HUMAN RELATIONS IN THE FICTION OF GERTRUDE STEIN

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of Graduate

Studies and Research

McGill University

IN Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Charlotte H. Tansey

September 1948.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND THE BACKGROUND

What is meant by "reality?" It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable -- now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech -- and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, as I think, has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is his business to find it and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us. So at least I infer from reading Lear or Emma or La Recherche du Temps Perdu. For the reading of these books seems to perform a curious couching operation on the senses; one sees more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life.[1]

The first, fundamental question asked of the work of an artist is this one -- does he find and collect and communicate "reality"? And in the quality and sureness of his expressed insight lies his success or failure as an artist. The novel, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms, attains its object in the communication of a full, intense, complex awareness or vision of human life. "Il faudrait reconnaître que l'art du roman est, avant tout, une transposition du réel et non une reproduction du réel", states François Mauriac.[2]

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[1]Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), p. 165-6.

[2]François Mauriac, Le Romancier et Ses Personnages, (Paris: Éditions R.-A. Corrêa, 1933), p. 152.

The heroes of novels, he has said, are born of the marriage which the novelist contracts with reality. And Henry James pointed out continually that the novel was a personal, a direct impression of life, and that this was its only justification. If fiction, on this account, appears "truer" than history, because it goes beyond the evidence in a detached historian's study of human motives and the expression of universal emotions, it has a right to be taken seriously, and the author may be allowed great freedom in the presentation of his unique vision. Jane Austen in Northanger Abbey defined and ironically defended the novel as " . . . only some work in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language." It has happened rather paradoxically that since the time of Henry James the experimentation in 'the best chosen language' has produced in criticism much discussion of form, and some ignoring of the value of the substance to which the form has been given.

If the pattern and device of the individual novelist are deliberately difficult and more unique than the vision itself, the critic cannot be blamed for devoting most of his attention to this aspect of the matter, but he is not properly a critic of fiction unless his preoccupation is with the "reality" communicated more than with the means by which the effect is achieved. The critic's problem is even more involved, if, as in the case of Gertrude Stein, his author is an innovator striking at the roots of the prevailing philo-

sophy of language itself, is an expatriate living in Paris and subject to literary influences outside her language, is a teacher of real value to young writers, a brilliant conversationalist whose distinction is that she makes others think, a woman of some humor and much shrewdness, for whom fiction is but one literary medium, and whose friends helped to publicize her "genius" sometimes at its most unintelligible. In Miss Stein's art there were so many and so varied influences and aims to be considered that it is small wonder that there is such a scarcity of serious literary judgment on her work in general and her fiction in particular. Miss Stein herself did not always indicate clearly the direction in which she was moving, or her reasons for the new step, and when later her explanation was forthcoming, her reputation for being incomprehensible had been solidly founded, and the explanation went for the most part unheard. Yet like a refrain through her thinking, there recurs the philosophic questioning about the nature of identity and the means of communication. On the latter, she was most helpful to beginning writers:

> It is the fundamental problem in writing and has nothing to do with metier, or with sentence building, or with rhythm. In my own writing, as you know, I have destroyed sentences and rhythms and literary overtones and all the rest of that nonsense, to get at the very core of this problem of the communication of the intuition. If the communication is perfect, the words have life, and that is all there is to good writing, putting down on the paper words which dance and weep and make love and fight and kiss and perform miracles.[3]

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3 bravig imbs, confessions of another young man (New York: Henkle-Yewdale House, Inc., 1936) p.121.

So her concern was with words, and what she had to say about them was rather like this - 'examine language - take up words as you would beautiful objects. Look at words. Listen to words. Have they shape, colour? What do they say without context? Do you see these words. Words are words.'[4] It was valuable, and it needed to be said, but some of her attempts to illustrate the idea were so mystifying, and some of her later work tended to obscure the very principle upon which she had based her experimentation. Paul Rosenfeld paraphrases the concepts and ways of Miss Stein in this manner:

> Identification of the work of art as the interaction of poet and thing before him, powerfully invites the individual rhythm of the writer, his way of moving, and profound, inner, subconscious life. It bars all literary formulae. What is unreflectingly known to the writer in his joyous condition of union with the object is a potentiality established within himself, a pattern of feeling, a suite of involuntary attitudes. Ever singular, the quick moment places all facts in solution and bids the worker reconstruct them in conformity with fresh insight. The consequent effort to body forth his blind rhythmical state very directly produces the poet's individual experience, vocabulary, and response to life, and the expression of the universal principle with which he harmonizes: elements sometimes called freshness of subject and originality of organization.[5]

So Gertrude Stein went to live in and rebuild, according to Sherwood Anderson, the city of words. She went "among the little housekeeping words, the swaggering bullying street-corner words, the honest working, money saving words, and all the other forgotten and neglected citizens of the sacred and half forgotten city."[6] And the majority of

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[4]Leo Lerman, "A Wonderchild for 72 Years," Saturday Review of Literature, 29: 18, Nov. 2,1946.

[5]Paul Rosenfeld, By Way of Art (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1928), p. 112.

[6]Sherwood Anderson, Preface to Geography and Plays (Boston; The Four Seas Company; 1922), p.8.

critics were not so happy about the matter as was Mr. Anderson. They found her inarticulate and silly, and the period that would listen to her even sillier, they objected to her onslaught and ravage upon the English language.

" . . . really is it not all fumisterie, is it not all false"[7] asked friend Mildred Aldrich of Alice B. Toklas in Paris in a moment of mystification over the experiments of Gertrude in literature and Matisse and Picasso in art. Her friends put the question politely, her critics were usually as mystified but much more violent and positive in their reaction. Miss Stein meanwhile brooked no doubts, and stated dogmatically "that in english literature in her time she is the only one."[8]

Gertrude Stein was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1874, of a family which was "very respectable middle class", but not intellectual. When she was about three years old the family went to Europe, lived for some time in Vienna, spent about a year in Paris, and then returned to the United States to settle in Oakland, California. Much of her early life and its conditions is told in The Making of Americans. In 1893 Miss Stein became a student at Radcliffe College and a favorite pupil of the Harvard psychologist, William James. From 1897 to 1900 she studied medicine at Johns Hopkins University, where she made a name for herself in original scientific study of the brain tracts, and came

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[7]Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), p.148.

[8]Ibid., p. 94 and Everybody's Autobiography (New York: Random House, 1937), p. 28: "I know that I am the most important writer writing today" and p. 114: "And then after all I can remember that I am one of the masters of English prose and that there are not many of them".

near to graduation and work in pathological psychology. But she left the university without receiving her degree; and having an independent income, joined her brother in Paris, where she remained most of her life. She became a friend and patron of artists and an influence on postwar novelists and writers. With her brother she early appreciated the work of Cézanne, of Matisse and Picasso, and she became the friend of the latter two artists as later of Juan Gris. She was at the center of the new school of art born at the turn of the century in Paris, and she remained through her life deeply interested in art though it was not her 'métier'. She wrote Three Lives, her first and most influential book, while translating Flaubert's Trois Contes and looking long hours at a painting by Cézanne. After the first great war young American and English writers flocked to her apartment in Paris for advice and training. "All of them she has received in her studio. They sat in the small low arm chairs with covering designed by Picasso and embroidered by Miss Toklas. To all of them she gave her excellent light Chinese tea so perfumed, and her deep interest so strong, perfumed and light handed.[9] Bernard Faÿ speaks also of the young French poets of her acquaintance and her interest in them. "Observation and construction make imagination, that is granting the possession of imagination, is what she has taught many young writers . . . She understands very well the basis of creation and therefore her advice and criticism is invaluable to all her friends" she tells us

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[9]Bernard Faÿ, Preface to The Making of Americans (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934) p.xi,xii.

in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.[10] Sherwood Anderson[11] and Ernest Hemingway[12] owed much to her tutelage, F. Scott Fitzgerald valued her judgment of his work, Eugene O'Neill read her Three Lives, and like Carl Van Vechten and Sherwood Anderson, later occupied himself with the writing of negro life, "in regard to which", says Edmund Wilson, "Miss Stein had given an example of an attitude not complicated by race-consciousness", a rare thing in writing about negroes, whatever the author's race. She has been enough of a prophet and pioneering stylist to be called the 'grandmother of our present writing' and her influence continues both directly[13] and through those whom she has influenced.

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10 Stein, op. cit., p. 94

11 Edmond Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York, London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) p. 239 -- "And Sherwood Anderson seems to have learned from her, in his own even less Naturalistic, even more dream-like, fiction, both his recurrent repetitions with their effect of ballad refrains and his method of telling a story in a series of simple declarative sentences of almost primer-like baldness."

12 see "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p. 261-6. - also - Agnes Paterson Duncan, "Some Aspects of Ernest Hemingway in His Relation to American Literary Naturalism," (unpublished Master's thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1945), p. 30-31: "From Stein he learned the value of the sound of words rather than their meaning. He learned that cadence was not only possible in prose but that it was essential for conveying nuances of emotion and sensation. He learned to play tunes with key words and to employ the technique of a composer rather than that of an author. Stein also taught him how to work. She showed him that he could not give to his art anything less than his undivided attention. Her friendship and criticism and artistic connections were invaluable to the young Hemingway."

13 for instance see: Henry Reed, The Novel Since 1939 (The British Council, The Arts in Britain: No. 4, London: Longmans Green & Co., 1946) p. 32: "Many other war books could be mentioned which have shown promising writers emerging: such books as F.S.P. (the initials of the Field Security Police), a book about army life up to Dunkirk, by A. Gwynne-Browne, who penetrates beyond Hemingway to Gertrude Stein and, by no means unsuccessfully, adapts her to his purpose."

One of her not idolatrous reviewers in the Saturday Review of Literature[14] has called her "a sort of Typhoid Mary" of prose style because she has infected in some degree so many of those "who came within range of her wondrously commonsensical mind." It would seem that she was a catalytic agent in Paris, vitally alive to artistic problems, tremendously sure of herself and of her ideas, interested in promoting the development of literature and art along new channels, with the leisure and the means for limitless discussion and much reading.

Her literary background was extensive, if non-classical. In The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas she speaks of her childhood reading, and her days in the British Museum:

> Her bookish life commenced at this time. She read anything that was printed that came her way and a great deal came her way. In the house were a few stray novels, a few travel books, her mother's well bound gift books Wordsworth Scott and other poets, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress a set of Shakespeare with notes, Burns, Congressional Records encyclopedias etcetera. She read them all and many times. She and her brothers began to acquire other books. There was also the local free library and later in San Francisco there were the mercantile and mechanics libraries with their excellent sets of eighteenth century and nineteenth century authors. From her eighth year when she absorbed Shakespeare to her fifteenth year when she read Clarissa Harlowe, Fielding, Smollett etcetera and used to worry lest in a few years more she would have read everything and there would be nothing unread to read, she lived continuously with the english language. She read a tremendous amount of history, she often laughs and says she is one of the few people of her generation that has read every line of Carlyle's Frederick the Great and Lecky's Constitutional History of England besides Charles Grandison and Wordsworth's longer poems. In fact she was as she still is always reading.[15]
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> She began spending all her days in the British Museum reading the Elizabethans. She returned to her early love of

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[14] James Thrall Soby, "Gertrude Stein and the Artists", Saturday Review of Literature, 30:34, May 24, 1947.

[15] Stein, op.cit., p.91-92.

> Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, and became absorbed in Elizabethan prose and particularly in the prose of Greene. She had little note-books full of phrases that pleased her as they had pleased her when she was a child . . . She always said that that first visit had made London just like Dickens and Dickens has always frightened her. . . There were some compensations, there was the prose of Greene and it was at this time that she discovered the novels of Anthony Trollope, for her the greatest of the Victorians. She then got together the complete collection of his work some of it difficult to get and only obtainable in Tauchnitz and it is of this collection that Robert Coates speaks when he tells about Gertrude Stein lending books to young writers. She also bought a quantity of eighteenth century memoirs among them the Creevy papers and Walpole . . .[16]

Later she recounts reading Queen Victoria's letters and becoming interested in missionary autobiographies and diaries.[17]

In her Radcliffe days, she tells us, she was not interested in the work of Henry James

> "for whom she now has a very great admiration and whom she considers quite definitely as her forerunner, he being the only nineteenth century writer who being an american felt the method of the twentieth century . . . . she contends that Henry James was the first person in literature to find the way to the literary methods of the twentieth century. But oddly enough", she tells us, "in all of her formative period she did not read him and was not interested in him. But as she often says one is always naturally antagonistic to one's parents and sympathetic to one's grandparents. The parents are too close, they hamper you, one must be alone. So perhaps that is the reason why only very lately Gertrude Stein reads Henry James."[18]

In the sense that James welcomed discussion on the novel because "art thrived . . . on discussion, experiment, curiosity, variety of attempt, the exchange of views and comparison of standpoints",[19]

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[16] Stein, op.cit., p.103.

[17] Ibid., p. 202.

