . For the written to be written, it must continue to 'act'" (Margins 316). To perform an utterance is to perform a promise, to authorize the reader to repeat the utterance in the author's name. It is the re-accentuated image in the face of absence that, through authorized repetition, valorizes.

Utterances are read, rewritten and repeated because they serve individual needs, they respond to our desire to challenge the gaps. The pleasure comes not from making the definitive judgement but from a provisional mastery of the site of the challenge (Hartman, Saving the Text 1). Thus in a sense, pleasure suspends value (Barthes, Pleasure of the Text 65), and instead glorifies the textual body (37) in an act of interpretation which is a will to power (62).

VII Performing Mistakes/The Scandal of Performing

Power is action, the domination of action, and the self-authorized claim of certainty in action. Power does not stand still. It is a performance and a promise of certainty. J. L. Austin's performative utterance constitutes such action. As Derrida describes it, the performative "does not describe something which exists outside and

before language. It produces or transforms a situation, it operates" (Margins 321). But "a successful performative is necessarily an 'impure' performative, . . . there is no 'pure' performative" (325), since we are essentially alone with linguistic signs (Derrida, Writing and Difference 72). The performance of an authorized certainty is only just that, a promise of certainty. It can never be fully communicated in a "pure" form. Thus power is no more than a promise. All utterances are therefore implicitly promises (Felman 17). Once again we are returned to Stein's claim that "[a] sentence then can easily make a mistake" (How to Write 35), and that this quality is a "very nice one." For Shoshana Felman these implicitly mistaken (impure) promises "situate what makes for problems in man" (9). Mistaken promises are the very condition of humanity.

And so Stein can write, "of course I was clear, Alice Toklas says and very often mistaken . . . I am slow minded and quickly clear in expression, I am certain that I see everything that is seen" (Everybody's Autobiography 301). "I like writing, it is so pleasant, to have the ink write it down on the paper as it goes on doing. Harlan Miller thought I left such a large space in between so that I could correct in between but I do not correct" (311). Words are shocks, she wrote in Useful Knowledge (111), and no amount of correction is going to cover up this shockingness of the promises of certainty. As Bakhtin writes, "[a]ll the high positions and symbols, . . . with which men adorn

themselves with such importance and hypocritical falsity [including language] . . . [take] place in an atmosphere of gay deception" (Dialogic Imagination 408). For the eventhood of a "performative statement [could not] succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable statement" (Derrida, Margins 326).

A promise, inasmuch as it is a commitment, not only gives rise to conflict but also structures it (Felman 26). For there is always a conflict in any commitment between the constative impetus and the performative impetus (Felman 27). The promise is the response to the desire to challenge absence and as Lacan has pointed out, desire always forces us to limit (if only because it leads us to making promises) (Four Fundamental Concepts 31). And since all promises are untenable, they all result in scandal, where scandal represents nothing more than the broken promise (Felman 11-12).

But even though the promise of meaning is "demonic-hyperbole," an attempt to convince the self and so stave off madness (Derrida, Writing and Difference 62), there is within this scandal also a source of pleasure (Felman 12). For Hartman this is because the text provides a means to reflection (Saving the Text 149). For Barthes it is enough to glorify the textual body (Pleasure in the Text 37). For Stein, excitement and pleasure are derived from going on, from knowing what you know, and from being able to be mistaken.

VIII The Paradox of the Broken Promise Performed

In The Literary Speech Act, Shoshana Felman encapsulates the paradox of the promise in a quotation from Plato's Symposium.

> What is strangest of all is the popular conviction that a lover, and none but a lover, can forswear himself with impunity--a lover's vow, they say, is no vow at all.
>
> (23)

All writers are lovers making vows they cannot keep.

"Whenever words come before the mind there is a mistake" writes Gertrude Stein in How To Write (66), since "[g]rammar is in our power" (73) and our power is constituted by the promise. "Grammar [can be] agreeableness" (59) and "[g]rammar is easily moved to usefulness" (100) but "[g]rammar is restless" (60); "[g]rammar includes excuse felicity" (55).

In her lecture "Poetry and Grammar," Stein quotes 'Bundles for Them' as an example of poetry that struggles to avoid nouns and thus be lively and exciting and of course able to be mistaken. The promises authorized in this piece set the tone.

> We were able to notice that each one in a way carried a bundle, they were not a trouble to them nor were they all bundles as some of them were chickens some of them pheasants some of them sheep and some of them bundles, they were not a trouble to them and then indeed we learned that it was the principle recreation and they were so arranged that they were not given away, and today they were given away.
>
> I will not look at them again.

They will not look for them again.
They have not seen them here again.
They are in there and we hear them again.
(239)

On the surface of things there are three blatant reversals underlining the text's capacity for error. Each carried a bundle but they weren't all bundles; they were not given away, and today they were given away; I will not look for them again, we hear them again. But if this is all it means to perform the paradox of promising then surely it is a simple matter and hardly worth our notice. Let's move on to the next paragraph in this poem.

In which way are stars brighter than they are. When we have come to this decision. We mention many thousands of buds. And when I close my eyes I see them.
(239)

What is being promised here, what is the author signing for, authorizing under her name? What does this have to do with what preceded it? There is an overlay here of three things: bundles, stars and buds. Are we being authorized to join them all metaphorically? Bundles, which include chickens and pheasants and sheep, are like stars, which are like the buds of flowers. When she closes her eyes she sees them. Does she see them discretely, or conflated? If conflated, what is she promising us about the similarities among these three things? Stars are arranged like bundles--constellations with animal names?--and when you look at the buds of flowers and then close your eyes a pattern is left on the inside of the eyelids like the stars of a constellation. This is all quite plausible, even possible, but where

then is the paradox, and why the superficial contradictions in the first part? Let us look again at what follows.

> If you hear her snore
> It is not before you love her
> You love her so that to be her beau is very lovely
> She is sweetly there and her curly hair is very lovely.
> She is sweetly here and I am very near and that is very lovely.
> She is my tender sweet and her little feet are stretched out well which is a treat and very lovely.
> Her little tender nose is between her little eyes which close and are very lovely.
> She is very lovely and mine which is very lovely.
> (240)

What we have here is a love poem, a poem glorifying a lover as well as celebrating the possession of that lover. But a lover's vow is no vow at all according to Plato. The flower bud becomes a star becomes a mundane bundle which is not a bundle. These vows of love are promised with conviction, but all that leads up to these vows warns us that even though authorized they are able to be mistaken. There is excitement and a certain violence in this doubt. There is a sensed need to stave off the madness of doubt and absence by challenging it with these vows. She is certain she knows the truthfulness of these vows but her network warns us of their potential scandal.

Chapter Six

"As I Saw When I Saw": Writing Self-Consciously

I Subtle Larceny

The last paragraph of Gertrude Stein's The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas reads:

> About six weeks ago Gertrude Stein said, it does not look to me as if you were ever going to write that autobiography. You know what I am going to do. I am going to write it for you. I am going to write it as simply as Defoe did the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe. And she has and this is it. (252)

With this simple declaration at the end of her book Stein undermines what most people would exively accept as the aim of any autobiography: to provide a true picture of a life. With this simple declaration she turns history into fiction.[1] As Shirley Neuman demonstrates in Gertrude Stein: Autobiography and the Problem of Narration, autobiographers, as well as biographers, have long been concerned with the gaps between the narrated presentation of a "self" and the reality of that "self." "[T]he 'special felicity'

of autobiography, its 'misrepresentation', is, . . . a highly conscious and integral attribute of the genre" (13). An autobiography can be true in no absolute sense. But as Neuman points out, Stein's "originality lies not in her realization of the autobiographer's dilemma but in her repudiation for literary purposes of the continuity of the self" (17). Stein is not only consciously aware of the dilemma, she consciously makes that consciousness a part of her narrative.

In the "Wilbur Wright" section of Four in America, Stein tells us that a painter painting "is like an actor who sees himself speaking" (93). She might have extended this analogy to include the writer who sees himself writing writing, for she was certainly aware, if not always quick to admit, that this was the case. The very first sentence of her last autobiography, Wars I Have Seen, demonstrates the inevitable hesitation of such self-consciousness: "I do not know whether to put in the things I do not remember as well as the things I do remember" (3). She then goes on in the very next sentence to tell us a thing that she does not remember but which has been told to her, emphasizing that there will be gaps between the actual occurrences and what she is going to tell us about them. This same point is made by Jonathan Culler in On Deconstruction: "The attempt to 'know thyself', whether by a person or a poem, may produce powerful interpretive discourse, but something crucial will remain unknown or unnoticed, and the relation between a

text and its self-description or self-interpretation will remain askew" (205). From this awareness of the gaps that appear when references are skewed comes the pluralization of modernism--the impetus which allows no truth to be fixed.

With no fixable truths, every history is "essentially a fiction" (Neuman 26). The text becomes self-referring and self-validating. The author acquires the status of proprietor, rather than that of revealer of truths. And so, Stein, at the beginning of her novel Ida, has the character Ida, when she is discussing how she created her own twin, ask the rhetorical question, "[i]f you make her can you kill her" (11)? The destiny of a character created within a discourse is fully controlled by that discourse. It is not subject to extra-textual validation. The self-conscious text no longer entertains any illusion about the connection between textual reality or truthfulness and exterior reality or truth. The subtle larceny exists in this creation of illusory substitutes for reality. Even though Stein admits that she is writing what she does not remember, she presents it with the authority of truth. The self-conscious reader will be aware of this and will not be victimized. The unaware reader will have unknowingly allowed the text (and the pre-emptive authority of the conventions of realism) to steal from him the truth-deciding authority that is rightfully his.

II Product and Process

Such self-consciousness is a trademark of modernism. But it is not unique to modernism. Robert Alter speaks for many literary critics and philosophers when, in Partial Magic: The Novel as Self-Conscious Genre, he points to the emergence of self-consciousness with such works as Cervante's Don Quixote, and then in the eighteenth century in Britain with Sterne's Tristram Shandy. He also speaks for many when he points to the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on realism and social utility, as a time of "eclipse" for self-consciousness; and of the modernist twentieth century as a time of "revival."

"The novel begins out of an erosion of belief in the authority of the written word" (Alter, Partial Magic 3). As a new genre it became the vehicle for raising these doubts. The illusions created by earlier romances and picaresques had reached the point where, as Alter puts it, heroic aspirations came face to face with a very unheroic reality (68). In self-consciously probing, in fiction, the relationship between artifice and reality, it became apparent that realism was "a tantalizing contradiction in terms" (x). The only way the nineteenth century could develop the realistic novel was by suppressing and ignoring this problem. Gertrude Stein, a prodigious reader of everything written during the nineteenth century was well aware of this willed blindness. "There was an end of the nineteenth century and realism" she writes in Wars I Have Seen;

"realism was the last thing the nineteenth century did completely. Anybody can understand there is no point in being realistic about here and now, . . . life is not real" (44). The reason for nineteenth century realism according to Stein was the feeling of being justified in being right. And although at times she insists that her writing is in a way realism it is not nineteenth century realism when being right was part of a belief in universal knowledge. It is instead her own type of realism in which it is right because she "knows" it is right.

In the twentieth century then, as in the eighteenth, there is a dialectic between reality and fiction (Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative 4). The reader, the writer and the critic do not look for truth and validity but for the motivations manifest in the operations of this dialectic.