[18] Ibid., p. 96-97. (Autobiography of ABT)

[19] Leon Edel, The Prefaces of Henry James, citing Henry James, "The Art of Fiction" in Partial Portraits, p. 376 (Paris: Jouve et Cie., 1931) p.39.

because he stood, preoccupied with form at the beginning of subjective fiction, of minute and detailed analysis, because he early considered himself a "painter of life", "rendering" the story point by point and scene by scene as she later, though to different purpose and with vastly different effects, "rendered" people, landscapes and events, because he is a psychological novelist, a novelist's novelist, conscious of form and structure, process and method, there is an evident relation in the work of the two authors. Miss Stein only points to their common preoccupation with method, there are other obvious differences, and there are possibly more subtle similarities between them. Pelham Edgar has noted that "James . . . concentrates all the powers of his intellect on the artistic presentation of human behaviour under conditions designed to reveal character at the maximum of intensity that situations on the hither side of tragedy may bear."[20] Miss Stein tells the story of low-tensioned people, and their maximum of intensity may be exhibited in the situations in which they are involved but it is never very great. Her characters are "small souls" of middle class origin and culture, in no sense remarkable. His characters belong to the leisured class, their tastes are fastidious, their manners impeccable, their conflicts, while universal, are handled with a rare, very civilized taste. But both, though their techniques varied widely, were psychological novelists of decided historical importance in fiction. And perhaps that which led James to his valuable experiments in the analysis of the human mind in action, being lacking in Gertrude Stein,

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[20] Pelham Edgar, The Art of the Novel, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 173-4.

accounts for the unsatisfactoriness or at least the lack of colour and wholeness which critics have found in some of her fiction.

> He had arrived, in his search for variety, a high refinement, a handsome wholeness of effect, at a very important discovery in the art of fiction. In elaborating the point of view he sought to approach his subject in the best possible manner, in the only manner consistent with his own fastidious artistic taste. He found himself obliged, thus, to give a picture of the mind at work, of the whole play of consciousness. We stand, here, at the beginning of subjective fiction, of analysis, minute and detailed, which in the work of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, has become our contemporary "stream of consciousness" method. They have only gone one step further than James. He selected carefully, and arranged the thoughts of his characters, giving only such thoughts as bear on his narrative and are capable of advancing it. Joyce and Mrs. Woolf, while also selecting (to a lesser degree) are anxious to give an impression of the actual _flow_ of thought, and in this are coming nearer the old _tranche de vie_ ideal, as Mrs. Wharton observes in _The Writing of Fiction_.
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> Their works also, are governed by the point of view . . .
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> James realized all the dangers of the method, and in most cases avoided them. If one was to look into an individual consciousness it would have to be a consciousness capable of wide perception, of "registering" in a satisfactory manner all that the author requires of him. Joyce, too, in choosing Dedalus, and Leopold Bloom, Mrs. Woolf in choosing Mrs. Dalloway or Mrs. Ramsay, have exercised similar discrimination. The danger of choosing commonplace minds is to be seen in the work of Dorothy Richardson, one of the earliest writers after James to attempt this type of fiction. It is bound to result in tedious observation, and a limited range: one's story becomes as limited as the mind it depicts. And while it is possible and even desirable to have pictures of limited minds, the author's "treatment" of them is the only assurance that the reader may not be as bored as the characters are boring.[21]

While Miss Stein could not but be influenced by the whole "stream of consciousness" movement after James, her interest in minds in action arose also from her studies in psychology at Radcliffe. Her formal

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[21] Edel, _op. cit._, p. 81.

approach to psychological fiction was consequently a mixture of the two influences, and the result was not like that of Joyce or Mrs. Woolf or any of the "stream of consciousness" moderns. Strictly speaking too, in time her fiction followed very closely on James though her later work was contemporary with Joyce and Mrs. Woolf. She attempted, and with some success, to exhibit the thinking processes of her characters in the very rhythm or pulse beat of their individual living and thinking, and so to communicate not only the content of their thought, not only the impression of the "flow of thought", but an identification in a unique way with the process of the thinking itself. The struggle to achieve such an identification, which lies at the root of much of Miss Stein's experimentation with language, implies that she was primarily and fundamentally interested in people at least in so far as they exhibited their own pattern of thought and of living by their reaction to life and people. But if she was aware of the danger which Henry James had foreseen, that a character with too limited a range may be tedious as a mirror, she did not let the possibility deflect her from her

> interest in ordinary middle class existence, in simple firm ordinary middle class traditions, in sordid material unaspiring visions, in a repeating, common decent enough kind of living, with no fine kind of fancy ways inside us, no excitements to surprise us, no new ways of being good or bad to win us.[22]

And so there is among her characters little of the fineness of perception to be found in the characters of James, and in their relationships no

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[22] Gertrude Stein, The Making of Americans, p.37.

fine-drawn drama and complexity. There is in her work a quality new to English fiction, something of participation with the steady throb of life, an experience of the rhythmic, repeating nature of experience. And yet the experience is rather more abstract and impersonal than we have traditionally expected. William Troy, speaking in the Nation some time ago, thought that she shared this abstract tendency with Henry James:

> In her detachment, her asceticism, and her eclecticism, Miss Stein can only remind us of another American author who lived in Europe and devoted himself more and more exclusively to the abstract. The principal difference between Henry James (whom Miss Stein reads more and more these days) and Gertrude Stein is that the former still kept within the human realm by treating moral problems. (Miss Stein has a more absolute aesthetic ideal: "the intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality".) Moreover, what Miss Stein has in common with James she has in common with Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and several other important and characteristic American writers: an orientation from experience toward the abstract, an orientation that has been so continuous as to constitute a tradition, if not actually the American tradition. Of this tradition it is possible to see in Miss Stein's writing not only a development but the pure culmination. She has pushed abstraction farther than James or even Poe would ever have dared -- to the terms of literary communication itself, "Words and Sentences". The final divorce between experience and art, which they threatened, is accomplished. Not only life but the traditional means of communication in life are "simplified" to suit the patterns which she offers in substitute.[23]

It might be debated that both Henry James and Gertrude Stein were more interested in the pattern of human behaviour than in the more conventional matter of the moral universe and conflicts in the moral order. Only James considered it essential that for the presentation of a pattern of human behaviour, conflicts in the moral order be treated. While Miss Stein, the product of a less humanistic and more scientific

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[23] William Troy, "A Note on Gertrude Stein", Nation, 137:274-5, September 6, 1933.

education, approached the human problem not in the traditional way of Shakespeare and Goëthe, but with her interest and training in the new psychological knowledge, while she did not deny the moral order, she simply did not consider it. In so far as her psychology is sound, there can be no real contradiction with the principles of the moral universe, and yet by ignoring the question her work appears to exist in a vacuum, divorced from the fullness of reality, with the reality communicated consisting rather in a genuine recognition of truths about relations and patterns of experience rather than the experience itself.

Edmund Wilson notes too that she is of the culmination of a self-conscious and very important literary movement which, by way of France, was founded on the principles of Poe. By reason of its development in France it had, he says, a deliberate self-conscious aesthetic which made it different from anything in English. The prime aim of the Symbolist movement was "To intimate things rather than state them plainly"; and its definition -- "an attempt by carefully studied means -- a complicated association of ideas represented by a medley of metaphors -- to communicate unique personal feelings."[24] With Miss Stein in the culmination of this movement, Mr. Wilson has included W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Marcel Proust and Paul Valery, and of their performance he has reported:

> The writers with whom I have here been concerned have not only, then, given us works of literature which, for intensity, brilliance and boldness as well as for an architectural genius, an intellectual mastery of their materials, rare among their Romantic predecessors, are probably comparable to the work of any time. Though it is true that

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[24] Wilson, op. cit., p. 21-22.

> they have tended to overemphasize the importance of the individual, that they have been preoccupied with introspection sometimes almost to the point of insanity, that they have endeavored to discourage their readers, not only with politics, but with action of any kind - they have yet succeeded in affecting in literature a revolution analagous to that which has taken place in science and philosophy: they have broken out of the old mechanistic routine, they have disintegrated the old materialism, and they have revealed to the imagination a new flexibility and freedom. And though we are aware in them of things that are dying - the whole belle-lettristic tradition of Renaissance culture perhaps, compelled to specialize more and more, more and more driven in on itself, as industrialism and democratic education have come to press it closer and closer -- they none the less break down the walls of the present and wake us to the hope and exaltation of the untried, unsuspected possibilities of human thought and art.[25]

There is a similarity and a fundamental difference between Symbolism and Romanticism which Mr. Wilson has recognized -

> The latter movement, . . . was an antidote to nineteenth century Naturalism, as the earlier had been an antidote to the neo-classicism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Symbolism corresponds to Romanticism, and is in fact an outgrowth from it. But whereas it was characteristic of the Romantics to seek experience for its own sake - love, travel, politics - to try the possibilities of life; the Symbolists, though they also hate formulas, though they also discard conventions, carry on their experimentation in the field of literature alone; and though they, too, are essentially explorers, explore only the possibilities of imagination and thought. And whereas the Romantic, in his individualism, had usually revolted against or defied that society with which he felt himself at odds, the Symbolist has detached himself from society and schools himself in indifference to it: he will cultivate his unique personal sensibility even beyond the point to which the Romantics did, but he will not assert his individual will - he will end by shifting the field of literature altogether, as his spokesman Axel had done the arena of life, from an objective to a subjective world, from an experience shared with society to an experience savored in solitude.[26]

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25 Ibid., p.297-8.

26 Ibid., p.265-6.

In The Literary Mind some seventeen years ago Max Eastman attacked poets who talked to themselves and he complained that literary communication had been reduced to a language of private values. This has been the cry of many critics, who fail to see the ambiguity of the problem for the contemporary writer -- that, as Mr. Sypher[27] pointed out recently

> while we are living in a culture that tends toward mass response, mass compulsions, the poet or novelist finds necessary to his insights a language that is increasingly private.

This was one of the challenges apparent to the writers which Mr. Wilson has termed 'Symbolist', and because they had no special sociological interest and no satirical bent to turn society to account, they did not struggle with the problem by publishing grievances against it, they tended to ignore it as best they could and to retreat to the stronghold of the imagination. Thus, says Mr. Wilson,

> both the characteristic tendency of the Symbolists to intimate rather than to speak plainly and their cult of the unique personal point of view are symptomatic of the extent to which they found themselves out of touch with their fellows and thrown in upon their own private imaginations.[28]

For with the rise of the middle class and the utilitarian society which followed on the industrial revolution, the literary man seemed to have lost his social role. And unless he was capable of Naturalism or of social idealism, he became peculiarly maladjusted. Thus we have seen the

> helpless hero of "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu," with his application of prodigious intellectual energy to

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[27] Wylie Sypher, "Obscurity as Fetish", Twentieth Century English (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946) p.336.

[28] Wilson, op. cit., p. 269.

> differentiating the emotions and sensations which arise from his passive contacts with life and with his preference for lying in bed by himself and worrying about Albertine's absences to getting up and taking her out - Proust himself, who put into practice the regime which Huysmans had invented for his hero, keeping his shutters closed by day and exercising his sensibility by night, whose whole elaborate work might have been based on Axel's contention in regard to foreign travel that the reality never equals the dream; Joyce's Bloom, with his animated consciousness and his inveterate ineptitude; Joyce's new hero who surpasses even the feats of sleeping of Proust's narrator and M. Teste by remaining asleep through an entire novel; and Gertrude Stein, who has withdrawn into herself more completely, who has spun herself a more impenetrable cocoon, than even Michael Robartes, M. Teste, Gerontion, H. C. Earwicker or Albertine's asthmatic lover.[29]

Yet, although Miss Stein, in her latter period, has outdistanced the rest of the Symbolists by using words for pure purposes of suggestion beyond their power to suggest, what she was attempting cannot be dismissed without serious consideration. Even, indeed especially, in that later period she has told us her intention was to "restore its intrinsic meaning to literature" and whether she was successful or not, we cannot dismiss her attempt as foolish without some discussion about the function of language. For we have a tendency to allow our ideas about the "logic" of language to be superficial and admit of little debate -

> The relation of words to what they convey - that is, to the processes behind them and the processes to which they give rise in those who listen to or read them - is still a very mysterious one. We tend to assume that being <u>convinced</u> of things is something quite different from having them <u>suggested</u> to us; but the suggestive language of the Symbolist poet is really performing the same sort of function as the reasonable language of the realist novelist or even the severe technical languages of science.

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29 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 266-7.

> The most, apparently, we can say of language is that it indicates relations, and a Symbolist poem does this just as much as a mathematical formula: both suggest imaginary worlds made up of elements abstracted from our experience of the real world and revealing relations which we acknowledge to be valid within those fields of experience. The only difference between the language of Symbolism and the literary languages to which we are accustomed is that the former indicates relations which, recently perceived for the first time, cut through or underlie those in terms of which we have been in the habit of thinking; and that it deals with them by means of what amounts, in comparison with conventional language, to a literary short-hand which makes complex ideas more easily manageable.[30]

Laura Riding has laid the performance of Gertrude Stein to the paradox of modern criticism which has demanded that language be organized anew so that it be "as instrumentally pure as colour or stone" and

> Words themselves would be reduced . . . to their least historical value. They would be cleansed of stale associations in order that they might be used primitively and abstractly. The purer they were the more eternally immediate and present they would be. In this way they could express the absolute at the same time as they were expressing the age.[31]

Miss Riding points out that

> Gertrude Stein's use of words may be looked on as such a purification. Her language is primitive and abstract. It is so primitive, indeed, that criticism has felt obliged to repudiate her work as a romantic vulgar barbarism, an expression of the personal crudeness of a mechanical age rather than a refined historical effort to restore a lost absolute to a group of co-ordinated creators. T. S. Eliot has said of Miss Stein's work that 'It is not improving, it is not amusing, it is not interesting, it is not good for one's mind. But its rhythms have a peculiar hypnotic power not met with before. It has a kinship with the saxophone. If this is the future,

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30 Ibid., p. 296.

31 Laura Riding, Contemporaries and Snobs (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928) p. 155-156.

then the future is, as it very likely is, of the barbarians. But this is the future in which we ought not to be interested.' Mr. Eliot was for the moment speaking from the civilized viewpoint: it seemed suddenly impossible to reconcile the crudities of any barbarism, however new, with the advanced historical state of the poetic mind and with the professional dignity of poetry which the new barbarism was invented to restore. A sincere attempt to do so was at once vulgar and obsure, like the work of Miss Stein. So except for such whole-hog literalness as hers modernist poetry has lacked the co-ordination to which modernist criticism subscribes; it has not had a controlling ism or school. This want would have been welcome if it had not meant an irreconcilability between criticism and workmanship which has made the latter a wasted performance.

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By combining the functions of critic and poet and taking everything around her very literally and many things for granted which others have not been naïve enough to take so, she has done what every one else has been ashamed to do. No one but Miss Stein has been willing to be as ordinary as simple, as primitive, as stupid, as barbaric as successful barbarism demands.[32]

"Does no one but Miss Stein realize that to be abstract, mathematical, thematic, anti-Hellenic, anti-Renaissancist, anti-romantic, we must be barbaric?" asks Miss Riding of the poetic work of Miss Stein and the same question might be asked of her prose, fiction included.

The fundamental questions which her work has posed concerning the nature of literary communication and her contribution to our knowledge of the problem has relegated a discussion of her fiction to a relatively unnoticed place in criticism. Her published fiction consists of four books, Three Lives, The Making of Americans, Ida, Brewsie and Willie, and some few short pieces which have appeared in magazines or

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32 Ibid., p. 156-7 and p. 183.

in collections of her works in the last twenty years. The value of this small group of writings has not been generally assessed in its relation to modern English literature, though there has been some attention paid to its effect on writers, and some tribute to the intrinsic value of Three Lives.

Of the various studies which might be undertaken in the area of her fiction, that of human relations seemed to me of special interest and value. There is nothing unique in the treatment of human relations in the novel, it is a basic ingredient of any work of fiction, and it might seem odd to look for a special contribution from one of the 'Symbolists' whose prime consideration was with man's relation with himself. Yet at least in the first two books, it seemed to me that Miss Stein has enunciated many valuable truths about human relations, which may have been implied by writers from antiquity, but have never been stated in quite the same way, or to quite the same effect. Miss Stein all her life seems to have been interested in relationships: between the writer and his material, between the reader and the written word, between a person and himself, between a man or woman and those about. The relationship under discussion is but one of those in which she was interested and upon which she had characteristically something definite to say. It should be advantageous to examine what she had to say of it in her fiction, and to determine if possible its value to literature. Perhaps because she was also interested in man's relation to himself, she may have been able to cast a new light on his relation to others. Neither of these two interests of hers is as mutually exclusive as appears at first glance.

There must be some key to the riddle of her performance in English Literature, and in stating what has been said by her critics we lay the groundwork for a considered judgment to be reached by a study of what she had to say of human nature in its relations, of human nature itself.

The problem of the communication of the intuition, with words which "dance and weep and make love and fight and kiss and perform miracles" implies emotional values and intensities, more than shape, colour, and aesthetic experience from words as ends in themselves, and points to her basic interest in human values. So it is a legitimate approach to the question of her general contribution to literature to deal first with her interest in human relations and what for her is the reality of experience to be communicated. It will also of course be necessary to see how well she was able to communicate it.

Since they began to write, women fiction writers have been particularly preoccupied with human relations. Virginia Woolf traces this to the fact that

> all the literary training that a woman had in the early nineteenth century was training in the observation of character, in the analysis of emotion. Her sensibility had been educated for centuries by the influences of the common sitting-room. People's feelings were impressed on her; personal relations were always before her eyes. Therefore, when the middle-class woman took to writing, she naturally wrote novels . . .[33]

And though the natural simplicity, the epic age of women's writing, may have passed, and women novelists have a wider range, as women

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[33] Woolf, op. cit., p. 100 - 101.

in general have achieved a wider scope, their writing still may be examined for the traditional note. Even if we agree with Katherine Anne Porter's idea of Gertrude Stein, that

> her envelope was a tricky disguise of Nature, that she was of the company of Amazons which nineteenth-century America produced among its many prodigies: not-men, not-women, answerable to no function in either sex, whose careers were carried on, and how successfully, in whatever field they chose: they were educators, writers, editors, politicians, artists, world travellers, and international hostesses, who lived in public and by the public and played out their self-assumed, self-created roles in such masterly freedom as only a few early mediaeval queens had equalled. Freedom to them meant precisely freedom from men and their stuffy rules for women. They usurped with a high hand the traditional masculine privileges of movement, choice and the use of direct, personal power. They were few in number and they were not only to be found in America and Miss Stein belonged with them, no doubt of it, in spite of a certain temperamental passivity which was Oriental, not feminine.[34]

- and there is no obligation that we should be as positive as our commentator, - there would yet be value in hearing what Miss Stein as a woman had to say of relations between women, and between men and women. Though her performance could be interpreted as such, we have Miss Stein's words that she was never a feminist, not even in her college days before the turn of the century. "The cause of women," she said early and late to Marion Walker, just did "not happen to be her business".[35] The special contribution of women to fiction is of such recent origin that any discussion of the matter tends to veer from literary criticism to psychology or to the history of women's role and women's rights. The subject is of real interest and still of much mystery psychologically, and psychology cannot be divorced from literature. Yet lest proportion be lost in what set out to be a critical

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[34] Katherine Anne Porter, "Gertrude Stein: A Self-Portrait", Harper's Magazine, 1171:522, December, 1947.

[35] Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p. 101-2.

literary study, I shall not consider Miss Stein's peculiar contribution on the subject of human relations in fiction as something which developed necessarily out of her womanhood. I shall be satisfied to examine what the woman writer, Gertrude Stein, had to say in her fiction of the relationships of people differing in age, in social status, in sex and in personality.

CHAPTER II

THREE LIVES

> I never know when or why a picture suddenly becomes beautiful and loses its quality of irritation. There was a time when I had to cover that Cezanne portrait with a glass for no one would believe that it was a finished work; it irritated everyone and even angered some. Without liking it, I had recognized its quality, and then one day -- as one turns over in sleep -- it became beautiful and I could not see it the way I had seen it before.[36]

The Cézanne portrait was large and strangely beautiful and of a woman. It was an attempt by the artist to combine movement and poise and it was one of those pictures which heralded the new school of art in Paris early in the century. With time and study one saw the impeccable organization, the exquisite balance. It was the joint purchase of Gertrude Stein and her brother, and "It was an important purchase because in looking and looking at this picture Gertrude Stein wrote "Three Lives".[37]

In "Three Lives" also the organization is impeccable, the balance exquisite, the technique new and valuable. Miss Stein in literature presented portraits of three women, and because the literary canvass is large and many-dimensioned her studies have a depth which she achieved by repetition in which one factor remains constant while another changes and develops the story ever more deeply. The artistic balance is so real that one has a tendency to consider it in terms of the visual art. The people surrounding the woman in each of

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[36] bravig imbs, op. cit., p. 182.

[37] Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p.40.

the three short novels are shown always in their relation to the life and personality of the heroine, and life itself, in these stories, is completely within the milieu and in terms of the heroine. Perhaps it was that in looking at the woman in the Cézanne picture, Miss Stein considered womanhood, and when she wrote of women, low-tensioned and of limited intellectual range, the subject divided itself into three - the woman who combines devotion and domination, the woman who is self-effacing and passive, and complex, passionate Melanctha who "was always seeking rest and quiet, and always . . . could only find new ways to be in trouble." Since she wrote the histories of "small souls" the treatment is not exhaustive nor all-inclusive save on the level of existence which she was treating. The book as a whole has a unity and a balance arising from the single view of the subject under the stimulus of the Cézanne, and from a knowledge of the relationships important to each of the fundamental types of women whose lives are viewed. Life begins, gathers speed, then ends for each of them and in the interim they react according to their natures to the challenges of their situation and to the people about them. Life it is that is single and irrevocable, and human personality is the factor that makes it ever the same and ever new.

The influence of Cézanne on Miss Stein at this time was certain and important. We have her word for it and it is evident in the composition of the work, both external and internal. There is another influence which is sometimes over-rated. Miss Stein has told us "She had begun not long before as an exercise in literature to translate Flaubert's

Trois Contes and then she had this Cézanne and she looked at it and under its stimulus she wrote Three Lives."[38] Flaubert was a master of style, of fitting the cadence and the phrase precisely to the mood or the object described, he was the "great prose poet of Naturalism". And Gertrude Stein, however much she was engrossed in fitting the cadence and the phrase to the mood or the object described, even in the beginning was not of the school of Naturalism. Flaubert never embodied himself in his characters nor identified his voice with theirs, and this is the great triumph of Gertrude Stein in Three Lives.

Edmund Wilson compares the work of the two in this manner:

> "Three Lives," ... was a work of what would at that time have been called realism, but it was realism of rather a novel kind. The book consisted of three long short stories - the histories of three women, two of them German servant-girls, the other a mulatto girl. What is most remarkable in these stories - especially if we compare them with such a typically Naturalistic production as Flaubert's "Un Coeur Simple," in which we feel that the old family servant has been seen from a great distance and documented with effort - is the closeness with which the author has been able to identify herself with her characters. In a style which appears to owe nothing to that of any other novelist, she seems to have caught the very rhythms and accents of the minds of her heroines: we find ourselves sharing the lives of the Good Anna and Gentle Lena so intimately that we forget about their position and see the world limited to their range, just as in Melanctha's case - and this is what makes her story one of the best as well as one of the earliest attempts of a white American novelist to understand the mind of the modern Americanized negro - we become so immersed in Melanctha's world that we quite forget its inhabitants are black. And we discover that these histories have a significance different from that of ordinary realistic fiction: Miss Stein is interested in her subjects, not from the point of view of the social conditions of which they might be taken as representative, but as three fundamental types of women: ...[39]

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[38] Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p. 41.

[39] Wilson, op. cit., p. 237-238.

In Flaubert's Trois Contes there is another very fundamental note which is not to be found in Three Lives or in any of Miss Stein's work - a preoccupation with the inferiority of the present over the past. Two of his three stories in this group manage to illustrate that in comparison with the third, Un Coeur Simple, life was indeed better in the time of Herodias and in that of St. Julien the Hospitaller. Miss Stein's The Good Anna begins with rather strikingly similar phrasing to the opening paragraph of Un Coeur Simple, and in each the style is beautiful in simplicity, yet one is deeply moved to the story of Anna and comes to appreciate the generosity and strength of her nature, while there reaches one through the telling of Un Coeur Simple some of the loathing of the author for his own characters and their situation. Perhaps, though it is to be doubted, The Gentle Lena, could not have been written without the influence of Un Coeur Simple.[40] E. B. Burgum seems to feel that this is so. It was the triumph of Miss Stein that in Three Lives the reader can share the lives of the heroines so intimately and their thoughts with a real identification. But Lena just is not active nor intellectual; as a consequence there is much less to share, and the reader receives an impression nearer to that received from the work of Flaubert. But the approach of the two authors is dissimilar, and their work has much less in common than critics such as Mr. Burgum have allowed. He has seen Melanctha and Madame Bovary as strikingly similar though on different social planes. "Melanctha" he states, "is ..... a variant of Madame Bovary, a Madame Bovary of the American

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40 E. B. Burgum, The Novel and the World's Dilemma (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 160: "In reality she was reverting to the example of Gustave Flaubert. Without the precedent of his Une Coeur Simple, The Gentle Lena would probably not have been written."