This dialectic is the constant self-conscious movement between writing, and reading what has been written--followed continuously by more rereading and rewriting. A text, according to Kristeva is nothing more than such a rereading and rewriting of itself (Desire in Language 87). The characters of a text, according to Alter, are constantly aware of the pen which controls them (Partial Magic 20-21). This dialectic, as Allen Thiher has put it, is a dramatizing of self-knowledge (Words in Reflection 113-14). "Explanations" writes Stein, "make me think of what do they think" (How to Write 16). Reading and writing become "co-extensive" (Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative 142). Dis-

course becomes a fabrication about fabrication (Alter 130), and flaunts the conditions of its own artifice (x). Doubt induced self-consciousness induces an endless mirroring of discourse and questioning of the status of fiction (Hutcheon xii).

But with this recognition that "all laws they are paper laws" (Stein, Everybody's Autobiography 243) also comes the recognition that knowledge kills action and that illusions are necessary (see Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy 60). Reflecting on the self and the self's discourse allows this self to fabricate the systems that prop up our necessary illusions (Thiher 67). But as Stein was all too aware, when rules are known they no longer exist (Stein, Picasso 46). They become the absence of killed action. "A planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world" writes Linda Hutcheon (58).

The dialectic operates between this absence and illusory realism. Culture has a nostalgia for realism according to Alter (50) but inasmuch as the only "real" analogue of reality is arbitrariness (71), every literary creation is larcenous (58) since it is inevitably impelled by the imagination's need to build myths (Hutcheon 140). As Alter writes, "imagination, then, is alternately, or even simultaneously, the supreme instrument of human realization and the eternal snare of delusion of a creature doomed to futility" (18). There can be no reliable narrator but each narrator exists only through validating his own relia-

bility. All conventions are inevitably misrepresentations and yet there is no escape from convention (Alter 33). The imagination is a cheat and yet we cannot create ourselves, our necessary myths without it. These are the paradoxes the realists of the nineteenth century had to avoid.

Art then is made of deception; it is fabrication passing as truth (Alter 76). The reader reading writing and rereading rewriting must remain self-conscious and, as Linda Hutcheon writes, somehow "'make sense' of the willed ambiguities, the paradoxes, even contradictions of the text" (Narcissistic Narrative 157). For even though language is a deception and inevitably commits larceny, it is also a magical conjurer and a radical probe (Alter 186). Art is at once the sole way to cope with chaos and a form of madness (198) since it challenges the ineffable absence with a belief in its own creative force.

These paradoxes, these contradictions, lead to infinite regress, aporia, absence and mise en abyme (or whatever other term is used to indicate the abyss of irresolvability). A central characteristic of this mise en abyme, according to Linda Hutcheon, is the mirror image (55): the mirror image in which Narcissus was caught and in which he discovers both the perfection of his form (truth) and his death (absence). According to Hutcheon, this Narcissism is the universal condition (1). Because the Narcissistic text must insist on its own truth, it is caught in the double bind of its own mirrored image. This mirrored image is the

self-consciousness without which there is no imagination (Hutcheon 113). Language, discourse, the text, consciousness, are the mediacy between two poles: truth (or the illusion of truth) and absence. The dialectic must therefore include not only discourse but the critique of discourse; it must mirror its own actions. As Gertrude Stein wrote in The Geographical History of America, writing is not messages it is writing what is written (80). In other words, it is reflecting on or containing a critical mirror-image of what is written.

The text, then, caught between these two poles can be judged only in terms of its own validity (i.e., truthfulness rather than absolute truth). The author or creator of the text, the mediating consciousness, must improvise his own self-validating codes and his own consequential order. In doing so he becomes the mediator not only between the illusory order of reality and absence but also the mediator between the reader and the text. He has, in other words, "absolute proprietorship over the fictional world he has created" (Alter, Partial Magic 17). The reader, in his turn, becomes a proprietor as well by rewriting the text he is reading. Every textual interaction is a proprietorial act. But this does not mean that a text can have only one proprietor, only one correct reading, or even that the proprietorship in any way changes hands; proprietorship is an imaginative act of the "I." Multiple proprietorship pluralizes the text. To take over an other's "I" would be

to recover un-skewed authorial intention. Ownership cannot change hands because the text is not a product; it is a process which must be joined.[2]

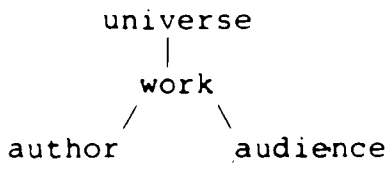
Thus, in the modernist text, the reader inevitably plays a more active role. The constant self-conscious textual movement between mirroring poles challenges the reader to enter the movement, the process. It is the self-consciousness, the mirroring of the imaginative process, which draws attention to itself and which constitutes this challenge. As Alter puts it, "the distinctive situation of the [self-conscious] novel enables the performer [i.e., the author (as narrator) or mediating consciousness] . . . to step down from the stage, walk among the audience, invite the individual spectators to examine his mask, consider its substance, design, texture, weight, coloring, even guess about the reality of the face behind the mask" (34-35). The reader must become a participant and proprietor of his own rewriting of the text. As Stein wrote in GMP,

> The way to find out that the one showing is showing, the way to find out that the one is that one is to be that one. The way to find out that the one doing what is showing is doing what is showing is to be the one doing what is showing. The way to find out that the one hearing what is heard is the one hearing what is heard is to be the one hearing what is heard. The way to find out that the one saying what is said is the one saying what is said is to be that one the one saying what is said.
> (217)

The text as process, as action, as self-conscious performance, began with the parodic novel according to Alter. Parody was meant to reveal the scandal of the conventions

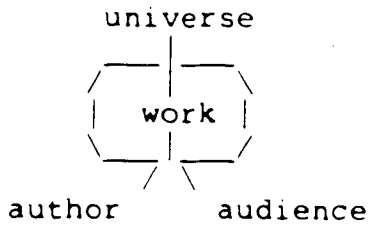
of the then popular fictional genres. But at the same time there was a seriousness involved in this parodic playfulness (Alter ix). It was a serious and restless self-questioning of the basis of culture (xv). While self-conscious discourse flaunts naive devices it also expresses a concern with the nature of artifice. If all discourse is fiction and if all fiction is, as Hutcheon claims, a parody of life (49) then even though all representation is parody, parody is also somehow representative of discourse (Alter 49) and can be positive and not just negative.

Self-conscious discourse does not just mirror the conventions of fiction but also the conventions of language. Language is placed at the core of the self-reflecting activity. There is now the mirror and the double mirror: not just the mirroring of the conventional process of representing reality but also the mirroring of the linguistic self mirroring that reality. We might illustrate this by borrowing M. H. Abrams' paradigm for literary activity in The Mirror and the Lamp. In this model, Abrams places the literary work or text in central position and then surrounds it with the three things which he feels influence the constitution of the text: the universe, the author and the audience.



(6)

Using this model, he then goes on to describe literary periods according to which relationship is emphasized. The realists, for example, emphasized the relationship between the work and the universe, that is, the work's representation of the real; and the Romantics emphasized the relationship between the author and his work, that is, the imaginative process at play. To continue the use of this model for modernism we would have to draw a circle outside of "work" and inside of "universe," "author" and "audience" and place the emphasis in the vibrating trace constituted by this circle. In other words the emphasis of self-conscious modernism is on the mirroring activity itself. The brooding metaphysical doubts at the base of modernism force the text into the position of performing a balancing act, or as Robert Alter puts it, "a flashing back and forth" (Partial Magic 132) between poles. The activity or process is the thing and not the product of any particular emphasized relationship.



III Links, Veils and Specular "I's"

The modernist novel, according to John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury, is introverted because alienated from full identification with any of what we might call the pole

positions in Abrams' model: the author, the universe, the audience and the text as object (Modernism 394-415). This introversion causes the modernist text to exist in between all of these pole positions. But as Gerald Graff points out in Literature Against Itself, self-reflexivity does not wholly abandon representation; rather, it relativizes it (200-201).[3] The impetus towards identifying a symbol with an object remains in spite of the alienating and inward-turning, self-conscious realization that this will never be achieved. Representation must remain because the poles still exercise influence. As Barthes has put it, if a text is not to be "a text without fecundity, without productivity, a sterile text," then it "needs its shadow: this shadow is a bit of ideology, a bit of representation, a bit of subject: ghosts, pockets, traces, necessary clouds: subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro" (Pleasure of the Text 32). The text can die because it has decided that it has discovered the whole truth, the whole plan (knowledge kills action); but it can also die, or in Barthes' terms become sterile, when it isolates itself to the point where it must become the silence it flirts with.

The text is caught in what Lacan calls the mirror stage (Écrits 1-7). According to Lacan the mirror stage is opposed to any philosophy that derives from the cogito, which is to say any philosophy of demonstrable existence or presence. To recognize the "I" by seeing its reflection in a mirror is a sign of intelligence which, in the child,

pre-dates the "I's" differentiation of self in relation to the "other." Thus the "I" is situated "in a fictional direction" in which the "I" is in "discordance with his own reality" (2). Inasmuch as it is the function of the mirror stage to establish a relation between the organism and reality, between the inner world and the outer world, the relation in this stage is subject to a "primordial Discord" (4). In this mirror stage the "I" is a specular "I," that is, an "I" aware of the gap between itself and its mirror image. Ironically, and in contrast, it is the social "I," achieved at a later date and through the differentiation of self in relation to the other, that allows the "I" to identify with its mirror image, and thus to become a paradox-avoiding realist.

The social "I" is a product; the specular "I" is a process. The social "I" is a single mirror; the specular "I" is a double mirror or an assemblage of mirrors. The social "I" is mimesis; the specular "I" is diegesis.[4] The identity of text as specular "I" is not to be found in the identity of any pole but in the folds between.

In these folds, where reading is rewriting and writing is rereading, this doubleness is not binarity. Binarity demands that the poles be singularly present and not simultaneously traced. The poles are the source of action inducing desire but this desire will never be fulfilled. This doubleness is the doubleness of Derrida's supplementarity, the sign that both replaces and adds to the

(mirrored) sign already in place.

For Derrida, since mimesis is commanded by truth (Dissemination 193) there is no imitation (194). The mime doesn't mirror, he inaugurates (195), he inscribes the self (198). Thus the mirror does not imitate, its reflections displace and distort (191). This is a movement, an action that feeds on its own proliferation (191). Where mimesis, in its efforts to mime truth would lift the veil and make all clear and unified (192), the text performing in the folds can do no more than extend itself out of sight in grafts in the veil (203). In Dissemination, Derrida's metaphor for the veil is the hymen. The hymen as veil is the virgin sheet of paper; the textual act of marking the paper, pierces it, is joined or married to it but is also envaginated and confined by a Platonic cave that simply proliferates the text without unveiling any truth beyond. The signifier is always separated from the signified by the intervention of the veil (207). Writing is always "in-betweeness" (212); piercing the veil as hymen and producing offspring, leads only to a repiercing not to finitude or origin.

Language, by perpetually confronting and reconfronting the veil, ends by playing in the folds. For Foucault, playing in the folds is challenging the unthought. The unthought is not, strictly speaking, absence, since for Foucault absence is not lacuna since it never ceases to be inhabited (Order of Things 308). Absence is an element of

"a wholly new form of thought" which is modernism (307).