Negro who is under bourgeois influences."[41] In personality the two have something in common - they are passionate, attractive, tend to jeopardize what they have in wanting what they dream. Yet there is a basic honesty of intention in Melanctha which it is hard to find in Madame Bovary, and while Melanctha is certainly confused, she is not the confused romantic that Emma is primarily. And the treatment given the two by their authors is not at all similar. Melanctha is comprehended deeply and with sympathy, Emma is satirized by a man fighting his own romanticism and disliking his heroine. Life for Flaubert is ignoble, sordid, tame, and this factor, fundamental in the spirit of his work, sets him quite apart from Gertrude Stein in all save their common interest in the cadence and the mood, the phrase and its object.

Three Lives was written just after the turn of the century in Paris. It was published first in 1909 by Grafton Press in very small quantity, a little later reissued by John Lane, and more recently by the Boni Brothers, by the Modern Library, and by New Directions. It is still being "discovered" by readers, and while its appeal may always be limited to some extent, it will probably continue to be the most popular of Miss Stein's work, with the possible exception of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas. It is artistically whole, and the only piece of Miss Stein's fiction of which it can be stated without controversy that it belongs permanently in the main stream of English letters. It is the story of Melanctha - Each One as She May - the second of the three studies,which is singled out by critics for greatest approbation. It

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[41] Burgum, op.cit., p.160.

is the longest, tensest, most churning, most original of the novelettes, and it tells the story of a mulatto girl who "always loved too hard and much too often" and who consequently "was always losing what she had in wanting all the things she saw. Melanctha was always being left when she was not leaving others." Her life was tragic as her loves were tragic, and at the end the greatest sorrow came from a failure in friendship. Then Melanctha Herbert knew, "way inside her, that she was lost, and nothing any more could ever help her." And a little later the "subtle, intelligent, attractive, half-white girl Melanctha Herbert" contracted consumption. "They sent her where she would be taken care of, a home for poor consumptives, and there Melanctha stayed until she died."

If Melanctha and her portrait are complex, the story of the Good Anna is as clear and sharp and vigorous as Anna insisted on being. The novelette is about half the length of Melanctha, and is the first in the book. Anna wore herself out in the service of her friends and employers. She was a German girl born in Europe and of the lower middle class. She went into service in her native city, and left her employer when one day "her mistress offered her maid -- that was Anna -- to a friend, to see her home. Anna felt herself to be a servant, not a maid, and so she promptly left the place." "Anna had always a firm old world sense of what was the right way for a girl to do." So Anna came with her mother to America, and settled in Bridgepoint, and took service first with Miss Mary Wadsmith, then with Dr. Shonfen, and later with Miss Mathilda. "Anna led an arduous and troubled life", she

scolded, and bargained, and helped and advised, and the romance of her life she found in her friend, Mrs. Lehntman. It is a story of friendship and service told with sympathy and humor.

The Gentle Lena was so gentle and passive that her story could be told in forty brief pages. It is an unaccented quiet history of "patient, gentle, sweet and german" Lena whose aunt brought her from Germany to Bridgepoint.

> Lena's age just suited Mrs. Haydon's purpose. Lena could first go out to service, and learn how to do things, and then,when she was a little older, Mrs. Haydon could get her a good husband. And then Lena was so still and docile, she would never want to do things her own way. And then, too, Mrs. Haydon, with all her hardness had wisdom, and she could feel the rarer strain there was in Lena.

So at seventeen Lena crossed the ocean with her aunt and cousins, went into service with an amiable mistress, and when she was twenty-one Mrs. Haydon found her Herman Kreder, a good, gentle, if reluctant, husband. Herman had the old-world obedience for his parents and he had no wish for "the getting married and having a girl always with him", but afterwards he loved his three children tenderly and devotedly. "Lena always was more and more lifeless and Herman now mostly never thought about her". And then Lena died and no one missed her much except the good German cook who had always scolded her and who to the last day had tried to help her. The Gentle Lena is the least interesting of the stories because Lena is essentially the least interesting heroine. The dreamy Lena had little to give to life and to the relationships in which she was involved, and the story has a neutral tone on this account.

Miss Stein wrote the three stories within three months of each other and on this account they reflect a single attitude to people and to human relations. As ingredients in each of the studies, friendship between women, between men and women, between servants and employers, between members of families, may differ in depth and relative importance, and love and marriage may figure large or not figure at all, but these are the things in which the author is interested, and the story of the heroine is the history of her relationships.

The author is very much preoccupied with friendship between women. And each of the stories bears a unique tribute to the importance of this relationship in the life of its heroine. This is a rarer occurence in literature than we are inclined to recognize, though Virginia Woolf helped us to see it in A Room of One's Own:

> "Chloe liked Olivia," I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature. Cleopatra did not like Octavia. And how completely Anthony and Cleopatra would have been altered had she done so! As it is, I thought, letting my mind, I am afraid, wander a little from Life's Adventure, the whole thing is simplified, conventionalized, if one dared say it, absurdly. Cleopatra's only feeling about Octavia is one of jealousy. Is she taller than I am? How does she do her hair? The play, perhaps, required no more. But how interesting it would have been if the relationship between the two women had been more complicated. All these relationships between women, I thought, rapidly recalling the splendid gallery of fictitious women, are too simple. So much has been left out, unattempted. And I tried to remember any case in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends. There is an attempt at it in Diana of the Crossways. They are confidantes, of course, in Racine and the Greek tragedies. But almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the

other sex. And how small a part of a woman's life is that; and how little can a man know even of that when he observes it through the black or rosy spectacles which sex puts upon his nose. Hence, perhaps, the peculiar nature of women in fiction; the astonishing extremes of her beauty and horror; her alternations between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity - for so a lover would see her as his love rose or sank, was prosperous or unhappy. This is not so true of the nineteenth-century novelists, of course. Woman becomes much more various and complicated there. Indeed it was the desire to write about women perhaps that led men by degrees to abandon the poetic drama which, with its violence, could make so little use of them, and to devise the novel as a more fitting receptacle. Even so it remains obvious, even in the writing of Proust, that a man is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women, as a woman in her knowledge of men.

Also, I continued, looking down at the page again, it is becoming evident that women, like men, have other interests besides the perennial interests of domesticity . . . Now all that, of course, has had to be left out, and thus the splendid portrait of the fictitious woman is much too simple and much too monotonous. Suppose,for instance, that men were only represented in literature as the lovers of women, and were never the friends of men, soldiers, thinkers, dreamers; how few parts in the plays of Shakespeare could be allotted to them! how literature would suffer![42]

There may be few satisfactory references to friendship between women in our literature, there are many concerning the friendships of men. After we have granted that human beings and their relationships have been essentially the same since Aristotle defined friendship as "one soul in two bodies"[43] we must recognize that the relationship between men has been differently regarded in life and in literature through the ages, according to its relative importance in the civilization at that period.

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[42] Woolf, op. cit., p. 123-125.

[43] Aristotle, Diog. Laertius, as quoted by Edward Carpenter, Iolaüs An Anthology of Friendship, (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1920), p. 185.

With the Greeks there was much respect given to love, in this case romantic friendship between men. J. A. Symonds has pointed out that

> partly owing to the social habits of their cities and partly to the peculiar notions which they entertained regarding the seclusion of free women in the home, all the higher elements of spiritual and mental activity, and the conditions under which a generous passion was conceivable, had become the exclusive privileges of men.[44]

And this love, we learn in the Socratic dialogues Phaedrus and Symposium, is, says Mr. Symonds, "like poetry and prophecy, . . . a divine gift, which diverts men from the common current of their lives; but in the right use of this gift lies the secret of all human excellence."[45]

In Christian times, says Edward Carpenter,

> The special sentiment of comrade-love or attachment (being a thing inherent in human nature) remained of course through the Christian centuries, as before, and unaltered -- except that being no longer recognized it became a private and personal affair, running often powerfully enough beneath the surface of society, but openly unacknowledged, and so far deprived of some of its dignity and influence. Owing to this fact there is nothing, for this period, to be quoted in the way of general ideal or public opinion on the subject of friendship, and the following sections therefore become limited to the expression of individual sentiments and experiences, in prose and poetyy. These we find, during the mediaeval period, largely coloured by religion; while at the Renaissance and afterwards they are evidently affected by Greek associations.[46]

Consequently what we may expect in Gertrude Stein is an expression of the attitude of her time, and an expression of her American, non-classical education, in which a study of the new imaginative science of psychology as presented by William James was very important.

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44 J. A. Symonds, "A Problem of Greek Ethics" Iolaüs An Anthology of Friendship (Edward Carpenter, editor); p. 68.

45 J. A. Symonds, "The Place of Friendship in Greek Life and Thought", Iolaüs, An Anthology of Friendship, op. cit., p. 47-48.

46 Carpenter, op. cit., p. 98.

In The Good Anna Gertrude Stein tells of a woman who found the romance of her life in her friendship with another woman. Mrs. Lehntman was a widow, a few years older than Anna. "She was pleasant, magnetic, efficient and good. She was very attractive, very generous and very amiable." For many years she had been a midwife. Since her husband's death she had herself and two young children to support. Anna was soon subdued by the widow's magnetic charm and in the early years of their friendship all of her spare hours were spent in Mrs. Lehntman's company.

> Even in the early days when Anna was first won by the glamour of Mrs. Lehntman's brilliancy and charm, she had been uneasy in Mrs. Lehntman's house with a need of putting things to rights. Now that the two children growing up were of more importance in the house, and now that long acquaintance had brushed the dazzle out of Anna's eyes, she began to struggle to make things go here as she thought was right.
>
> So she scolded the daughter Julia and the boy, and the daughter grew sullen and the son enjoyed it for it brought new things to eat,and teasing, and jokes. And gradually in six years, Anna came to lead. "Not really lead, of course, for Mrs. Lehntman never could be led, she was so very devious in her ways; but Anna had come to have direction whenever she could learn what Mrs. Lehntman meant to do before the deed was done." And then Mrs. Lehntman of the disordered family life, whom Anna helped with advice and the lending of money, decided to adopt the unwanted child of one of the girls she loved to help when they were in trouble. Anna was determined for the right and "Mrs. Lehntman had her unhearing mind and her happy way of giving a pleasant well diffused attention, and then she had it on her side that, after all, this thing

was already done." It was hard to tell which one would win out. Anna spoke harshly, so harshly that Mrs. Lehntman could not really hear and ever invite Anna to her home again. And she liked Anna and was used to depending on her savings and her strength. "And then too Mrs. Lehntman could not really take in the harsh ideas. She was too well diffused to catch the feel of any sharp firm edge." So she tried to placate Anna without changing her decision, and Anna lost the open fight.

> while the good Anna did not come to open fight she had been stronger. Now Mrs. Lehntman could always hold out longer. She knew too, that Anna had a feeling heart. Anna could never stop doing all she could for any one that really needed help. Poor Anna had no power to say no.
>
> And then, too, Mrs. Lehntman was the only romance Anna ever knew. Romance is the ideal in one's life and it is very lonely living with it lost.
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> . . . . . .
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> In friendship, power always has its downward curve. One's strength to manage rises always higher until there comes a time one does not win, and though one may not really lose, still from the time that victory is not sure, one's power slowly ceases to be strong. It is only in a close tie such as marriage that influence can mount and grow stronger with the years and never meet with a decline. It can only happen so when there is no way to escape.
>
> Friendship goes by favour. There is always danger of a break or of a stronger power coming in between. Influence can only be a steady march when one can surely never break away.
>
> Anna wanted Mrs. Lehntman very much and Mrs. Lehntman needed Anna, but there were always other ways to do and if Anna had once given up she might do so again, so why should Mrs. Lehntman have real fear?
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> . . . . . .
>
> The adopting of the little boy did not put an end to Anna's friendship for the widow Mrs. Lehntman. Neither the good Anna nor the careless Mrs. Lehntman would give

each other up excepting for the gravest cause.

> Mrs. Lehntman was the only romance Anna ever knew. A certain magnetic brilliancy in person and in manner made Mrs. Lehntman a woman other women loved. Then, too, she was generous and good and honest, though she was so careless always in her ways. And then she trusted Anna and liked her better than any of her other friends, and Anna always felt this very much.
>
> No, Anna could not give up Mrs. Lehntman, and soon she was busier than before making Julia do things right for little Johnny.

Anna helped Mrs. Lehntman establish a large house for the girls she loved to help when they were in trouble. Anna felt it surely could not pay, but Mrs. Lehntman had rented the house, and the work was so good, what could Anna do but spend her savings and her strength in fixing it as nicely as possible? Then gradually Mrs. Lehntman seemed to lose interest in the house and in Anna. She who had always been vague became almost furtive, she became involved with a mysterious, perhaps an evil, doctor, and Anna then saw little of Mrs. Lehntman. But Anna always found new people to help, and there was now her mistress Miss Mathilda who "was not a romance in the good Anna's life, but Anna gave her so much strong affection that it almost filled her life as full." For some time now also Anna had been intimate with Mrs. Drehten.