Our attempt through language to explain our duplication of ourselves, that is to represent ourselves, is, according to Foucault an attempt to link ourselves to nature, that is, to link the inside to the outside (310). In order for man to exist as a presence, as a realized idea, he must be a figure of finitude. As such, he has traditionally been an empirical-transcendental doublet (318). The real has been linked to the ideal in our representations of self (the physical has been linked to the transcendentally universal). But inasmuch as finitude or truth can only ever be a promise (320) the transcendent is not the ideal and fundamental but the unthought which inhabits the space of the doublet (i.e., man caught in the mirrored gap) (323). The ideal can no longer serve as man's origin. Man is thus a being with no origin (332) and as such all beginnings are rebeginnings (333). All thought is not a thinking about the self and the link between the empirical and the transcendent but a challenge of unthought. The other of the empirical man is not his ideal but his unthought self, his twin (326). Thus finitude as the figure of man is a figure that always refers back to itself (317). And since the unthought inhabits language, the twin of man, his attempts to represent himself through linking self to nature, then language becomes the other through which man figures himself. Language becomes the gap in which man searches for himself and the linking to nature becomes the linking act

of linguistic performance. The chain of being becomes the chain of discourse (310). Thus man is a non-present linking act. Or as Stein wrote in How to Write:

> narrative is the relation between there being there at once once and having their next not at once not once not now not merely . . . . There might be some there after all after all after all. . . . There is no remembering remembrance of when when they were . . . .
>
> (226)

This is the specular "I" vibrating in the in-between with nowhere to come to rest.

IV Stein's Fall

Self-consciousness, not only of generic convention but also of the "primordial discord" of language, is very apparent in the work of Gertrude Stein. Stein's subject was writing itself. But Stein had to fall from a belief in her ability to discover and express wholeness and absolute truth into this recognition of "primordial discord," of mortality and absence. She documented the self-conscious doubts that caused this fall in The Making of Americans. It is therefore fitting that when she came to write a lecture about the self-conscious element of writing writing, she wrote "The Gradual Making of The Making of Americans." But this lecture is not an explanation of the discovery of doubt (for such an explanation would be the demonstration of the "truth" about doubt); it is a rereading and rewriting of the process of becoming lost in the folds, of being unable to make the final link between the "I" and

nature, which evokes the same ambivalence to be found in The Making of Americans.

The Making of Americans is the story of absolute certainty, the full identification (linkage) of the inside with the outside, becoming the limited and relative certainty of the "I" knowing what it knows. "I was very full of convictions in those days," she writes in her lecture (136); "I was sure that in a kind of a way the enigma of the universe could . . . be solved" (142). She was going to use "The Making of Americans . . . to do this thing, to make the whole present" (147). To do this she was going to describe everyone (142), by creating a complete typology of human character based on bottom natures (139). She even went so far as "to make charts of all the people I had ever known or seen, or met or remembered" (141). For, as she later wrote in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, she had been "possessed by the intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality" (211). She was determined to link human (or internal) nature with outer nature. Her aim was a nineteenth century aim, the aim to create a realistic product.

Had this absolute certainty been her only intellectual resource, Stein would never have written what she wrote. Fortunately (or unfortunately) her passion for exactitude compelled her to consider every inexactitude. As Richard Bridgman has written, "Stein's quest for demonstrable and final truth was perpetually undermined by her awareness of

exceptions" (Gertrude Stein in Pieces 74). These perpetual exceptions created doubt. This doubt turned Stein back into herself. She returned to the preoccupations of her college years when she had been "so occupied with what made me myself inside me" and "in my own mental and physical processes and less in that of others" (Gradual Making of the Making of Americans 137). Stein became more interesting for her doubts about certainty, and for the reflections about the self that these caused, than for the certainties themselves.

The Making of Americans is littered with despondent moments when Stein recognizes the infinity of exceptions that face her. They begin as early as page 15 where, after an attempt at description she admits that "this is perhaps not the whole of our story either" (15). A few pages later she is even more in doubt about her capacity to find the truth. This doubt forces her to reflect on the nature of what she is doing. "[B]ut truly I never feel it that there ever can be for me any such a creature [Julia Dehning], no it is this scribbled and dirty and lined paper" (33). Later her ambitions are revised downwards. The book is now going to be the history of some and not of all character types (175). But even after this downward revision of her ambition she is still "unhappy in this writing" (348). Until finally her disillusionment reaches the point where she decides that "no one can really ever be agreeing with you completely in anything" (483), that the inside cannot

be equal to the outside, that human nature cannot express equality with nature, and that there is "no way of making a whole one" (522). As she later expressed it in her "Transatlantic Interview" with Robert Haas, "[n]othing can be the same thing to the other person. Nobody can enter into anybody else's mind . . . . You have slight contacts with other people's minds, but you cannot enter into them" (Primer for the Gradual Understanding 34).

In her lecture on The Making of Americans, Stein tells us that all of the exceptions and the doubts they caused, did not, in the end, cause her to "get at all discouraged," in fact, they only caused her to "become more and more interested" (144). What did it mean that there could be no complete description (156). It meant that she would have to examine what was inside of her and how she brought what was outside inside and sent what was inside outside (how she related to the natural world). It did not mean that she would examine what was inside of others because she could not wholly know what was inside of others. As Bridgman puts it, "finding herself perpetually frustrated in her attempts to provide a full, satisfactory description of any one or any thing, she eventually found herself driven to rely upon her own subjective response" (Gertrude Stein in Pieces 55).

She was no longer writing for herself and strangers but instead for the sake of those "who know I know it" (Gradual Making of the Making of Americans 141), where what she knew was not the everything of absolute truth but rather the

everything which was all that she knew (158). This everything was not both inside and outside but the everything that "is inside every one" (150). This "one" was the individual being that she self-consciously recognized in The Making of Americans as being self-created (260). Complete understanding of everything was an understanding of this self-creation. Wholeness does not have an absolute value but a value relativized by being, as Stein puts it, "a whole one to me" (291). She no longer wrote for herself and strangers but only for herself (430), that is, only out of her own internal knowing and not out of a supposed or conjectured ideal knowing.

Writing for herself meant writing self-consciously within the fold, bringing the outside in and sending the inside out but no longer claiming that the one knew the wholeness of the other. As she put it in The Geographical History of America, "they did not know what they saw because they said they saw what they knew and if they saw it they no longer knew it because then they were two" (150). Thus knowing became experiencing, became living in and writing in the gap: a process not a product (which turned knowing into "two" identified as one).

Once her writing became concerned with itself, it became concerned with the experience of indefiniteness rather than with the expression of definiteness. Experience became prolonging existing (Gradual Making of the Making of Americans 152), it became the infinite variations of repe-

tition and sameness (138). Knowing was no longer linking the inside and the outside in fixed expressions of truth but "a sense for combination within a conception of the existence of a given space" (160). Even though Stein continued to hope that things would be the way she said they were (Making of Americans 631), because she could not bear not knowing everything (729), she came to accept that the only certainty was not knowledge but experiencing knowing (783). In a piece entitled "Scenes" first published in Geography and Plays she summed this up when she wrote, "[t]here is no answer. There is turning. Turning is not a victim, it has no protection, it has no authority, it has a receipt" (121). This turning is the constant play in the fold, the constant approach and turning back from opposing and unattainable poles. The text resolves itself into the status of a receipt for the experience of turning, of existing; the receipt has no protection from a greater authority; it has only itself to remind itself of itself.

Her receipt allows her to see when she saw (Gradual Making of the Making of Americans 88). And this turned her increasingly to reflect on language. In "Genuine Creative Ability" Stein wrote, "I am very busy finding out what people mean by what they say. I used to be interested in what they were I am now interested in what they say" (Haas, Primer for the Gradual Understanding 105). And so she was concerned with and self-conscious of "pushing language around, putting pressure on it" (Stein, Narration 12), and

she liked "the feeling of words doing as they want to do and as they have to do . . . which of course they do do" (15).

Chapter Seven

"Talking and Listening": Repetition, Insistence and Force

I Excessive Repetition

Gertrude Stein is perhaps best known, by those who know nothing about her, for her use of repetition. In fact, this use of repetition was so notorious that all a journalist had to do to parody her was to repeat something excessively. When Gertrude and Alice B. Toklas arrived in New York in 1934 for their American tour, one of the newspaper headlines read: "Gerty Gerty Stein Stein is Back Home Home Back" (Mellow, Charmed Circle 381). The editor was obviously confident that such an allusion to Stein's work would be easily recognized. Few readers of this headline, however, would have understood more about Stein's use of repetition than this parodied excessiveness.[1] They were quite content to unquestioningly accept it as symptomatic of the silliness to which avant-garde experimentalism could lead.

This contented audience, if they had thought at all about the question of repetition, would have concluded that it was a structural device, and that Stein's apparent ad nauseam use was so excessive and drew so much attention to itself that it undermined the usefulness and force of the device. And, confined within the limits of this conceptualization of repetition, they would have considered themselves quite justified in this judgement. But in failing to ask why attention was being drawn to repetition, and as a result assigning to its excessive use a negative valuation, they were culpable of the sort of error of which no good scientist or logician (labels which would include the literary critic who would discover a unified theory in literature) should ever be culpable. Anomalies are not to be discarded as errors. Once discovered, they should become the focus of attention until the present theory can be revised to accommodate the anomaly. This, of course, is to accept the anomalous Steinian text as literature and to give it the status of empirical data; it is also to valorize both logical induction and the theories that result from such acts of induction. (Accordingly, to accept the negative parody as justified is necessarily to label the Steinian text non-literary.) Without entering into the debate concerning what is and what is not literary, one can say that there were enough people willing to claim that the Steinian text was literary to place the burden of proof on those who were not so willing.[2] In this case, parody was an

evasion. Stein's use of repetition had to be accounted for in some way. The paradox is, that while Stein's parodists would have considered such an argument, and the search for a more accommodating theory, valid, and could only have challenged it by challenging the literary status of the Steinian text, Stein herself would have dismissed it as beside the point. She had no desire to be "included" within any tidy theory, new or old.

Stein wanted to be read and to have the genius of her writing acknowledged. Part of acknowledging this genius was acknowledging and feeling the force of her use of repetition. Whether or not a reader decides to accept Stein as a genius is unimportant (although Stein gives the reader ample opportunity to do so by defining genius in the context of repetition); what is important is that the reader does not deny himself the opportunity of making this judgement by imposing inadequate theories on the Steinian text. Such an opportunity only comes when the old theories are left behind and the reader learns to respond to what Stein is doing with repetition, and not to what the old theories have lead him to expect from repetition.

II Three Repetitions

Gilles Deleuze suggests that there are three types of repetition: 1) repetition of the past; 2) repetition in the present; and, 3) repetition as eternal recurrence, which is to say repetition which is cyclical and can therefore be

predicted for the future (Différence et répétition 376-86). The first of these is traditional repetition. What is repeated is firmly based in the models of the past and uses those models to inform and instruct the present action. E. K. Brown's, Rhythm In the Novel is a good expression of this attitude. His chapter titles clearly indicate the aims of such a theory. The first three chapters are titled "Phrase, Character, Incident," "Expanding Symbols," and "Interweaving Themes" (the fourth and final chapter is on E. M. Forster and provides an illustration of the theory contained within the first three chapters and does not interest me here). The first chapter identifies the sites and explains the conventional structural patterns of repetition and variation. The next two chapters examine the purposes of these repetitions and variations. The ultimate purpose of repetition is to promote ideological unity through structural unity. What Brown is doing for the novel is what any traditional prosodist attempts to do for poetry: to demonstrate how structure can best serve the unification of thought.

This is not all that different from Deleuze's third option, the repetition of eternal recurrence. Although the term "eternal recurrence" is most often associated with Nietzsche and with the recognition that man will never be able to express anything transcendent and will always be stuck repeating the same hard realities of material existence, it is still epistemological. A cycle is a sys-

tem. The formulations of many strict structuralists, such as Gérard Genette, can be placed in this category. Genette's narratological theory sees repetition as an element of temporality, which he investigates under the rubric of "frequency." Repetitions are the identity of multiple occurrences; they are the paradigms of recurrence (Narrative Discourse 113), which Genette then classifies in terms of its structural type (114).