> There was no fever in this friendship, it was just the interchange of two hard working, worrying women, the one large and motherly, with the pleasant, patient, soft, worn, tolerant face, that comes with a german husband to obey, and seven solid girls and boys to bear and rear, and the other was our good Anna with her spinster body, her firm jaw, her humorous, light, clean eyes and her lined, worn, thin, pale yellow face.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It was a family life the good Anna very much approved and also she was much liked by them all. With a german

> woman's feeling for the masterhood in men, she was docile to the surly father and rarely rubbed him the wrong way. To the large, worn, patient, sickly mother she was a sympathetic listener, wise in council and most efficient in her help. The young ones too, liked her very well. The sons teased her all the time and roared with boisterous pleasure when she gave them back sharp hits. The girls were all so good that her scoldings here were only in the shape of good advice, sweetened with new trimmings for their hats, and ribbons, and sometimes on their birthdays, bits of jewels.
>
> It was here that Anna came for comfort after her grievous stroke at her friend the widow, Mrs. Lehntman. Not that Anna would tell Mrs. Drehten of this trouble. She could never lay bare the wound that came to her through this idealised affection. Her affair with Mrs. Lehntman was too sacred and too grievous ever to be told. But here in this large household, in busy movement and variety in strife, she could silence the uneasiness and pain of her own wound.

It was now several years that Anna did not see her friend, Mrs. Lehntman. She was very busy, was Anna, taking care of her mistress, Miss Mathilda, and being good to everyone who seemed to need help. And then Mrs. Lehntman left the mysterious and certainly evil doctor, and slowly Anna began to see her again. "They could never be as they had been before. Mrs. Lehntman could never be again the romance in the good Anna's life, but they could be friends again, and Anna could help all the Lehntmans in their need. This slowly came about." The years want on and Anna had her friend Mrs. Drehten and her friend Mrs. Lehntman. But

> Mrs. Lehntman she saw very rarely. It is hard to build up new on an old friendship when in that friendship there has been bitter disillusion. They did their best, both these women, to be friends, but they were never able to again touch one another nearly. There were too many things between them that they could not speak of, things that had never been explained nor yet forgiven. The good Anna still did her best for foolish Julia and still every now and then saw Mrs. Lehntman, but this family had now lost all its real hold on Anna.

> Mrs. Drehten was now the best friend that Anna knew. Here there was never any more than the mingling of their sorrows. They talked over all the time the best way for Mrs. Drehten now to do; poor Mrs. Drehten who with her chief trouble, her bad husband, had really now no way that she could do. She just had to work and to be patient and to love her children and be very quiet. She always had a soothing mother influence on the good Anna who with her irritable, strained, worn-out body would come and sit by Mrs. Drehten and talk all her troubles over.
>
> Of all the friends that the good Anna had had in these twenty years in Bridgepoint, the good father and patient Mrs. Drehten were the only ones that were now near to Anna and with whom she could talk her troubles over.

Anna worked too hard for the boarders which she now kept. They were poor and she knew she could not charge them any more, yet there was not money enough for a maid and Anna did it all. She became always more tired, more pale yellow, and in her face thinner and more worn and worried. Mrs. Drehten and the doctor and the good father all tried to make her give herself more care and rest, but Mrs. Drehten was too gentle to make stubborn Anna rest when there was so much to do, and Anna grew worse, and had to enter the hospital for an operation, and there, with Mrs. Drehten for company, the good Anna died.

Friendship with another woman came to be for Melanctha the sustaining force of her life. That was the reason she did for and lowered herself for the "coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish Rose" Johnson. But in her early days, "it was only men that for Melanctha held anything there was of knowledge and power. It was not from men however that Melanctha learned to really understand this power."

Melanctha Herbert was sixteen when she first met Jane Harden. ... She taught Melanctha many things. She taught her how to go the ways that lead to wisdom.

Jane Harden was at this time twenty-three years old and she had had much experience. She was very much attracted by Melanctha,and Melanctha was very proud that this Jane would let her know her.

. . . . . .

Jane was a roughened woman. She had power and she liked to use it, she had much white blood and that made her see clear, she liked drinking and that made her reckless. Her white blood was strong in her and she had grit and endurance and a vital courage. She was always game, however much she was in trouble. She liked Melanctha Herbert for the things that she had like her, and then Melanctha was young, and she had sweetness, and a way of listening with intelligence and sympathetic interest,to the stories that Jane Harden often told out of her experience.

Jane grew always fonder of Melanctha. Soon they began to wander,more to be together than to see men and learn their various ways of working. Then they began not to wander, and Melanctha would spend long hours with Jane in her room, sitting at her feet and listening to her stories, and feeling her strength and the power of her affection, and slowly she began to see clear before her one certain way that would be sure to lead to wisdom.

. . . . . .

In the first year, between Jane Harden and Melanctha Herbert, Jane had been much the stronger. Jane loved Melantha and she found her always intelligent and brave and sweet and docile, and Jane meant to, and before the year was over she had taught Melanctha what it is that gives many people in the world their wisdom.

. . . . . .

It was a very tumultuous, very mingled year, this time for Melanctha,but she certainly did begin to really understand.

In every way she got it from Jane Harden. There was nothing good or bad in doing, feeling, thinking or in talking, that Jane spared her. Sometimes the lesson came almost too strong for Melanctha, but somehow she always managed to endure

it and so slowly, but always with increasing strength and feeling, Melanctha began to really understand.

Then slowly, between them, it began to be all different. Slowly now between them, it was Melanctha Herbert who was stronger. Slowly now they began to drift apart from one another.

Melanctha Herbert never really lost her sense that it was Jane Harden who had taught her, but Jane did many things that Melanctha now no longer needed. And then, too, Melanctha never could remember right when it came to what she had done and what had happened. Melanctha now sometimes quarrelled with Jane, and they no longer went about together, and sometimes Melanctha really forgot how much she owed to Jane Harden's teaching.

. . . . . .

Melanctha from now on saw very little of Jane Harden. Jane did not like that very well and sometimes she abused Melanctha, but her drinking soon covered everything all up.

It was not in Melanctha's nature to really lose her sense for Jane Harden. Melanctha all her life was ready to help Jane out in any of her trouble, and later, when Jane really went to pieces, Melanctha always did all that she could to help her.

But Melanctha Herbert was ready now herself to do teaching. Melanctha could do anything now that she wanted. Melanctha knew now what everybody wanted.

So once more, and alone, Melanctha began to wander. This was the year her mother was dying and towards the end of this wandering time she met Jefferson Campbell, and she ceased to wander and needed little of the friendship of women. Only when later she was "thick in her trouble with Jeff Campbell" did Melanctha turn more and more to her new friend, Rose, who afterwards married the decent Sam Johnson. And "always Rose and Melanctha were more and more together, and Jeff Campbell could now hardly ever any more be alone with Melanctha.

> And Melanctha Herbert clung to Rose in the hope that Rose could save her. Melanctha felt the power of Rose's selfish, decent kind of nature. It was so solid, simple, certain to her. Melanctha clung to Rose, she loved to have her scold her, she always wanted to be with her. She always felt a solid safety in her. Rose always was, in her way, very good to let Melanctha be loving to her. Melanctha never had any way she could really be a trouble to her. Melanctha never had any way that she could ever get real power, to come close inside to her. Melanctha was always very humble to her. Melanctha was always ready to do anything Rose wanted from her. Melanctha needed badly to have Rose always willing to let Melanctha cling to her. Rose was a simple, sullen, selfish, black girl,but she had a solid power in her. Rose had strong the sense of decent conduct, she had strong the sense for decent comfort. Rose always knew very well what it was she wanted, and she knew very well what was the right way to do to get everything she wanted, and she never had any kind of trouble to perplex her. And so the subtle intelligent attractive half white girl Melanctha Herbert loved and did for, and demeaned herself in service to this coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black, childish Rose and now this unmoral promiscuous shiftless Rose was to be married to a good man of the negroes. . .

Rose married Sam and Melanctha got involved with the reckless, game mulatto, Jem Richards. Melanctha still saw much of Rose and did much for her but she could no longer cling to her. "Rose had Sam, and Melanctha more and more lost the hold she had had there." Rose did not approve of Melanctha's performance in regard to Jem. For Melanctha's love for Jem made her foolish, and Rose did not like it. More and more Sam was gentle to Melanctha and even at first tried to defend her to Rose. So Rose, who was always direct and sure in what she wanted, forbade Melanctha to visit her ever again.

> Melanctha Herbert was all sore and bruised inside her. Melanctha had needed Rose always to believe her, Melanctha needed Rose always to let her cling to her, Melanctha wanted badly to have somebody who could make her always feel a little safe inside her, and now Rose had sent her from her. Melanctha wanted Rose more than she had ever wanted all the others. Rose always was so simple, solid, decent, for her. And now Rose had cast her from her. Melanctha was lost and all the world went whirling in a mad weary dance around her.

There is something more traditional and highly satisfactory about the testimony to friendship which Montaigne has given:

> what we commonly call friends and friendships are nothing but an acquaintance and connection, contracted either by accident or upon some design, by means of which there happens some little intercourse our souls: but, in the friendship I speak of, they mingle and melt into one piece with so universal a mixture that there is left no more sign of the seam by which they were first conjoined . . . betwixt
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Common friendships will admit of division, one may love the beauty of this, the good humour of that person, the liberality of a third, the paternal affection of a fourth, the fraternal love of a fifth, and so on. But this friendship that posseses the whole soul, and there rules and sways with an absolute sovereignty, can admit of no rival . . . In good earnest, if I compare all the rest of my life with the four years I had the happiness to enjoy the sweet society of this excellent man, 'tis nothing but smoke, but an obscure and tedious night.[47]

Montaigne is concerned with the rare experience of friendship itself, and so is Gertrude Stein, but not primarily. She is rather more interested in the history or the pattern of the relationship, and her insights are very valuable as long as one realizes that this is her peculiar gift. Perhaps, had she been dealing with characters of high mentality and great vitality, there might have been a better basis of comparison between her work and the mass of great and lasting literature. As it is, her deliberate choice of mediocre characters, low-tensioned and non-intellectual, of necessity requires that the patterns of the relationships between the characters be more limited than they otherwise might be. This in no way implies that it is not of value to literature to have a record of the relationships of low-tensioned persons at the precise level at which they experience these relationships, and this is Miss Stein's personal triumph

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[47] Montaigne, Essay on Friendship, (Book I, chapter XXVII), quoted by Edward Carpenter, Ioläus An Anthology of Friendship, op. cit., p. 125.

in English literature, especially with Three Lives, but it does mean that what could be said of the pattern of human relationships could never be fully developed and said by her in her chosen medium of fiction. Her choice may have been wise, quite probably she could not have developed the message further, but that is beyond the point.

It is interesting, too, to note in passing, that Montaigne and she seem to differ in their evaluation of the relative merits of the relationships of friendship and marriage. In The Good Anna we have already noted this paragraph:

> In friendship, power always has its downward curve. One's strength to manage rises always higher until there comes a time one does not win, and though one may not really lose, still from the time that victory is not sure, one's power slowly ceases to be strong. It is only in a close tie such as marriage, that influence can mount and grow stronger with the years and never meet with a decline. It can only happen so when there is no way to escape.

As far as Montaigne is concerned the fact that there is no way to escape renders any valuable development in the relationship almost impossible:

> As to marriage, besides that it is a covenant, the making of which is only free, but the continuance in it forced and compelled, having another dependence than that of our own free will, and a bargain moreover commonly contracted to other ends, there happen a thousand intricacies in it to unravel, enough to break the thread,and to divert the current, of lively affection: whereas a friendship has no manner of business or traffic with anything but itself ...[48]

Historically Miss Stein's statement seems to have been more sound than Montaigne's, but she does often illustrate that in individual cases where marriage has been between unsuited persons, it is friendship that is the more enduring relationship. The Gentle Lena, rather inadequate as a story because Lena was by nature colourless and lacking in vitality, shows this point clearly.

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[48] loc. cit.

Lena was passive in friendship as in everything. The servant girls she sat with in the park teased her and gave her advice and would have welcomed her on their Sunday excursions had she wished to go. Yet when she married they did not think to visit her, and she was always too dreamy and vague for any deep relationship. Only the good German cook consistently tried to help her, and Lena visited her and listened to her scoldings and went her gentle way.

> The good german cook who had always scolded Lena, and had always to the last day tried to help her, was the only one who ever missed her. She remembered how nice Lena had looked all the time she was in service with her, and how her voice had been so gentle and sweet-sounding, and how she always was a good girl, and how she never had to have any trouble with her, the way she always had with all the other girls who had been taken into the house to help her. The good cook sometimes spoke so of Lena when she had time to have a talk with Mrs. Aldrich, and this was all the remembering there now ever was of Lena.

Anna and Lena were both German servant girls whose happiest days were spent in the service of kind masters and mistresses. Lena worked for four years in the same place and found it very good. "There was a pleasant, unexacting mistress and her children, and they all liked Lena very well."

> Anna found her place with large, abundant women, for such were always lazy, careless or all helpless, and so the burden of their lives could fall on Anna, and give her just content. Anna's superiors must be always these large helpless women, or be men, for none others could give themselves to be made so comfortable and free.

So Anna served in the household of Miss Mary Wadsmith, a large, fair, helpless woman burdened with the care of her young nephew and niece, in the household of the jolly bachelor doctor Dr. Shonjen, with whom

she learned to laugh at the queer ways of people and dogs, and with Miss Mathilda for whom she did the cooking and the sewing and the saving and the worrying. "With Miss Mathilda Anna did it all. The clothes, the house, the hats, what she should wear and when and what was always best for her to do. There was nothing Miss Mathilda would not let Anna manage, and only be too glad if she would do." "Yes, taking care of Miss Mathilda were the happiest days of all the good Anna's strong hard working life."

> All Anna's friends reverenced the good Anna's cherished Miss Mathilda. How could they not do so and still remain friends with the good Anna? Miss Mathilda rarely really saw them but they were always sending flowers and words of admiration through her Anna. Every now and then Anna would bring one of them to Miss Mathilda for advice.
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> It is wonderful how poor people love to take advice from people who are friendly and above them, from people who read in books and who are good.
>
> Miss Mathilda saw Mrs. Drehten and told her she was glad that she was going to the hospital for operation for that surely would be best, and so good Mrs. Drehten's mind was set at rest.

Anna had her troubles with big, careless Miss Mathilda, who liked a bit of porcelain or an oil painting better than new clothes. Anna often turned her back at the door to put on her good dress, or change the poor old-looking hat. And occasionally Miss Mathilda felt herself a rebel along with the second maid.

> It was pleasant that everything for one was done, but annoying often that what one wanted most just then, one could not have when one had foolishly demanded and not suggested one's desire. And then Miss Mathilda loved to to out on joyous, tramps when, stretching free and far with cheerful comrades, over rolling hills and cornfields,
>
> country

> glorious in the setting sun, and dogwood white and shining underneath the moon and clear stars over head, and brilliant air and tingling blood it was hard to have to think of Anna's anger at the late return, though Miss Mathilda had begged that there might be no hot supper cooked that night. And then when all the happy crew of Miss Mathilda and her friends, tired with fullness of good health and burning winds and glowing sunshine in the eyes, stiffened and justly worn and wholly ripe for pleasant food and gentle content, were all come together to the little house -- it was hard for all that tired crew who loved the good things Anna made to eat, to come to the closed door and wonder there if it was Anna's evening in or out, and then the others must wait shivering on their tired feet, while Miss Mathilda softened Anna's heart, or if Anna was well out, boldly ordering youthful Sallie to feed all the hungry lot.

Anna did most of the buying and saving for her Miss Mathilda. In the name of Miss Mathilda Anna conquered the merchants of Bridgepoint. Anna had the sense of what it was right that a girl should do, and she knew well "the kind of ugliness appropriate to each rank in life".

> It was interesting to see how when she bought things for Miss Wadsmith and later for her cherished Miss Mathilda and always entirely from her own taste and often as cheaply as she bought things for her friends or for herself, that on the one hand she chose the things having the right air for a member of the upper class, and for the others always the things having the awkward ugliness that we call Dutch. She knew the best thing in each kind,and she never in the course of her strong life compromised her sense of what was the right thing for a girl to wear.

. . . . . .

Anna had always a firm old world sense of what was the right way for a girl to do.

No argument could bring her to sit an evening in the empty parlour, although the smell of paint when they were fixing up the kitchen made her very sick, and tired as she always was, she never would sit down during the long talks she held with Miss Mathilda. A girl was a girl and should act always like a girl, both as to giving all respect and as to what she had to eat.

Mr. Burgum finds Miss Stein regrettably un-American and scientifically impersonal in her treatment of domestic workers.

> It is, indeed, the American ingredients of these stories that make the telling of them seem the more strikingly un-American. The fact that these domestic workers are of a different racial stock from the employing class represented by both author and reader, that they are German and Negro, increases the alienation already imposed by the difference of economic class. Miss Stein is thus not only rejecting the respect the new movement felt for the lower classes; she is also puncturing our earlier literary fantasy that this is the land of liberty and opportunity. She is presenting, in other words,the actual everyday attitude of the American mistress towards her servants, and ruthlessly representing it as no better than, as identical with, that customary inbenighted Europe.
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> . . . . . .
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> The significance of Three Lives, sociologically, therefore, is that it is one of the few pieces of writing in the United States to assume the conservative attitude which was common in Europe .... Miss Stein's servant girls lead lives that are even more drab and stabilized and do nothing to strain the limits of her pity. Like the patient animals of the field, her poor people continue soberly their routine service to their betters until their final return to the soil. . . They are merely persons without talents who arouse pity when the compulsion of a democratic atmosphere forces them into the focus of attention.[49]

The attitude of Anna and Lena to their masters and mistresses was certainly influenced by the fact that they were born in Germany and "knew the right way for a girl to do." This fact is inherent in the stories. But in these stories, more than anywhere else save Brewsie and Willie, Miss Stein shows a deep sympathy for her characters. And she shows this sympathy with greater artistry than in Brewsie and Willie. She identifies herself completely and with integrity with her heroines,

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[49] Burgum, op. cit., p. 160-161, 162.

and this is not the same thing as being scientifically impersonal with them. It may of course be "un-American", though I do not think so. Any sound American view of equality must rest on the principle of opportunity to go as far as ability can take one, and her characters had this opportunity. What they did not have was ability to go any farther. And there is nothing un-American in recognizing the fact. Only accidentally does Miss Stein present the actual everyday attitude of the American mistress towards her servants, essentially she shows the actual everyday attitude of the German-born American servant to her American mistress, and there is no ruthless exhibition in the thing at all. If the possession of rationality is the measure of humanity in people, certainly Anna and Melanctha and Lena do not stand at the top of the ladder for they were not highly intellectual. But the life stories of the three women are full of human values, not animal ones, and the author expresses them as such. Anna had a talent for devoted service and friendship, and her last message to Miss Mathilda is full of love not grovelling sub-human servitude:

> "Dear Miss Mathilda," wrote Mrs. Drehten, "Miss Annie died in the hospital yesterday after a hard operation. She was talking about you and Doctor and Miss Mary Wadsmith all the time. She said she hoped you would take Peter and the little Rags to keep when you came back to America to live. I will keep them for you here Miss Mathilda. Miss Annie died easy, Miss Mathilda, and sent you her love."

Herman Kreder's obedience to his parents was notably European. Herman was a good, quiet, dutiful son who helped his father in his tailoring business and did always as he was told. So when Mrs. Kreder decided that Herman should marry Lena Mainz she did not think to discuss it with her son, she just told him of the day and the hour. And Herman

went to visit his sister and did not come back till the pleading of his father, the memory of his mother, and the laughter of his sister, chained him again to obedience. So Herman married the gentle Lena and they had three good, gentle children. Herman never thought much of Lena, for he did not particularly like a girls always around. It was for his children that Herman broke the bonds which bound him so strictly to his parents.

> It was a new feeling Herman now had inside him that made him feel that he was strong to make a struggle. It was new for Herman Kreder really to be wanting something, but Herman wanted strongly now to be a father, and he wanted badly that his baby should be a boy and healthy. Herman never had cared really very much about his father and his mother, though always, all his life, he had done everything just as they wanted, and he had never really cared much about his wife, Lena, though he always had been very good to her, and had always tried to keep his mother off her, with the awful way she always scolded, but to be really a father of a little baby, that feeling took hold of Herman very deeply. He was almost ready so as to save his baby from all trouble, to really make a strong struggle with his mother and with his father too if he would not help him to control his mother.

This theme of the relationships between generations is one which Miss Stein treats at great length in <u>The Making of Americans</u> rather than the earlier <u>Three Lives</u>, but there are hints of it in these stories.

> Melanctha was pale yellow and mysterious and a little pleasant like her mother, but the real power in Melanctha's nature came through her robust and unpleasant and very unendurable black father.
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> . . . . . .
>
> Melanctha Herbert almost always hated her black father, but she loved very well the power in herself that came through him and so her feeling was really closer to her black coarse father, than her feeling had ever been toward her pale yellow,

sweet-appearing mother. The things she had in her of her mother never made her feel respect.

Melanctha Herbert had not loved herself in childhood. All of her youth was bitter to remember.

Melanctha had not loved her father and her mother and they had found it very troublesome to have her.

. . . . . .

The young Melanctha did not love her father and her mother, and she had a break neck courage, and a tongue that could be very nasty. Then, too, Melanctha went to school and was very quick in all the learning, and she knew very well how to use this knowledge to annoy her parents who knew nothing.

. . . . . .

Melanctha had a strong respect for any kind of successful power. It was this that always kept Melanctha nearer in her feeling toward her virile and unendurable black father, than she ever was in her feeling for her pale yellow, sweet-appearing mother. The things she had in her of her mother, never made her feel respect.

In her early years, it was only men that for Melanctha held anything of knowledge and power. And so it was among men that Melanctha went, first in her innocence, then after Jane Harden, in her knowledge.

> Melanctha tried a great many men, in these days before she was really suited. It was almost a year that she wandered and then she met with a young mulatto. He was a doctor who had just begun to practise. He would most likely do well in the future, but it was not this that concerned Melanctha. She found him good and strong and gentle and very intellectual, and all her life Melanctha liked and wanted good and considerate people, and then too he did not at first believe in Melanctha. He held off and did not know what it was that Melanctha wanted. Melanctha came to want him very badly. They began to know each other better. Things began to be very strong between them. Melanctha wanted him so badly that now she never wandered. She just gave herself to this experience.

. . . . . .

Jefferson Campbell always liked to talk to everybody

about the things he worked at and about his thinking about what he could do for the colored people. Melanctha Herbert never thought about these things the way that he did. Melanctha had never said much to Dr. Campbell about what she thought about them. Melanctha did not feel the same as he did about being good and regular in life, and not having excitements all the time, which was the way that Jefferson Campbell wanted that everybody should be, so that everybody would be wise and yet be happy. Melanctha always had strong the sense for real experience. Melanctha Herbert did not think much of this way of coming to real wisdom.

. . . . . .

Jefferson was not sure that he knew here just what he wanted. He was not sure he knew just what it was that Melanctha wanted. He knew if it was only play, with Melanctha, that he did not want to do it. But he remembered always how she had told him he never knew how to feel things very deeply. He remembered how she told him he was afraid to let himself ever know real feeling, and then, too, most of all to him, she had told him he was not very understanding. That always troubled Jefferson very keenly, he wanted very badly to be really understanding. If Jefferson only knew better just what Melanctha meant by what she said. Jefferson always had thought he knew something about women. Now he found that really he knew nothing. He did not know the least bit about Melanctha.

So Melanctha tempted Jeff as the serpent had tempted Adam and Eve with the fruit of the tree of knowledge and wisdom. Miss Stein's knowledge of human psychology was very sound, but she was not concerned with showing a "moral" universe. And so the story of Melanctha and Jeff is on a different plane to the story of Troilus and Cressida as told by either Chaucer or Shakespeare. Chaucer treats of the lack of permanence in human relations, and ends on a note of Christian faith and resignation, Shakespeare writes a ragged, indignant drama of the futility of life and human relations when the individual personality is disordered, and Miss Stein's story is simply a psychological, detailed study of what happens when two people love who are psychologically

dissimilar, whose reactions are differently timed, whose outlooks cannot be permanently brought into sympathy, and for whom in consequence there can be no joy because there can be so little unity. It is the absence of the lyrical quality that is most noticeable, that singing joy that is to be found in Romeo and Juliet, that intense sureness that prompts Berowne in Love's Labours Lost to say:

> As sweet, and musical,
> As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair;
> And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
> Makes Heaven drowsy with the harmony.
>
> Act iv, Scene 3.

Or the poetic fervor is lacking, the sense of beauty, that makes Maxwell Anderson's Trock in Winterset exclaim:

> It lights from within -- a white chalice
> holding fire, a flower in flame, this is your face.

Loving for Melanctha and Jefferson Campbell was much more suffering, enduring, increasing lack of trust with increasing knowledge of each other. Yet early, when Jeff was just beginning to understand, Melanctha had for Jeff a religious and beautiful quality. But it was never sure and radiant, and it did not last but was hidden in doubts, and lost in his suffering, and squandered in her sudden treacherous changes of mood and lack of sympathy. Jeff saw the problem in his slow and steady way and explained it to Melanctha, who simply did not answer him:

> "Sometimes you are a girl to me I certainly never would be trusting, and you got a laugh then so hard, it just rattles, and you got ways so bad, I can't believe you mean them hardly, and yet all that I just been saying is certainly you one way I often see you, and it's what your mother and Jane Harden always found you, and it's again what makes me hate so, to come near you. And thencertainly sometimes, Melanctha, you certainly is all a different creature,and sometimes then there comes out in you what is certainly a thing,like a real beauty. I certainly, Melanctha, never can tell just how it is that it comes

> so lovely. Seems to me when it comes it's got a real sweetness, that is more wonderful than a pure flower, and a gentleness, that is more tender than the sunshine, and a kindness that makes one feel like summer, and then a way to know, that makes everything all over, and all that, and it does certainly seem to be real for the little while it's lasting, for the little while that I can surely see it, and it gives me to feel like I certainly had got real religion. And then when I got rich with such a feeling, comes all that other girl, and then that seems more likely that that is really you what's honest, and then I certainly do get awful afraid to come to you, and I certainly never do feel I could be very trusting with you. And then I certainly don't know anything at all about you, and I certainly don't know which is a real Melanchha Herbert and I certainly don't feel no longer, I ever want to talk to you. Tell me honest, Melanctha, which is the way that is you really, when you are alone and real, and all honest. Tell me, Melanctha, for I certainly do want to know it."