Both of these types of repetition are similar in one key regard: what is repeated is repeated from models or paradigms and provides structural support for systemic thought. This repetition is not cancelled by repetition in the present; it exists congruent to it. It is in this sense that repetition produces not challenge, but method and the illusion of unity (Culler, On Deconstruction 229). Any such paradigmatic use of repetition implies an acceptance of method and unity and consequently imparts a concomitant value on the adherents. As Freud has written, "man's judgements of value follow directly his wishes for happiness--that, accordingly, . . . are an attempt to support his illusions with arguments" (Civilization and its Discontents 82).

For Stein, well known for her insistence on present continuing composition, this kind of repetition is unsuitable. She did not repeat the past nor the cycles that would fill the future; she repeated only <u>in</u> the present, Deleuze's second option. The implications of this choice

are considerable. But first let us look at what Stein herself had to say about repetition in her lecture, "Portraits and Repetition."

III Stein's Repetition

The first thing to note in this lecture is that although it is ostensibly about repetition, repetition is the enemy. Repetition is remembering the past; repetition in the present is not really repetition but insistence and emphasis (167). Thus, repeating is dead and insistence is alive (174). Writing is therefore not description (166) because description implies resemblance and representation, which in turn presuppose remembering, which is a reclamation of the past (174). Writing is the expression of existing (175). Writing a portrait is writing what a person is and not what a person does or has done (172). This insistence on the continuing present is an insistence on William James' will to live on (169). This will to live on occurs in the face of chaos and is supported by no illusions of order.

Two apparent contradictions arise though if we try to go much further. First, insistence and emphasis imply change and movement. And "there is no real realization of it moving if it does not move against something" (165). The text, in her words is relational. But Stein then claims that the movement and feeling of existing in her writing, if it "is lively enough, perhaps it is possible to know

that it is moving even if it is not moving against anything" (165). This is a writing not in relation. "[W]e have now, a movement lively enough to be a thing in itself moving, it does not have to move against anything to know that it is moving" (171). On the surface of things, this seems a patent absurdity. How can we perceive movement if not through relation?

The second contradiction has to do with remembering. Existing is insistence and not repetition. "[a]nything one is remembering is a repetition, but existing as a human being . . . is never repetition. It is not repetition if it is that which you are actually doing because naturally each time the emphasis is different" (179). But if insistence is emphasis, and emphasis is adding to the force of something already existing, then that something already existing, in order to be added to and to be emphasized must, it seems logical to suggest, be remembered during the act of repetition cum insistence in order to achieve the desired emphasis. A thing not remembered during an act of emphasis would appear to undermine, by its absence, the intended effect. These two problems are thus very similar. Both remembering and relation provide the other against which the self of the thing existing can discover its movement, change, emphasis and insistence.

To extricate ourselves from this confusion it is necessary (i.e., desired by the reader) to explicitly figure some terms that Stein leaves, at best, implicit. Let

me, begin with the terms "clarity" and "confusion." Stein begins by stating clearly that "a thing that is very clear may easily not be clear at all, a thing that may be confused may be very clear" (173). She then further clarifies/confuses her position: "I am inclined to believe that there is really no difference between clarity and confusion" (174). Later in the lecture she comes back to these terms: "intelligent people although they talk as if they knew something are really confusing, because they are so to speak keeping two times going at once, the repetition time of remembering and the actual time of talking . . . although they are clearly saying something they are not clearly creating something, because they are because they always are remembering" (180). Clarity is therefore confused with confusion when what is said is said when remembering. Clarity which is reclaimed from the past and which repeats already described concepts is confusing. The confusion of present creating is clarity. The clarity of repeating is outside and seen in relation. The clarity of creating existing is "a thing contained within itself" (194) and therefore not in relation.

Inside is existing and insistence and not in relation. Outside is remembering and repetition in relation. Inside is what <u>is</u>. Outside is what has been <u>done</u>. The inside is promoted over the outside because the inside is the site where genius creates what <u>is</u>. The terms with which Stein delimits "genius" must therefore be explicitly figured.

"[T]he essence of genius," Stein tells us, "of being most intensely alive, . . . is being one who is at the same time talking and listening" (170). To be "most entirely and completely listening and talking, the two in one and the one in two . . . has in it no element of remembering. Therefore there is no element of confusion" (180). However, to do two things at the same time, listening and talking, necessarily places them in relation. Listening thus bears the same relationship to remembering that insistence bears to repetition. Repetition relates a present act to a past act; insistence is the reiteration or reinscription of existence in the present. Remembering relates present knowing to past knowing; listening relates the various elements that exist within the field of present knowing. The inside is therefore the synchronic field and the outside is diachronic progression. In diachronic progression there is relation (which allows for the perception of movement and change) because the moving thing in the present is seen in relation to a fixed thing in the past. Stein claims that there is no relation in the synchronic field because nothing is fixed and everything is moving. Thus movement is not seen in relation <u>to</u> something but <u>is</u> relation itself. It can only be figured after the fact and not during existing. Thus Stein can claim that "relation" and "remembering" do not <u>exist</u> in the present because while continuing in the present they cannot be stopped, delimited and named.

Thus there is repetition but it is deferred and called insistence; there is remembering but it is brought into the present and called listening; and there is relation but it can only be reclaimed after the fact. Diachronic clarity is synchronic confusion and synchronic clarity is diachronic confusion. Stein uses the second of Deleuze's categories of repetition, that is, repetition in the present, to set up these confusions in order to insist upon and emphasize her present existing. The differences which delimit and allow for naming are deferred.

It is interesting to note that although Stein's texts are almost always referred to as writing in the continuous present, many of her critics have not dealt with her use of repetition in this context. Many have considered her use of repetition as either past oriented or cyclical.

IV The Critics

Stein's use of repetition has often been discussed, but just as often misconceived. Leon Katz, in his influential 1963 Ph.D. dissertation on Stein, claimed that her use of repetition was not Freudian (see below) but rhythmic, attitudinal and gestural and that to know Stein's rhythm is to know her wholeness (84). This is an obvious echoing of E. K. Brown. Richard Bridgman analyzes Stein's use of repetition as an element of one of her "several unreadable styles" (Gertrude Stein in Pieces 97), or in other words, as a structural device. Wendy Steiner, although she begins

by recognizing that the problem of representation is important to reading Stein's texts, ends by seeing her use of repetition as a stylistic element characteristic of her typologizing (Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance 18), and later as a method of finding the rhythm of a person's wholeness (49), a rhythm that would allow a text to be "mimetically adequate to the subject" (60). Michael J. Hoffman sees the repetitions of Stein as elements abstracted out of the larger context to emphasize "full organic balance," or what we might call universal qualities (The Development of Abstractionism 61). These are prominent examples but by no means unrepresentative.

Bruce Kawin is a more interesting case. He devoted a whole book to the question of repetition in which he deals with many of the issues of indeterminacy which concern contemporary literary theorists. He devotes most of one chapter to Stein and suggests, as I have done, that the significant aspect of Stein's use of repetition is its relationship to time. He titles his chapter on Stein "The Continuous Present," seemingly signalling that like Deleuze he sees repetition <u>of</u> and <u>in</u> the present to be a category of repetition. However, he fails to take into account the epistemological implications of existing in the present. In the end he arrives at conclusions which sound very similar to those favored by critics who see Stein's use of repetition only as a stylistic device. He suggests that Stein was able "by beginning again with each new instan[illegible]bserving

and recording, to make her carefully, consciously chosen individual and nonevocative words record what she actually saw" (Beginning Again and Again 119). In other words, it is a stylistic device designed to invoke "mimetic adequacy."

A significant trend of more recent Stein criticism is the recognition of the implications that present composition has on the ability of language to represent the real and the actual. Robert Bartlett Haas recognizes the contiguous rather than paradigmatic nature of relationships in the present when he speaks of Stein's use of repetition as the process of accumulation and of creating lists (Primer for the Gradual Understanding 43-44), structures which are indefinite and fragmentary. James Rother sees Stein's use of repetition as representative of her expanding universe (Translation of Experience 113). Marjorie Perloff, borrowing a phrase from John Ashbery, sees repetition as a "hymn to possibility" (Poetics of Indeterminacy 77). Jayne L. Walker sees Stein's recognition of mortality and of the fragmentary and discontinuous nature of knowledge (Making of a Modernist 74) as leading directly to her "repetition motif" (76). Although this trend has become more prominent in recent criticism, it is by no means a radical departure. As early as 1951 Donald Sutherland had recognized that repetition did not demonstrate that everything was alike but rather, quite the opposite, that everything was different (Biography of Her Work 73).

In this context, repetition in the fragmentary,

indeterminate and expanding present becomes a figure of force. As such it is a figure which challenges death, madness and chaos.

V Freud and Force

In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud came to the conclusion that there were two drives or instincts: the sex drive, which aimed towards the continuation of life, and the death drive, which aimed to return life or existence to its original condition, which is to say non-existence or death (32). When internalized, the drive to non-existence becomes active defiance in the face of pain (10) and finds pleasure in aggression (11). The repression of pain-causing aggressions is required to secure the continuation of civilization. The active pursuit of defiance and aggression would liberate repressions and drive towards death, madness and chaos (14).

In Civilization and its Discontents, Freud sees three ways for the individual and civilization to avoid this madness and chaos: 1) through the deflection of aggression: to repress it and forget its existence; 2) through the substitution of illusion for aggression: to put in place a religion or metaphysics which provides a system of order to be believed in that denies aggression; and, 3) through intoxication: to cancel the pain of madness and chaos by rendering oneself insensitive to it (12). However, if the object of life is the strong experience of pleasure and not

just the security of a soothing absence of pain (13) then the individual must move beyond such patterns of avoidance and go on the attack (15).[3] The consequence, of course, is that civilization will never be secure.

Repetition is an act symptomatic of this defiance. Repetition forces connection to the point of resistance, that is, to the point where repression is hiding the pain of madness and chaos and death (Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle 12) by refusing to allow it to be forgotten and by constantly returning chaos to consciousness. Repetition defies the capacity of intoxication to render insensible by battering at the conscious mind over and over again and not allowing the oblivion of intoxication to take effect. Repetition is an aggressive action which challenges the illusions that prop up guilt induced submission and faith (Freud, Civilization and its Discontents 71). It repeatedly attacks the points at which illusion resists chaos. Repetition, writes Derrida in his study of Freud, "has the power of breaching" (Writing and Difference 201). The act of breaching is an act of contacting and recontacting the point of repression or resistance until something gives and the resistance itself becomes the focus-perception of existing. According to Derrida, in his essay, "Ellipsis" (Writing 295-300), this breach or rupture never allows the circle of an episteme to close, thus the illusion or religion is left incomplete, insecure and inadequate. Gilles Deleuze was in agreement when he claimed that repe-

tition is a critique of representation (Différence 108).

This repetition is the repetition which Freud called compulsive repetition; it is the repetition that seemed excessive to the journalists who parodied Stein. It confuses illusory systems of order but makes mortality and madness clearly visible. But not all repetition can claim this status and as I have pointed out, the critic must be careful not to be too sweeping. The gentler repetition of the past should not be forced into the context of compulsive repetition. To say that repetition can be compulsive is not to give license to see compulsion in all repetition.

These two types of repetition are really quite different and the use of the same word can be confusing. This is why Stein's decision to use a new list of words--insistence, emphasis, existing, talking/listening--and to emphasize the continuing present, is important. Although Freud still uses the word "repetition" (adding the adjective compulsive), he also emphasizes the present tense action of that compulsive repetition that breaches. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle he writes that to rupture the barriers of resistance and of repression, one "is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, . . . remembering it as something belonging to the past" (12). To relieve a patient of pain (i.e., to allow him a soothing civilized happiness) is "to force as much as possible into the channel of memory and to allow as little as possible to emerge as repetition" (13). Stein's repeti-

tion is a "contemporary experience" of rupturing without remembering. Memory allows the self to remain aloof from the experience of the repetition, to compartmentalize it, exteriorize it and thus to forget that it has a bearing upon present existing. Soothing repetition is an accommodation of the repressed material in the memory, which is to say, into an ordered pattern of recollection that defuses the pain.