The story is a slow and searching and steady probing of the relationship between the two, it progresses with an ever deeper awareness of their fundamental incompatability communicated to the reader as the character realizes it ever more deeply. It is a love story which cannot be successful, and the reader suffers with Melanctha and with Jeff, and realizes with them in a very complete identification of mood and mind, that there will be no satisfying lasting love. And the outcome for neither is tragic, it is not even really futile, it is just as life would have it, without real drama, for it is not a lost unity but a unity which could not be achieved.

> Jeff Campbell never could forget the sweetness in Melanctha Herbert, and he was always very friendly to her, but they never any more came close to one another. More and more Jeff Campbell and Melanctha fell away from all knowing of each other, but Jeff never could forget Melanctha. Jeff never could forget the real sweetness she had in her, but Jeff never any more had the sense of a real religion for her. Jeff always had strong in him the meaning of all the new kind of beauty Melanctha Herbert once had shown him, and always more and more it helped him with his working for

himself and for all the colored people.

. . . . . .

> Melanctha was already now to find new ways to be in trouble. And yet Melanctha Herbert never wanted not to do right. Always Melanctha Herbert wanted peace and quiet, and always she could only find new ways to get excited.

It was a love story with a new approach, a pulsing, searching quality, which made for a new identification of reader and hero and heroine, a novel which enmeshed the reader as the characters were enmeshed by life, and step by step ever more fully revealed the incompatability of the lovers at the same time as the story proceeded in time. It is again a pattern of relationships which Miss Stein traces with a valuable insight. She shows us the unhappy love of Melanctha and Jeff, and then to bring the story smoothly and fully to its end, she tells less fully and more quickly of that other almost more successful, certainly less complicated love of Melanctha and Jem Richards. Jem was a dashing kind of fellow, a man whom other men trusted, a man who knew how to win out, "and always all her life, Melanctha Herbert loved successful power".

> Jem Richards made Melanctha Herbert come fast with him. He never gave her any time with waiting. Soon Melanctha always had Jem with her. Melanctha did not want anything better. Now in Jem Richards, Melanctha found everything she had ever needed to content her.

Yet Melanctha's love made her mad and foolish, and somehow Melanctha did not seem to have the right intuition to bring off a successful love affair. Rose had not been consulted, and Rose always knew how to get and keep what she wanted.

> Melanctha Herbert's love had surely made her mad and foolish. She thrust it always deep into Jem Richards and now that he had trouble with his betting, Jem had no way that he ever wanted to be made to feel it. Jem Richards

> never could want to marry any girl while he had trouble. That was no way a man like him should do it. Melanctha's love had made her mad and foolish, she should be silent now and let him do it. Jem Richards was not a kind of man to want a woman to be strong to him, when he was in trouble with his betting. That was not the kind ofatime when a man like him needed to have it.
>
> Melanctha needed so badly to have it, this love which she had always wanted, she did not know what she should do to save it . . .

And Melanctha did not save it. Slowly she lost Jem, and then he went away and she never saw him again.

Three Lives, then, is a unique testimony to the art of Gertrude Stein, and to her sympathetic interest in people. More than that it shows her preoccupation with the patterns of the relationships between human beings. It consists of three stories, all about simple, lower middle class persons of little education save as life educates them and develops their not too rich potencies for experience. In Melanctha Miss Stein showed for the first time fully her power of bringing the reader and the heroine and hero into so close communication that the identification is almost complete, and the reader sees the situation as Melanctha and Jeff do, and in their terms. A new technique of bringing the cadence of the thinking of slow-minded simple people into the prose itself helped to achieve in the reader a sensation of the steady flow of life, the pulsing repeating quality of experience. And the love story of Melanctha and Jeff is a new departure in psychological fiction, in which the concern is not with moral data but with the moods and discordant forces in two widely different personalities.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF AMERICANS

A LONG GAY BOOK

> I began to wonder if it was possible to describe the way every possible kind of human being acted and felt in relation with any other kind of human being and I thought if this could be done it would make A Long Gay Book. It is naturally gayer describing what any one feels acts and does in relation to any other one than to describe what they just are what they are inside them.[50]

The Making of Americans was for Miss Stein the book in which she described what everyone was. It had started to be the history of her family in America and "It had changed from being a history of a family to being the history of everybody the family knew and then it became the history of every kind and of every individual human being."[51] It was a book that took three years to write, was a thousand pages long, was made up of five hundred and sixty-five thousand words. Whether it is artistically successful has been debated by critics who wearied of its page-long sentences and the constant repetition of words and phrases, and by publishers who were not interested in publishing it for many years.

The book was written just after Three Lives, between the years 1906 and 1908, some sections of it appeared in Transatlantic, but the whole remained in manuscript until Robert McAlmon decided to publish it in 1925 in Paris. Copies of the whole work would be much easier to obtain if Bennet Cerf had, as he wished in 1933, published it completely

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[50] Stein, Gertrude, "The Gradual Making of The Making of Americans", Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein (Carl Van Vechten, Editor; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 220.

[51] Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p.138.

in the giant edition of the Modern Library. By that time, however, Miss Stein had signed a contract with Harcourt Brace and Company for the publication of an abridged edition of a little over four hundred pages. This condensation had been done by Miss Stein some time before at the request of Furman the publisher, who when he got home to America had found his plan for publication of the work vetoed. This long struggle for publication is told in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.[52] The Harcourt Brace edition appeared in 1934, the year that Gertrude Stein made her American trip, and after The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas had been a best-seller. Relationships between characters cannot, of course, be excluded in a work which Miss Stein has said is "like a novel", but the stress is definitely not on them in this book. As she tells us, human relationships were to be treated in A Long Gay Book which she began immediately after The Making of Americans and in which she lost interest and did not develop to any great length. This short work, much in the manner of The Making of Americans in the structure of its sentences and in its generalizations on birth and the ways of man's knowing and on his attitude to existence, appeared in the Dial in 1927, and was later published by Random House. It is a fragment, just an introduction to a novel.

Bernard Faÿ in his long introduction to The Making of Americans was lyrical in his appreciation and his description of the work:

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[52] It is this late condensed edition which has been used for this study, and it would seem adequate because textual criticism is no part of the study, and because the book is much more concerned with the basis of existence in each one who is or has been or will be living than with the relations between people.

She likes too much the present; she is too fond of words; she has too strongly the love of life; she is too far from death, to be satisfied with anything but the whole of America . . . Consequently it is the complete story of a complete family that she has written. And the family she describes is America itself with its migrations, its flights, its settlements, its conquests; it is an uninterrupted family with a continuous life. She has shown all the generations, all the adventures of America; . . . Taking up her family just when it started to become an American family, she has described the grandparents, she has studied the parents, she has explained the children and the grandchildren. She has watched them, followed and pursued them all over the continent from Maryland to California, from Bridgepoint (which is Baltimore, Maryland) to her Gossols (which is Oakland, California). She has shown their continuous life, their unbroken life and their true life without telling any lies, without condemning any, accusing or excusing. There has never been a more impartial book written on the United States because there has never been any book more faithful to the rhythm of America and more inclined to love the American people while laughing at them and with them.

. . . . . .

I have never seen any other book where the United States could be seen as it is here in this unbroken continuity, in its monotonous variety which never settles down, in its perpetual invention which never stops and is never satisfied .... The family grows and changes, and the book grows and changes. The first generation comes. They are nice people, immigrants who have come from very far and who have a hard time of it ... But anyway they die and disappear and drift. They die immigrant Americans as they always were. But after them others come who have been born in the country and who have received from the soil and the sky new gifts and new lessons. They are at home on this earth, and they are at home with the other inhabitants of the land. They work with them, they talk with them, and they feel with them. They organize stable relationships, they have acquired a status and a prestige, they live and they die according to their fashion -- but it is nearly an American fashion. And when they die they leave behind them something like a spiritual presence. And they leave another generation which was born out of them in this land, and for this land. ..... all these Americans fulfil something that their ancestors had never fulfilled. The mixture is done, and this mixture is life. They are filled with American life and they are the living America. ... Thus the family rises and grows, and the words of the book rise and grow also ... what they create is a deep American symphony.

There is no breaking and no contrast. Everything in the book is life, and all the ideas that appear in the book are life, even the theories are life. Miss Stein doesn't follow the method of some writers, who always stop and announce before they are going to write a very intelligent or intellectual page that the readers should watch and be careful. Ideas come to her spontaneously,and this book has a very thin delicate soft skin. It never looks like heavy patchment. No great theory or thesis, no long explanation, no systematic views -- all the forces which lead and push this American family are interior, and they are all expressed as such. There is no other comment on them than the shape of the paragraphs or the tempo of the sentences. The line of a chapter gives us the mystery of a character just as the line of a profile reveals to us the mystery of a character, or of a career.

. . . . . .

It is very difficult to speak of what is moving and growing, of everything that has a quick pace and a powerful sweep, it is hard to grasp and difficult to explain, the lines are mysterious, the human mind feels lost and would always avoid mentioning such things if the pleasure of life and the excitement of movement were not for it the greatest comfort and the best stimulation.

Movements cannot be expressed by flat formulas. The most refined cleverness of the human mind cannot give the human person any understanding of movement except by stirring up in us a mysterious force that is harmonious and moving --- But how to reach this deep par of the human being without losing touch with the human mind and reason?

Miss Stein has done it. In these pages her family is alive. There is a family life and it spreads all around, all over the book. All the paragraphs in the book make us feel a big movement and see big ideas, and all these movements and ideas move in the same rhythm without ever getting separated from each other.

Miss Stein has put in this book, in these words, in these characters and ideas, and in this book, a unique life.[53]

Few critics will deny that there is unique life in the book after they express their doubts as to its artistic success. Willis

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53 Bernard Fay, Preface To The Making of Americans (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934) p. XIX to XXIII.

Steell, reviewing the book in Paris in 1926, said suggestively

> Monotonous as a whole, and crude in detail, there is yet life in the book, a kind of dim, smoke-obscured life that a curious critic watches as he might a fire in a stove, uncertain whether it is going out or will suddenly burst into a blaze. Gertrude's book does neither; it yields no more heat at the close than it did at the beginning; it never flames and it never wholly crumbles into ash.[54]

Francis Fergusson in The Saturday Review of Literature, beginning with a tribute, has a very provocative thought about Miss Stein's vision -

> It must be said at once that "The Making of Americans" is oddly moving, and can yield a new pleasure to anyone who is willing to learn Miss Stein's idiom. It is the history of the Hersland and Denning families; of how they came to this country, made their fortunes, had children, and at last came to be "dead ones". As in any long naturalistic novel the facts and the people are there, somewhere; Mr. Fay tells us that it is the story of Miss Stein's own family which lived between Baltimore (called Bridgepoint in the book) and Oakland, California (called Gossols). But Miss Stein's famous English transforms all these real people, shows them to us as though in a wavy mirror. They cease to be inhabitants of our world, and become "young ones" and "old ones" and ones having "family living," and "dependent independent" or "independent dependent". Miss Stein's vision is as eccentric as Swift's; the world she shows us is not the commonsense one, but a map or diagram of it, subtly distorted, but with its own consistency. And her English repeats and imitates the contours of this private universe of hers.
>
> Miss Stein has a well-known passion for "repeating": she says, "there is always then repeating, always everything is repeating, this is a history of every kind of repeating there is in living, this is then a history of every kind of living." Her prose, you see, musically imitates the repetitiveness of life as she sees it. So a baby will tell himself the same story over and over, with small variations. But the repeated patterns of the different lives are incommensurable, and Miss Stein's world is full of mystery and anarchy: "This is then the real meaning of not being any longer a young one in living, the complete realizing that not any one really can believe what any other one is believing".

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54 Willis Steell, International Book Review, February, 1926 quoted in "Gertrude Stein in Critical French Eyes", Literary Digest, 88:58, February 6, 1926.