VI The Uncanny

Culler suggests that Freud's compulsive repetition carries death and the uncanny into life (On Deconstruction 165). The present then becomes a mise en abyme, a realm of infinite regress and madness. This is the present of free association (Stein's repetition as insistence without remembering) which is, as Freud has suggested, anathema to memory (General Introduction 114). It is a present action of "isolating repetition" and "discontinuity" (Bloom, Anxiety of Influence 83). Pleasure does not come from the security of order but is episodic, which is to say fragmentary (Freud, Civilization 13).

As Deleuze has written, repetition itself becomes the object of desire as both loss and gain (Différence 13). Or as Sartre put it, everything is already done and yet to be done (What is Literature 32). This repetition in the present, which takes place at the point of resistance or repression, is the trace, the performed erasure of the

present (Derrida, Writing and Difference 201ff). The unerasable trace is that "presence" to which we have no access. Repetition is the incidence of the inscription and reinscription of the trace. It is difference and deferral rather than sameness. It is the supplement that adds to as well as replaces. It is not sameness because there is no remembering the presence of the trace. "We are so made that we can derive intense enjoyment only from a contrast and very little from a state of things" writes Freud in Civilization and its Discontents (13). Where there is this repeated difference and deferral, the trace leaves us only with what Hartman calls a "phantom" when he suggests that "repetition phantomizes presence" (Saving the Text 121). As Stein has written, "[t]here is a world of difference and in it there is essentially no remembering" (Portraits and Repetition 183).

VII Who Names Names

In the "Ulysses S. Grant" section of Four in America Stein writes,

> And names. Who names names. Nobody names names. They have names. If they have names and nobody names names, names are not like names, but they will know their names. Oh yes their names. It is like that their names.
>
> (57)

This is precisely the sort of repetition that Stein's journalistic parodists found excessive. How then do we react to it?

First, we might ask, where is the point of resistance?

and concomitantly, what illusion is being ruptured? It seems fairly obvious that "names" and the process of naming is the point of resistance. Naming names allows us to control the exterior world and so resist the pain and madness of aporia. What is being ruptured then are all metaphysical arguments which support the illusion that somebody "names names" and that "names" are "like names." Naming names and naming the name name until the very name name loses its illusory power to definitively name is an aggressive act against naming. We needn't stop here. We could conceivably bring to bear on this text any other text that has to do with naming. Thus any text which concerns itself with the question of linguistic representation forms part of the intertext.

The point of resistance and the thing ruptured are not always so easily identified. What does a reader do when faced with a passage such as this one from Sacred Emily.

Pale.
Pale.
Pale.
Pale.
Pale.
Pale.
Pale.
Near sights.
Please sorts.
Example.
Example.
Put something down.
Put something down some day.
Put something down some day in.
Put something down some day in my.

In my hand.
In my hand right.
In my hand writing.
Put something down some day ir my hand writing.
(Geography and Plays 185)

The first reaction might be the reaction of "common sense" (common sense is, of course, supported by soothing illusions of presence; it is only called common because although the evidently correct response is very present, the underlying metaphysical support is so entrenched that it is unstated and for the most part not even recognized as related). Common sense might suggest that the writer is trying very hard to put down on paper a thought that is only vaguely present in the back of her mind and that, in her efforts to make the thought fully present she is coaxing it out by writing down the bits and pieces as they come along, until finally the whole thing arrives. However, if we accept what Stein has written about writing in the present, and about not remembering, then we will recognize that she is not trying to reclaim a prior thought because such an action is anathema to her whole endeavor. Common sense doesn't help us much here.

Must there then be a point of resistance when common sense tells us that it is a simple case of stuttering?[4] It seems to me that unless we wish simply to discard this text and join the ranks of the parodists and detractors, we must at least try. We can begin with the word that is first repeated. "Pale" is repeated seven times. What could it possibly be attacking? "Near sights"? Somebody who is near

sighted is bound to see things in the distance faintly. "Pale" can also indicate the line (literally fence) that separates the sanctioned or favored from the unsanctioned or unfavored. Are those who see things near sightedly unconsciously accepting the laws that decide what is and what is not sanctioned by not looking well enough at what lies beyond the "pale." "Please sorts" seems to suggest so. The action of sanctioning, of "sorting," "pleases" certain sorts. Next, Stein calls for an example. The example is that to "put something down" "in my hand" (validated by my signature), confuses "right" with "write." The point of resistance is therefore the idea that what is written is law. What is ruptured is the sanctity of this law.

But is this "coherent" reading really "present" in this stuttering? The answer is yes and no. Yes, because I have found it and provided reasonable contextual constraints. No, because it is not the only or the correct reading. What it forces on the reader is thus the combined pain and pleasure of its coherence. Its coherence is ephemeral, a mere trace of coherence. It only has a semblance of coherence because I have stopped the existing of the text in order to provide commentary (to provide commentary is unavoidably to place into the past what is being commented on; once placed in the past, differences and relations can be provisionally identified--hence the ephemeral coherence). In fact, paradoxically, the "message" or identity (the coherence) of this commentary argues against

the validity of coherence and in favor of forcing through the "pale."

Once again the intertext can be infinitely broadened (an expanding textual universe/field). How does such a response relate to the rest of the text, a portrait written in 1912 in which she first uses the phrase "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," a text which Mellow calls "a domestic idyll" (Charmed Circle 259). How do we relate it to other portraits of the same period or portraits of different periods? The commentary could be endless. But it must begin somewhere and the recognition of force, point of resistance, and rupture is a good place to begin. Looking at repetition allows us to begin--again and again.

Chapter Eight

Master-pieces, Manifestoes and the "Business of Living": Gertrude Stein Lecturing

I Of Fame and Glory

Gertrude Stein, for whatever psychologically, socially or culturally induced reasons, needed to be famous, to make a conquest of power and tradition, to experience what she referred to as "la gloire." However, when large-scale "best-seller" fame finally came to her with the 1933 publication of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, she quickly realized that it was not the sort of "gloire" she was looking for. She was all too conscious of the fact that she was the most widely known unread author in America. For a writer who felt that she had written one of the three great

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1. [S]omething . . . printed . . .[is] no longer the property of the one who wrote it . . . .
2. . . . [T]alking essentially has nothing to do with creation.

works of the twentieth century (The Making of Americans joined Ulysses and A la Recherche du Temps Perdu) this was unacceptable (Stein, Portraits and Repetition 184). She wanted to be read and to be lionised for her creative genius; she did not want to be lionised only for the force and appeal of her personality. After all, she had been well known for years as the "Sybil of Montparnasse"--as the friend, patron, and promoter of many of the early twentieth century's most famous artists and writers and, while this role occupied her, she did not consider it either fulfilling ("governing is occupying but not interesting" [Law 65]) or her life's work. She was a writer. And it was as a writer that she would have herself lionised.

Henry McBride, a New York journalist and friend of Gertrude Stein's, had warned her against striving for too large a measure of fame instead of developing a small audience capable of understanding and appreciating her. He argued that in the process of achieving a wider fame she would experience growing pressures to conform to traditional conventions. He warned that this would stifle her creative impulse. In 1933 Stein discovered that he had in large part been right. After having written almost every day for thirty years she was unable to write anything. As

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3. . . . [T]he essence of being a genius is to be able to talk and listen, to listen while talking and talk while listening . . . .
4. . . . [O]ne has no identity . . . . when one is in the act of doing anything.

she later wrote, "[n]othing needed any word and there was no word inside me that could not be spoken and so there was no word inside me" (Everybody's Autobiography 64).

This block, along with her lack of satisfaction in the fame she had achieved, started her thinking about the relationship between the writer and her audience, and among the writer, her audience and the "business of living" (What Are Master-pieces 88). She came to realize that "[a]fter the audience begins, naturally they create something that is they o[illegible]e you" (law 67). Stein did not want to be shaped by her audience; she did not want her writing to be reduced to a "business;" she wanted to do the shaping herself. Her meditations on these relationships resulted not only in theoretical discourse but also in pragmatic action. She had two problems of a practical nature to resolve. She had to break through her block and begin writing again and she had to convince her large new audience that they should actually read her and not just "about" her.

Stein's realization that the major reason for her block was this pressure to conform to her audience's desires was important. She now had a concrete obstacle to overcome. At first, this audience pressure seemed to exclude from her writing process any external stimuli. Naturally, she found

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5. Identity is recognition.
6. I do not care care who it is that has or does influence me as long as it is not myself.
7. There is always the same subject . . . each one in his or her way knows all of them . . . it is not this knowledge that makes master-pieces.

this a very barren point of view. Only when she began to re-formulate for herself a difference between external stimulus as demanding-subject (or audience) and external stimulus as undemanding-object (or raw material) was she once again able to place herself in a position where she did not feel that she was undermining her integrity during the act of writing. This distinction eventually evolved into the theory of human mind and human nature [illegible] wrote about at length in 1935 in The Geographic[illegible] of America. It was also at the [illegible] her 1936 lecture "What are Master-Pieces and Wh[illegible]ere so Few of Them." In this theory, a master-piece [illegible] text which deals with the world but bears no necessary relationship to it; it aims for a textual "purity" in which the text is an "entity" or unnecessary product (in terms of its relation to the business of living) of the human m[illegible]; all other writing is concerned first and foremost with it's relation to the world and is the product of human nature and is "identity" writing.

Stein spent the summer of 1933, the summer immediately following the success of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, at her summer home in Bilignin as usual. Two unexplained deaths in the neighborhood provided the undeman-

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8. At any moment when you are you you are you without the memory of yourself.
9. . . . [I]n lecturing . . . one ceased to hear what one said one heard what the audience hears one say.
10. . . . [O]ratory is practically never a master-piece . . . .

ding-external stimulus which was extraordinary enough to be easily separated from the demands of her audience and which was jarring enough to start her writing again. First, Madame Pernollet of the well-known Hotel Pernollet in the nearby town of Belley died after she had apparently fallen out of a second-story window of the hotel. Second, the English friend of Madame Caesar, who lived on a chicken farm close to Gertrude and Alice, was found dead in a ravine with two bullets through her head. Neither of these deaths was ever confirmed to be murder, though both of them raised suspicions. In any event, in puzzling out these two events Gertrude Stein had begun to write again. The result was Blood on the Dining Room Floor, Stein's version of the detective story.[2] Her first pragmatic action then was her decision to use an external stimulus as a starting point for writing "entity." As she later wrote: "a picture [or a text] exists for and in itself and the painter [or writer] has to use objects landscapes and people as a way the only way that he is able to get the picture [or text] to exist" (law 15).

Her second pragmatic action was the decision to enter the "business of living," that is, to write texts aimed at making readers out of her new audience; texts which did not

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11. . . . [H]istory deals with . . . orators who hear . . . what their audience hears them say.
12. . . . [T]he letter writes what the other person is to hear and so entity does not exist there are two present instead of one and so once again creation breaks down.

pretend to be master-pieces. She decided to give a series of lectures that would, she hoped, not only convince people that she was readable but also that she was worth reading. In these lectures she set out to define the ground rules for reading that her public complained they lacked. It is these lectures that I call her manifestoes.

Recent work done by semioticians on the generic configuration of the avant-garde literary manifesto provides a useful context within which to consider Stein's lecture/manifestoes.[3] The manifesto is a text uniquely suited to a period of Foucauldian rupture, that is, a period of shift from one cultural, historical or social strata to another--a rupture and shift which require both a new formulation and a new understanding of rules, codes and conventions. The peculiar nature of the avant-garde modernist rupture was that it did not separate itself from traditional systems in order to establish the authority of a better system; rather, it separated itself from traditional systems in order to demonstrate the inadequacy of any system. The avant-garde literary manifesto does not attempt to constitute or re-constitute coherence and meaning; instead, it is a text which, to use Foucault's term, "compensates" for this loss of coherence and

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13. . . . [A]ction is necessary and anything that is necessary has to do with human nature and not with the human mind.
14. . . . [A] master-piece has essentially not to be necessary.
15. . . . [A] picture exists for and in itself and the

meaning (Order of Things 44). This compensation takes the form of self-consciously providing a collection of rules, codes and conventions in a way that makes evident their provisional status.

II Manifestos as Genre

In Stein's terms, the manifesto is a text of identity because it provides a business-like connection between the necessities of "human nature" and the free-play of "human mind." It is useful then to consider here the conventions of that text which concerns itself with "convention." For the purposes of clarity I will divide my discussion of the generic conventions of the manifesto into three ad hoc categories. I will place the manifesto in relation to "time and place," "power and tradition," and "discourse."

1. Time and Place

The first thing to assert is that the manifesto is an act. This act is dependent upon the contingencies of time and place, which is to say that time and place, during this textual act, are translated into a unique synchronic space of consciousness. Stein produced her lecture/manifestoes expressly for the audiences to whom they were delivered. Without the perceived need for these lectures and without

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painter has to use objects landscapes and people . . . to get the picture to exist.

16. . . . [T]he minute one is conscious deeply conscious of these things as a subject the interest in them does not exist.

the many requests by friends and the various interested parties (such as publishers and agents) that they be given, it is unlikely that they would ever have been written. And without some prior success and notoriety it is unlikely that the requests would have been made. (The requests here stand for the forces demanding such an act: the social, cultural or political mix of forces which the manifesto writer sees as demanding the announcement of a break with the past and the declaration of new laws. These forces may be perceived in many ways and not just as requests.)

Another important convention of the manifesto is that it does not precede a new form but rather it follows it. Stein wrote these lectures not in the process of creating her aesthetic but rather in the hope of convincing others that her aesthetic was worthy of note and of emulation. These lecture/manifestoes are not the sort of textual meditations in which she clarified for herself what she was attempting to do. They were written for her audience, to be performed before them. Others of her theoretical writings, such as <u>How to Write</u> and <u>Four in America</u>, are more exploratory and meditative--written more for herself and not expressly for her audience-- and are therefore not to be considered manifestoes. (A manifesto is not simply any text

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17. . . . [W]hat is happening [in the world] is not really interesting . . . it excites them a little but it does not really thrill them.
18. . . . [T]alking is really human nature . . . .
19. . . . [H]uman nature has nothing to do with masterpieces.

which deals with theoretical issues. It is a genre of text which deals with theoretical issues in a certain way and for certain reasons.)

Brought together at one time and in one place the manifesto is necessarily a performance. It is not an immutable "ideal" or "essence" which exists independently of its "living" in the world. The audience is as necessary as the performer and the text. The participants in the performance of a manifesto can be on either the performing side of the text or the audience side of the text. If they are on the performing side they desire to shock and create scandal by committing an act of rupture which undermines traditional conventions of meaning and/or power. If they are on the audience side then they are necessarily unaware of what the manifesto will declare to them; they are allied with the extant powers and traditions (or at least unallied with the "movement" performing the manifesto); and they will be shocked and scandalized by these declarations which will attempt to undermine the codes and conventions they live by. However, since the manifesto is a function of time and place, this shock value quickly disappears. Time and place are no longer "now" but "then." The new "now" contains the "now" of "then" and therefore cannot be scandalized by it.

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20. In real life people are interested in the crime more than they are in detection. 21. In the story it is the detection that holds the interest
21. . . . [I]n the story it is detection that holds the interest.

The manifesto quickly becomes a museum piece to be dissected and analyzed--just as I am doing here. It is no longer a placed and primary textual act but a displaced one made secondary in a meta-literary act. Stein herself contributed to this quick "fossilisation" by publishing all of her lectures. (This does not mean that a manifesto cannot be re-activated--although this would require a certain naïveté in the audience: to re-activate a manifesto a person would have to have had no exposure to whole areas of culture.)

2) Power and Tradition

The avant-garde manifesto is not written from a position of power. One way in which it attempts to make its position appear more than spurious is to appear under the banner of a movement. A movement can claim more power than an individual simply because of numbers. If one man is a nut he can easily be dismissed as a nut because he has no support and is isolated; but once his particular brand of "nuttiness" is shared by others it becomes a norm or convention which must be taken seriously (that is, recognized as a power to be reckoned with). But how then can Stein, a single person, be called a movement? It seems to

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22. . . . [T]he master-piece . . . has to do with the human mind and the entity . . . .
23. . . . [T]he masterpiece . . . has to do with . . . a thing in itself and not in relation.
24. The moment it is in relation it is common knowledge and anybody can feel and know it . . . .

me that if we look at the situation surrounding the composition of these lecture/manifestoes, it is not too ingenious to suggest that all of the people surrounding Stein, all of the people whom she had collected over the years who were actively promoting her, writing letters to publishers on her behalf, sending out her manuscripts for her, in essence working as de-facto (albeit unpaid) agents, that all of these people constitute a movement of like-minded persons working toward the same ends.

The characteristics of the avant-garde modernist movements corroborate this. Those involved in a movement consider themselves set apart (if not among the elect) because of the special knowledge they possess. Stein's promoters certainly felt that they had acquired a special knowledge which allowed them to understand Stein. As well, a movement may claim power and legitimacy but it is never institutionalised. A movement is a collective and not an institution. It is not an institution because it must remain marginal and precarious in its relation to power and tradition. Which is not to say that a movement may not become an institution. However, if it does it can no longer create manifestoes (it will create constitutions or charters of rights instead) and the manifestoes it created before its

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25. . . . [E]very one . . sooner or later does feel the reality of a master-piece.
26. . . . [T]here is the thing that we call the human mind something that makes it hold itself just the same.
27. [Masterpieces] exist because they came to be as some-

institutionalisation become historical, venerated museum pieces. Stein's relation to power and tradition at the time of her lectures was definitely precarious. Her texts were the "other" attempting to scandalize "sameness."

The writers of manifestoes then, must always remain on the outside. Their power and authority is self-professed and not granted them by the general populace, by those who demand and support institutions. To imbue themselves with even a limited measure of authority (a measure large enough to make scandal felt) manifesto writers must pass themselves off as prophets who claim that the future has arrived--in the sense that they are inspired teachers and law givers. They feel no need to explain the truth of what they say which they take as self-evident; they demand only that what they say be accepted. For vatic pronouncements, that is, the pronouncements of a prophet, are by definition infallible, since received through divine inspiration.

In the modernist sense this infallibility is a human dimension, limited by our conceptual or textual horizons, and therefore provisional. This paradox is necessary and unavoidable and gives to divine inspiration a new context and a special meaning. For although some avant-garde writers and artists, such as the Dadaist Hugo Ball and the

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thing that is an end in itself and in that respect is opposed to the business of living which is relation and necessity.
28. [But a masterpiece may talk about the business of living.]

Russian Futurist Alexei Kruchenykh, did become conventional religious mystics, in general the "divine" should not be given an overly religious connotation. It does not refer to a known source or named God but simply the "unknown" inherent in any "limited" conceptual horizon. It invokes the "mystery" behind religion and not the doctrinal explanation of that "mystery." Thus inspiration is that which results from contact with this a-logical, chaotic "mystery." This is, of course, religious in the larger sense of the word but not religious in the sense that it pertains to any specific religion. That is, unless we accept Matthew Arnold's prophecy and see literature as the religion of our age, in which case any inspiration from an undefined source which contributes to literature (that is, which expands the textual horizon) is religious since literature is our religion. The manifesto does not provide a new sense of coherence. It merely provides (through "divinely inspired" contact with "mystery") a compensatory textual identity (prophetic laws which can be formed into many patterns of relations and not just one logical episteme[4]) for the "coherence" it has scuttled.

Stein's lecture/manifestoes are studded with vatic pronouncements; with unsupported declarations which are to be

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29. [A masterpiece] does not begin and end if it did it would be of necessity and in relation . . . .
30. . . . [Y]et . . . like the subject of human nature master-pieces have to use beginning and ending to become existing.

taken as law. A typical pattern of relation begins in the second paragraph of "What are Master-pieces and Why There Are So Few of Them": "I was going to talk to you but actually it is impossible to talk about master-pieces and what they are because talking essentially has nothing to do with creation" (law 2). We are never given any logical argument in support of this conclusion. It is presented as a self-evident law. If we read further on in this lecture/manifesto we learn that "talking is really human nature" (law 18) and that "human nature has nothing to do with master-pieces" (law 19). This does not "explain" why talking is not creation. It is simply another law in a chain of interconnected laws. Further on we learn that human nature is identity (law 40), that identity is recognition or remembering (laws 5, 35), that recognition is placing things in relation (laws 8, 32) and that "the moment it is in relation . . . it is not a master-piece" (law 24). This new "explanation" is once again just another series of laws. Not only that but it completes a tautology. We are told that talking is not a master-piece because talking is in relation and that a masterpiece cannot be talked because a masterpiece is not in relation. The tautology is typical of the manifesto where what "is" is so

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31. . . . [A]nybody who is trying to do anything today is desperately not having a beginning and an ending but nevertheless in some way one does have to stop.
32. . . . [S]econdary writing . . . is remembering . . . .
33. If you do not remember while you are writing, it may

because it "is" and not because it follows logically from the central premise of a coherent system. Each law in a pattern is related contiguously and not hierarchically.[5] All that can be said is that "a" is "a" and "b" is "b."

Thus a manifesto is not a mystical document full of arcane knowledge which attempts to solve the mysteries of the unknown--although this might often seem to be the case; and it is not a document in the dialogue between those who would discover first principles. It is a document directed to the common man; it is a document which states that "what is, is;" it is a pragmatic attempt to challenge power and tradition which employs the conventions of prophecy as its strategy. The manifesto, in its struggle for power, allows "desire" to dominate "knowledge." The exposition of the logical foundations of the knowledge which it professes is sacrificed to rhetorical strategies which respond more immediately to the desires (to accommodate "mystery" "chaos" and "silence") of the avant-garde modernist manifesto writer.

However, this does not necessarily mean that all of the ideas contained in a manifesto are entirely new. This is far from the case. The ideas themselves may simply be a reshuffling of old ideas. What counts is that the impetus to

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seem confused to others but actually it is clear . . . .
34. . . . [A] master-piece . . . may be unwelcome but it is never dull.
35. . . . [M]ostly people live in identity and memory . . . when they think.

change constitutes an act of rupture given the specific circumstances of a specific time and place. It is an act of prophetic self-legitimisation and is therefore a privileging machine which wishes to establish not so much order as a post-rupture identity.

3) Discourse

J.L. Austin's distinction between a constative utterance and a performative utterance provides a useful starting point for a discussion of the manifesto's discourse. A constative utterance claims to be a statement of fact which can be either true or false. Thus, "the sky is blue" is understood to be a true statement of the colour of the sky. A performative utterance is neither true nor false but rather an actual performance. Thus an utterance such as, "I promise to pay" is an act of promising. Austin goes on to show, however, that the constative utterance is not a separate and equal classification of utterance but actually an utterance subordinate to the performative utterance. For, although the sentence, "the sky is blue," appears to be a true or false statement of fact, what is actually understood is the utterance, "I promise you that the sky is blue." The utterance is no longer

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36. . . . [M]emory is necessary to make them exist and so they cannot create master-pieces.
37. . . . [T]he boy and the man have nothing to do with each other, except in respect to memory and identity . . .
38. It is not extremely difficult not to have identity but it is extremely difficult the knowing not having identity.

clearly true or false but a performed promise. (This sense of discourse as performance is different than although parallel in implication to the sense of physical performance which I introduced into the discussion of the manifesto in relation to power and tradition. Whenever performance is valorised, the ideal is invalidated.)

Therefore to say, as semioticians say, that the customary mode of the manifesto is declarative, is to say that the manifesto stresses the performative (since a declaration is a promise of factuality) rather the supposedly constative nature of utterance. A manifesto is a promise. It is a promise to fulfill certain desires. And as a promise it is a mode of discourse which courts scandal since any language-constituted promise is a promise to fulfill the desire for meaning. This is a promise that can never be fully kept, and an unkept promise is scandalous. Each new promise reveals both the scandal of the old promises--the old laws and conventions--and, self-reflexively, the scandalous nature of its own promising.[6]

Not only do manifestoes use many overtly performative verbs such as "promise," "assure," and "declare," but they also make insistent use of the copula, as is the case with Stein whose laws use them almost almost exclusively. As

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39. [Masterpieces] are knowing that there is no identity and producing while identity is not.
40. Everything that makes life go on makes identity and everything that makes identity is of necessity a necessity.
41. The pleasures that are soothing . . . [and] exciting all have to do with identity . . . .

Derrida has shown us, the copula, in which the subject of an utterance is declared "equal" to its object, is a promise of meaning that is both at the centre of the metaphysics of presence and the weakest link in that metaphysics. It is the weakest link because the most easily undermined. To say that "a" is "b" can easily be turned into "a" is not "b" by qualifying "a" in a way that disqualifies its equality with "b." The copula then is the most spartan of the linguistically performed promises.

Thus the manifesto's relation to discourse reflects its relation to power and tradition. It is a discourse of challenge and rupture, of "otherness" (new promises) attacking "sameness" (old promises). The manifesto not only challenges and ruptures the scandalous ideational or ideological framework of power and tradition but also the capacity of discourse to be factual (the self-reflexive recognition of the scandalous nature of its own discourse). By being so forthrightly performative the manifesto is rupturing, that is decentering or deconstructing, the claim that what linguistic signs signify is or ever can be fully understood. It is not enough simply to disrupt conventional grammar, although this is useful, the manifesto also performs in a way that brings the understandability of

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42. . . . [T]here is more identity that one knows about than anything else one knows about . . . .
43. . . . [T]hinking is something that does so nearly need to be memory and if it is then of course it has nothing to do with a master-piece.

discourse into question.

This performance is essentially naive, as are the pronouncements of any prophet. It is not the sophisticated argument of a metaphysician or theologian, where sophisticated implies the attempt to forestall all logical objection. It is not a completed discourse, but a discourse placed in an open field which may thus stand as preface to a fuller text and a larger textual field.

III The Avant-Garde Manifesto

Gertrude Stein was not the only avant-garde writer to pragmatically use the manifesto for the "business of living" with language, literature, society and culture. The phenomenon was widely spread. Numerous manifestoes were written by the Italian Futurists, the Russian Futurists, the various Dada groups, the Surrealists, the Vorticists, the Imagists--the list goes on and on. It might even be said that one of the things which separates the avant-garde modernist from the more conservative modernist--which is to say, those modernists who recognized the problems inherent in metaphysics but who tried to compensate for this loss of externally reinforced meaning by creating internally coherent and autonomous universes--was the need to write pro-

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44. . . . [M]ostly . . . [a masterpiece] is about identity . . . and in being so it must not have any.
45. Moments are not important because of course masterpieces have no more time than they have identity although time like identity is what they concern themselves about. . . .

phetic manifestoes. For the avant-garde modernist the need to recognize rupture is more important (is more desired) than the need to recognize continuity. The point being that continuity can be readily formulated but that the act of formulating continuity is a self-deception, whereas a declaration of rupture is a self-conscious act of self-deception. The act of formulating continuity is an act within metaphysics; the act of declaring rupture is a scriptural act depicting the absence at the heart of metaphysical presence. The more conservative modernists did, of course, write much in the attempt to justify their various aesthetic postures. But their writings cannot be considered manifestoes since in the end they seek to establish continuity. These writings follow very much in the textual tradition of the artist/critic which has been with us at least since Horace's Ars Poetica. They are writings which attempt to enter an ongoing aesthetic/metaphysical debate. They are not "otherness" attacking "sameness;" they are doubters refining "sameness."

The manifesto then, as a textual act which identifies the avant-garde modernist, is a text in which the issues of "post-rupture" literature are made apparent. Stein's lecture/manifestoes can be read as declarations

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46. Once when one has said what one says it is not true or too true.
47. . . . [W]hat . . . women say [is] truer than what men say.
48. . . . [A] thing goes dead once it has been said. . . .

concerning various of these issues[7] "What are Master-Pieces and Why are There so Few of Them" concerns itself with a key issue (and the one at issue here), the status of textual and self-creation. In other words, this lecture/manifesto deals not only with the status of the master-piece but, by implication, with the status of all other texts as well, including the manifesto.

Stein begins this lecture by telling us how she set out to put it together and in what way she considers it a text. She begins, in effect, by describing the status of her lecture/manifesto, which she then proceeds to set off against what she considers to be the status of the master-piece. As it turns out, in her view, there are very few master-pieces or texts of "identity" but the manifesto as a text of "identity" is a member of an enormous group of texts.

This declaration of Stein's on textual creation does not concern itself with generically delimiting the lecture/manifesto. I have borrowed this pattern of conventions from semiotics and imposed it upon Stein because of the manner in which it allows us access to Stein's texts--and indeed the texts of other avant-garde writers, who can now usefully be viewed in the same textual field. She does not

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because of there being this trouble with time.
49. . . . [T]ime does make identity . . . .
50. . . . [I]dentity does stop the creation of master-pieces.
51. If you do not keep remembering yourself you have no

concern herself with anything so easily (and self-deceivingly) defined as a genre. Her lecture concerns itself with the ontological (or in Derrida's terminology, ontotheological) status of script(ur)ing. The only true scripturing is the master-piece; all other writing is worldly scripting and part of the business of living.

In her lecture/manifesto on master-pieces Stein prophetically declares the postures which allow her to create masterpieces, that is, what I have abstracted as her laws. Such postures inevitably entail evasions. Without these motivating evasions (an evasion being a posture which allows one to side-step silence) we would be lost forever in the inactivity of the silence of aporia. An identifying characteristic of post-rupture literature is that these self-evasions are self-consciously performed; they are presented not as truths arrived at by logic but as options chosen. For this reason they are very easily discovered and deconstructed.

The nature of Stein's evasion tells us much about her views on the ontotheological status of the creative as well as the business-like text. She divides texts into two categories: "writing identity," and "writing entity." Writing identity requires that a self-deception (myth or

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identity.
52. . . . [I]f you have no time you do not keep remembering yourself.
53. . . . [Y]ou create yes if you exist but time and identity do not exist.

episteme) be placed firmly within the text, just as firmly as the text is placed within society and culture. The master-piece as "writing entity" is that text which requires no assistance from existing systems of codes and conventions in order to exist. It is a text which "is" but which is not necessary; it is not motivated by existing social and cultural exigencies. The master-piece is a "pure" text. It is that pure text which Renato Poggioli saw as inevitably posited by avant-garde modernists (Theory of the Avant-Garde). It is Barthes' zero degree writing. Ostensibly zero degree writing or pure writing or entity writing avoids the need for an underlying episteme because it is what it is and nothing else; it is not what it is because it is in relation to something else. These pure texts have the same ontotheological status as do the two poles of Yeats's system in A Vision, the only two positions in his system to which no historical personage or text was assigned. They are necessary but ideal positions which anchor the orbits of the other positions but which can never, in themselves, be achieved. They are the absent centres recognized by Derrida. Inevitably, they are positions or postures of silence.

There is therefore some confusion in Stein's

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54. We live in time and identity but as we are we do not know time and identity . . . .
55. . . . [T]o know what one knows is frightening to live what one lives is soothing . . . .
56. . . . [T]here are very few master-pieces because to be

lecture/manifesto on master-pieces as to whether or not this posture of pure text is simply an element in the process of writing or an achievable type of text. On the one hand there is her well-known connection with writing as process: her connection with Jamesian "stream of consciousness;" her use of the continuous tenses to portray the "ing"ness of being; her belief that composition is a spontaneous meditative "act" and not something to be thought out beforehand. In her lecture/manifesto on master-pieces she tells us that, "one has no identity . . . when one is in the act of doing anything" (law 4); that, "it is the detection that holds the interest," and not the solution (law 21); and that a master-piece "does not begin and end" (law 29). All of these things suggest that the posited pure text is simply a tactical evasion which aids the process of writing. On the other hand, in this same lecture/manifesto we are told that the master-piece "has to do with the human mind and the entity that is with a thing in itself" (law 23); that "master-pieces have no more time than they have identity" (law 45); and that "a master-piece does not continue it is as it is but it does not continue" (law 57). All of these laws suggest that the pure text is an achievable product.

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able to know that is not to have identity and time but not to mind talking as if there was because it does not interfere with anything and to go on being not as if there were no time and identity but as if there were and at the same time existing without time and identity is so very simple

A critic can do one of two things with this confusion. He can emphasize it in order to demonstrate Stein's inadequacies as writer and theorist and use it as ammunition to warn us away from wasting our time. Or he can look for some way of demonstrating that the apparent confusion is really no confusion at all and thus reclaim Stein for a reading public that demands coherence and identity: in other words, he can collaborate with Stein's manifesto in the business of living. The first response is the response of a critic who still feels the scandal of the manifesto; the second response is the response of a critic who acquiesces to the power of play.

To respond in the second way it is necessary to demonstrate that process dominates product in Stein's manifesto; it is necessary, once again, to read something into the text. First, it is necessary to add that in order for a posited ideal to effectively influence a process it is necessary that that ideal be believed in. If it is not believed in then it has no power to motivate the creative process because it can be made to disappear too easily and so to dissipate any energy that it had induced. Stein was primarily a writer who believed in process. But in order to believe in process she had to have a motivating concept of

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that it is difficult to have many that are that.
57. . . . [A] master-piece does not continue it is as it is but it does not continue.
58. . . . [T]he fact that they all die has something to do with time but it has nothing to do with a master-piece.

product. The critic who provides such a formulation inevitably creates a hierarchy out of Stein's laws. In this case the idea of "entity text" is subordinated to the idea of composition as process. As a creative writer and a manifesto writer Stein is not obliged to acknowledge such a hierarchy. She is able to present her laws contiguously.

In this necessary evasion (this side-stepping of aporia by allowing to exist contiguously two beliefs that on the surface appear contradictory without attempting to resolve them in a formula that is too easily deconstructed) there is a silent admission that it is in this problematic play that whatever bliss (Barthes' "jouissance") can be derived from the text is to be found. ("The pleasures that are soothing . . . all have to do with identity" [law 41]: Barthes' "plaisir"). To accept this is to accept the pathos inherent in language. That is, language is our prime means of communication and yet the most outstanding characteristic of this communication is that it always falls short of what it aims for. Post-rupture texts look for jouissance by playing in the gaps of this falling short. For Stein, the gap is between identity and entity. To say that there is sadness here is not to contradict the presence of "jouissance;" rather, it reminds us that the original lofty

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59. The word timely as used in our speech is very interesting but you can anyone can see that it has nothing to do with masterpieces . . . .
60. . . . [I]dentity consists in recognition . . . .
61. . . . [I]n recognizing you lose identity because after

aim of any language is to communicate without any possibility of misinterpretation and that our pleasure is located in the gap between this ideal and the inevitable falling short.

In her more obscure and oblique texts, Gertrude Stein is moving ever closer to her sense of entity and of thingness where the text is unnecessary and is the product of "one" not in relation. It is, for whatever psychological, social and cultural mix of reasons, moving deeper into the universe of a private language that can have a reading or interpretation imposed upon it but can never communicate any sense of its own self-deception (its own self-conscious choice of episteme). In her more accessible writings, such as her lecture/manifestoes, she is moving closer to identity, giving us language that is still in relation, still recognizably part of the business of living, but still with enough private language to force us to question the foundations of language as a transparent vehicle for communication. What we do when we try to find theoretical coherence in Stein is try to find the stages that connect the public use of language to the private use of language and thereby develop a lexicon that will enable us to decode what were once seen as unreadable texts. Many such interpretive lexi-

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all nobody looks as they look like . . . .
62. . . . [N]o master-piece can see what it can see if it does then it is timely . . . .
63. If there was no identity no one could be governed . . . .
64. . . . [G]overning has nothing to do with master-pieces

cons exist, most of them ingenious. They constitute the self-deceptions (creative and useful) of our shared critical activity. At their best they contribute to our pleasure (jouissance) in the text. And yet, if it were not for Gertrude Stein's need to be famous, and the manifestoes that tried to make of that fame something more than a personality cult, it is possible that we might not even make the effort to impose ourselves on her more private texts.

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it has completely to do with identity . . . .
65. . . . [G]overning is occupying but not interesting . . . .
66. When you are writing before there is an audience anything written is as important as any other thing . . . .
67. After the audience begins, naturally they create something that is they create you, and so not everything is so important . . . .

Postlude

post: after
ludus: play

All of the Stein lectures I have used as occasions are manifestos designed to provoke action: to stimulate the marketplace if nothing else. But even as pragmatic actions they still unavoidably provide us with an aesthetic context which is, as Wendy Steiner has pointed out, to a striking extent indexical of the present day. The paradoxes and contradictions of Stein's declarations are the paradoxes and contradictions of an artist caught in the double bind, in the gap between two receding edges. We as readers can create figures in this gap but these figures must account for and be self-conscious of the gap. The gap is between the "self" and the "other" of the intertextual field and between the "self" as reader/writer and the "other" of the field; the gap is there because we force ourselves past the "Covering Cherub" that would hide it from us and have us live comfortably, well soothed; the gap is there because

figures such as repetition batter at the points of resistance that hide it from us; and our self-consciousness of the gap, of the unthought, forces us to authorize (to seek authority) in our own re-inscription of the problem. And yet we do create figures of our own power to figure; we do seek and claim to discover intelligibility.

"College professors" wrote Gertrude Stein, "have two bad traits. They are logical and they are easily flattered" ("Universe in Hand," Painted Lace 269). It is useful to recall such depreciations of the analytical at the end of an extended act of analysis. What is it, after all, to be logical but to indulge in an act of self-flattery. We flatter ourselves that we have been logical and also that rigorous logic is worthy of encomium. And no matter how much a critical work (which must be analytical or otherwise it is mere impressionism and not critical) attacks the mechanisms of logic it cannot avoid the sort of infinite one-upmanship that logic invites. Logic can only be deflated by superior logic.

Or can it? It is a truism to suggest that there is no logic in desire and yet the logic of this work on Stein is largely the logic of desire. Within this oxymoron is masked the close adhesion of all logic to all illogic. Desire demands force and force demands something more than existing logic. Impressionism, the avoidance of the paradoxes of logic in favor of gratifying (comforting soothing) chains of responses is not good enough, not

forceful enough. Desire demands something more than gratification. A gratified desire is a dead desire. Desire demands continuation. Again an oxymoron.

There is no "after play" for desire. No after play but death. As in music, a postlude carries us back to ongoingness. It is a refusal to end. One more recapitulation. One more beginning again, one more using what is there, one more repetition motivated by desire, one more . . .

Notes

Chapter 1

[1] Hugh Ford's *Published in Paris* provides a very useful account of the many small publishing ventures that flourished in Paris in the early decades of the twentieth century.

[2] I am referring here to such works as Allegra Stewart's *Gertrude Stein and the Present*; Elizabeth Fifer's "Rescued Reading: Characteristic Deformations in the Language of Gertrude Stein's Plays;" and Harry Garvin's "Sound and Sense in *Four Saints in Three Acts*."

[3] This attitude is amply demonstrated in Tzara's *Seven Dada Manifestos*.

[4] See Betty Jean Craige's *Literary Relativity* and D. B. Allison's "Introduction" to Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena* for good discussions of this duality.

Chapter 2

[1] Robert Scholes, for example, has written that "we write always and inevitably on the basis of the models of writing we have already encountered" (Semiotics 6). By using the word "model," which suggests a paradigmatic relationship rather than a syntagmatic relationship (invoking

metaphor instead of metonymy--to borrow Jakobson's starting point for a similar argument), influence, which is paradigmatic and historical, is confused with intertextuality, which is, as we shall see, syntagmatic inscription.

Chapter 3

[1] This "clarity" is not the same "clarity" that Stein refers to when writing about her visit to the Mother Superior at San Rafael (see chapter one). As is so often the case in Stein, words have no fixed meaning; they are used and distorted according to the demands of the situation.

[2] "Knowing" here is not the pre-nineteenth century "knowing" which can be internally complete, but the "knowing" which is an audacious action which allows one to perform.

[3] See Aristotle's On the Soul and Generation of Animals.

Chapter 4

[1] Stein had published no creative work at this time but she had published two works in The Psychological Review (1896, 1898), on natural motor automatism and cultivated motor automatism, with Leon Solomons.

[2] See Mabel Dodge's "Speculations, or Post-Impressionism in Prose."

[3] See The Little Review, vol Xii, no. 2 (May, 1929).

Chapter 5

[1] To say "can" is not to say "do" but even to admit to the possibility is to entertain debilitating doubt.

[2] This takes for granted that each textual re-enactment or reading involves a judgement of value on the part of the reader. This does not imply, however, that such judgements bear any necessary relationship to universal truths (nor even that such truths exist).

[3] It should be pointed out that with a Chomskian generative grammar there can be infinite transformations. The difference is that Stein sought no universal generating system to account for the transformations. She let the sentence diagram itself. She did not diagram a sentence according to transformational models. Although the conclusion is the same, that there is an infinite number of possible sentence structures, the ways in which this infinite variety is accounted for are opposed. One seeks origin, the other seeks only to feel a space completely created.

[4] Although Stein assures us that commas are of no use, she uses them constantly. "I still do feel that way about it," she writes, "only now I do not pay as much attention to them" (Poetry and Grammar 220). They, or she, is mistaken.

[5] Stein at times makes an effort to deny this

unavoidable connection. In Narration she claims that fiction does not have to face the burden of reality (60). In Four in America she claims that a novel (a fiction) does not arrange or structure anything (200). But these claims, like her claim that she never uses commas, are wishful thinking, and are never really carried out. They are mistaken, an indulgence she insists upon--an indication that she too is trying to describe the absence, the gap, the "spaces [that] are interesting" (Poetry and Grammar 216).

Chapter 6

[1] In French the word "histoire" with its double meaning of both history and story makes this much more evident than it is in English.

[2] Linda Hutcheon locates the difference between realism and modernism in this difference between the concept of text as product and text as process. See her Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox.

[3] Drawing on E.H. Gombrich's analysis in Art and Illusion, Graff goes on to suggest that even anti-realistic works represent closer links to real objects than might at first seem possible. While I see no need to push the argument this far (in fact, it seems counter productive) I do think that his basic insight is valid: that representation, regardless of deconstruction, cannot be wholly abandoned.

[4] Intertextuality is usually discussed in terms of the self or text in dialogue with "others." To say that the social "I" establishes identity through the differentiation of self in relation to the other should not be confused here with these others in dialogue. The "other" also plays a role in the concept of influence. Thus the text as social "I" is a text that identifies itself through its influences, its singly mirrored others; the text as specular "I" is in dialogue with doubly mirroring others.

Chapter 7

[1] As Linda Hutcheon points out in A Theory of Parody, the term parody is not intrinsically negative. A parody can just as easily be positive and productive--especially in the postmodern context.

[2] Even if the parodists tried to argue that Stein's texts can't be considered literature because they don't even make coherent use of language and that they are nonsense, they would still find themselves in an untenable position. First, they would have to contend with the sort of argument that suggests that any written use of language is literary (see F.E. Sparshott Centrum 3, no. 1 [Spring 1975]:5-22). Further, to claim that Stein's texts are nonsense is to claim that they misrepresent whatever it is they are attempting to represent, much as scientific data can be challenged as inadequate because the scientific method is inadequate and the results misrepresent the object under study. However,

if what is being "represented" is language itself then any utterance, no matter how unintelligible, becomes, since its creation was possible, acceptable as data.

[3] To move such defiance and aggression into an internalized intellectual or artistic context is a civilizing deflection. The physical drive to death is displaced, in effect forgotten, and aggression is allowed to release itself in, what for society, is a safer way. The need and desire to exercise defiance and aggression is not in this way diminished, however.

[4] If it were just a simple case of stuttering (the stutters of the mind rather than of the lips) then the parodist would have ample justification for indulging in negative parody. He might be accused of cruelty in attacking one so afflicted, but, he might respond, if it is offered to the public it invites whatever it gets.

Chapter 8

[1] These laws have been abstracted from Gertrude Stein's lecture, What Are Masterpieces.

[2] Interestingly, her lecture/manifesto on masterpieces claims that the detective story comes very close to fulfilling the criteria she has set. "In real life people are interested in the crime rather than the detection" (law 20) while "in the story it is the detection that holds the interest" (law 21). Since the only necessary action is the death and since this comes at the beginning of the detec-

tive story, what follows, which is to say the detection, is unnecessary and therefore potentially a masterpiece since necessary actions are human nature and unnecessary actions are human mind and only human mind can produce a masterpiece (laws 27, 28, 29 and many more).

[3] Three journals have recently devoted special issues to the manifesto: Littérature no. 39 (1980); Etudes Françaises 16/3-4 (Oct., 1980), and; L'Esprit Createur vol. XXIII, no. 4 (winter, 1983).

[4] To say that there are many patterns means that they will contradict one another (otherwise they would inevitably be part of the same pattern). But then we must admit that contradictions are always defined in the context of a controlling pattern (or episteme). If the controlling episteme is removed then so also are the contradictions. These different patterns now stand as signs of textual plurality.

[5] This reflects, perhaps a little too neatly, the idea that the structural trope for modernism is metonymy, where signs are related contiguously rather than the metaphor where signs are related hierarchically.

[6] For an excellent study of the relationship between the textual body, promising and scandal see, Shoshana Felman's The Literary Speech Act.

[7] "Composition as Explanation" concerns itself with representation, borders, framing, context and trust; "Plays" concerns itself with discontinuity, fragmentation,

signification/force, desire and need; "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans" concerns itself with self-consciousness, self-reflexivity, narcissism, and the fall into the present; "What is English Literature" concerns itself with textual fields, intertextuality, conceptual horizons and dialogics; "Pictures" concerns itself with figuration; "Poetry and Grammar" concerns itself with valorization, privileging, and private and shared languages; "Poetry and Repetition" concerns itself with repetition compulsion.

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