> As Mr. Fay well says, Miss Stein's book fills one with ideas. It makes one want to "place it"; but the attempt is dangerous. There are now so many private universes in literature that no one can see how they fit together. Besides, Miss Stein warns one off by divesting her work of all tradition, to the very point of inventing her own language. Here is a prose from which all the suggestiveness, many of the familiar denotations, and all the commonsense light have been removed. The words are English, but they are used in a special limited sense like the technical vocabulary of some new science. She would never call a spade a spade; She would invent a phrase that would turn it into a diagram of itself.[55]

Edmund Wilson makes a distinction between the early chapters of the book and those later ones which he confesses not to have read right through to the end.

> The first chapters show the same remarkable qualities as "Three Lives", though in a somewhat diluted form. Miss Stein sets before us the men and women of her German-Jewish families with all the strong sense we have already admired for the various and irreducible entities of human character; and we are made, as we are in "Three Lives", to feel life as her people feel it, to take for granted just as they do the whole complex of conditions of which they are part. But already some ruminative self-hypnosis, some progressive slowing-up of the mind, has begun to show itself in Miss Stein's work as a sort of fatty degeneration of her imagination and style. In "Three Lives", the rhythmic repetitions were successful in conveying the recurrences, the gradual unwinding of life, and in the dialogue they produced the effect of the speech of slow-minded people; ... But, though in "The Making of Americans" this sort of thing is appropriate to the patient and brooding repetitiousness of the German-Jewish Americans of the first and second generations, it is here carried to such immoderate lengths as finally to suggest some technique of mesmerism. With sentences so regularly rhythmical, so needlessly prolix, so many times repeatedand ending so often in present participles, the reader is all too soon in a state, not to follow the slow becoming of life, but simply to fall asleep. And the further we get, the more difficult we find it to keep our mind on what we are reading: Miss Stein abandoned altogether for long

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55 Francis Fergusson, "The Making of Gertrude Stein", Saturday Review of Literature, 10:489, February 17th, 1934.

> stretches any attempt to tell her story by reporting what her characters do and say, and resorts to a curious abstract vein of generalization: "Some are needing themselves being a young one, an older one, a middle aged one, an older one, an old one to be one's realizing what any one telling about different ways of feeling anything, of thinking about anything, of doing anything is meaning by what that one is telling. Some are needing themselves being a young one, an older one, a middle aged one, an older one, an old one to be one being certain that it is a different thing inside in one being a young one, from being an older one, from being a middle aged one, from being an older one, from being an old one," etc. etc. The psychological truth is still there, no doubt, but it is in a solution of about one per cent to the total volume of the dose, and the volume of the dose is enormous.[56]

Miss Stein herself very tersely tells us what she set out to do in The Making of Americans and how the book changed in her hands from the history of her family to a description of everything and everybody:

> In The Making of Americans I wrote about our family. I made it like a novel and I took a piece of one person and mixed it with a piece of another one and then I found that it was not interesting and instead I described everything. I had the idea of describing every one, every one who could or would or had been living, but in the beginning I did give a real description of how our family lived in East Oakland, and how everything looked as I had seen it then.[57]

The book then, began as an attempt to give literary value to the story of her family, it bagan "like a novel", and proceeded to a description of every one. It became more and more abstract and philosophical until with the chapter on David Hersland, whom she calls in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas the hero of the book, there is a deep and oddly stirring sense of tragedy communicated, and little but an abstract, involved, obscure, psychological explanation of his nature given. He was a child and a young man and he died about the "ending of the beginning of his middle living". He was a man, we gather, of

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56 Edmund Wilson, op. cit., p. 239-241.

57 Gertrude Stein, Everybody's Autobiography, p.69.

many acquaintances, a vital, interested man, in whom many confided, but there are only rare explicit passages which tell the story of his relationships.

> George Dehning was knowing David Hersland. He had been knowing him before David Hersland was knowing Dehning family living. David Hersland had been knowing George Dehning and George Dehning had been telling David Hersland something about this thing about his knowing him. George Dehning was going on being living, he was not completely doing this thing going on being living. He came later to be doing other things and he was succeeding then quite well then succeeding in being living. He was knowing then that David Hersland was not being living and he did not then quite completely forget that thing, forget that David Hersland was not then being living.
>
> David Hersland was being living and he was knowing the Dehning family living and each one of the Dehning family were knowing him then and each one of them were mentioning that thing to him mentioning knowing him.

The story value of the work itself seems to have been swallowed up more and more in the describing of everyone, rhythmically, slowly, somewhat obscurely. Even Gertrude Stein herself points it out later in Everybody's Autobiography:

> If it is real enough what is the use of it being a story, and anyway The Making of Americans is not really a story it is a description of how ever one who ever lived eats and drinks and loves and sleeps and talks and walks and wakes and forgets and quarrels and likes and dislikes and works and sits, and naturally a longer description of some than of others and a very long description of my mother and my father.[58]

It would seem that this work stands mid-pointbetween Three Lives and the portraits which followed. Even Three Lives, influenced by the painter Cézanne, has been compared in this study to a canvas on which was

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58 Ibid., p. 138.

painted three many-dimensioned portraits of women. The Making of Americans is even more thoroughly descriptive of the inner states of consciousness first of persons in family groups, then in the whole world. The portraits make no claim to fiction at all, they describe in a unique way Miss Stein's judgment on the personality of each of the friends to whom they are assigned. The Making of Americans, "like a novel", still has something valuable for us to examine on the subject of human relations, but it is generally in the first part of the book that we find the most explicit information, and that which is there in its function of illustrating the inter-dependance and inter-action of human beings, rather than illustrating in an abstract manner, a generalized, possibly scientific rule of action for human beings.

Perhaps the most pleasing statement on human relations in The Making of Americans is that with which the book opens. It was, Miss Stein has told us, written as a daily theme while she was at Radcliffe,

> Once an angry man dragged his father along the ground through his own orchard. "Stop!" cried the groaning old man at last, "Stop! I did not drag my father beyond this tree."
>
> It is hard living down the tempers we are born with. We all begin well, for in our youth there is nothing we are more intolerant of than our own sins writ large in others and we fight them fiercely in ourselves; but we grow old and we see that these our sins are of all sins the really harmless ones to own, nay that they give a charm to any character, and so our struggle with them dies away.

The matter of relationships between youth and age is one which interests Miss Stein particularly in this work for she set out to tell of The

Making of Americans, and she begins with the immigrant grandparents, with the four kinds of grandmothers who were strong to bear many children -

> One was very strong to bear them and then always she was very strong to lead them.
>
> One was very strong to bear them and then always she was strong to suffer with them.
>
> One, a little gentle weary woman was strong to bear many children and then always after she would sadly suffer for them, weeping for the sadness of all sinning, wearying for the rest she knew her death would bring them.
>
> And then there was one sweet good woman, strong just to bear many children, and then she died away and left them, for that was all she knew then to do for them.

But it is reserved for some of the men who were the grandparents to outlive the women, and to see their children not needing or valuing their advice:

> The old father, strong as he always had been in his nature, firm in being for himself all there was of religion, knowing to his dying that religion was all there was of living, yet never in any way was he ever interfering in the living and the feeling and the thinking of his daughter or her husband or any of their children or any of his own children who were there in the same house with him. Now, for him who was no longer leading in a house with others shut up with him, with him who was all there was of religion, for him, now, that they were apart from him being grown men and women to him, even though they were all together every minute with him, although he was up to the last moment of dying as strong as ever in the faith of him, to be himself and to be all there was of religion, yet now it was not for him to ever in any way interfere with any/one of them. He never found out anything that was happening, anything that he did not wish to know that any one of them was doing. What a man does not know can never be a worry to him. This was his answer to his children whenever any one of them wanted to explain anything to him or to get him to agree to any new thing in their living.

This was old Mr. Hissen, the father of Mrs. Hersland, and his way of acting and seeing in his old age. Mr. Dehning in his age was not needed

much by the world or by his children. "He was just a decent well-meaning faithful good-enough ordinary man. He was honest, and he left that very strongly to his children and he worked hard, but he never came to very much with all his faithful working."

> They were good daughters and sons to him, but his sayings and his old ordinary ways of doing had not much importance for them. They were strong, all of them, in their work and in their new way of feeling and full always of their new ways of living. It was alright, he always said it to them, and he thought it so really in him, but it was all too new, it could never be any comfort to him. He had been left out of all life while he was still living. It was all too new for his feeling and his wife was no longer there to stay beside him. He felt it always in him and he sighed and at last he just slowly left off living. "Yes", he would say of his son Henry who was the one who took most care and trouble for him, "Yes, Henry, he is a good man and he knows how to make a living. Yes he is a good boy to me always but he never does anything like I tell him. It aint wrong in him, never I don't say so like that ever for him, only I don't need it any more just to go on like I was living. My wife she did always like I told her, she never knew any way to do it different, and now she is gone peace be with her, and it is all now like it was all over, and I, I got no right now to say do so to my children. I don't ever say it now ever no more to them. What have I got to do with living? I've got no place to go on now like I was really living. I got nobody now always by me to do things like I tell them. I got nothing to say now anymore to my children. I got all done with what I got to say to them. Well young folks always knows things different, and they got it right not to listen, I got nothing now really to do with their new kinds of ways of living. . . . . "
> And then the old man sighed and then soon too he died away and left them.

Henry Dehning, his son, was a rich man and an honest man, and long before in his early years he had been poor. And he loved to tell his children of his struggle, and it was more real to them then than to him, and this is common to all those whose habits have changed and who remember it as fact like a dim beginning.

Yes, they say it long and often and often and yet it is never real to them while they are thus talking. No it is not as really present to their thinking as it is to the young ones who never really had the feeling. These have it through their fear, which makes it for them a really present feeling. The old ones have not such a fear and they have it all only like a dim beginning, like the being as babies or as children or as grown old men and women.

And this father Dehning was always very full of such talking. He had made everything for himself and for his children. He was a good and honest man was Henry Dehning. He was strong and rich and good tempered and respected and he showed it in his look, that look that makes young people think older ones are very aged, and he loved to tell it over to his children, how he had made it all for them so they could have it and not have to work to make it different.

This father was proud of his children and yet, too, very reproachful in his feeling toward them. His wife from perhaps more than equal living with him never much regarded such a feeling in him, but to the young ones it was new for them however often it came to them, for it always meant a new fighting for the right to their kind of power that they felt strongly inside them.

But always there was a little of the dread in them that comes to even grown young men and women from an old man's sharp looking, for deep down is the fear, perhaps he really knows, his look is so outward from him, he certainly has used it all up the things inside him at which young ones are still always looking. And then comes the strong feeling, no he never has had it inside him the way that gives it a real meaning, and so the young ones are firm to go on with their fighting. And always they stay with their father and listen to him.

His wife from her more than equal living, as it sometimes is in women, has not such a dread of his really knowing when it comes to their ways of living, and then it is really only talking with him for now it is completely his own only way of living, and so she never listens to him, is deaf to him or goes away when he begins this kind of talking. But his children always stay and listen to him. They are ready very strongly to explain their new ways to him. But he does not listen to them, he goes on telling what he has done and what he thinks of them.

. . . . . .

> ...Herman Dehning's pride and pleasure in his Julia was all exceeded by the loud voiced satisfaction of the mother to whom this brilliant daughter always seemed as the product of the mother's own exertions. In her it was the vanity and exultation of creation as well as of possession and she never fairly learned how completely it was the girl who governed all the family life and how very much of this young life was hidden from her knowledge.

In the Hersland family the mother was not very important to them. "They were good enough children in their daily living but they were never very loving to her inside them. They had it too strongly in them to win their own freedom."

> They turned to their father, altogether, in their thinking. It was against him inside, and strongly always around them, that they had to do the fighting for their freedom. Now the mother was a little ailing. She was all lost between the father and the three big struggling children.
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> In their young days the father was proud of his children, proud that they were important each one to himself inside him, proud that they needed to win for themselves their own freedom. Always then he encouragedtheir disputing, he wanted then that they should fight and win out against him. As I was saying David Hersland the father of these big resentful children was in some ways a splendid kind of person. But now things were going less easily around him. Joy was a little dim inside now for all of them. Now he would often be angry and be given to pounding on the table and loudly declaring, he was the father, they were the children, they must obey else he would know how to make them. And the gentle little mother who every day was giving signs of weakening would sit scared, and afterwards she would be weeping, lost between the father and the three big resentful children.
>
> But this was all when they had become grown young men and women and joy was a little dim inside for all of them.

. . . . . .

Each one of the Hersland family was then each one of them too much taken up with the being inside themselves then to pay much attention to another one.

. . . . . .

Family living is a thing a family in a way is realising. Sometimes a family is not at all realising that thing. Mostly a family is in a way knowing the kind of family living they have in them. Sometimes it is a queer thing to have them telling family living. Sometimes it is a very funny thing when some are explaining a family living, sometimes it is a foolishthing, sometimes an irritating thing, very often a quite tedious thing. Family living is a peculiar thing because not any one, mostly, is deciding family and always each one is himself or herself inside her or him and family living is in a way a combination that in a way is not coming from any one. Sometimes it is coming from some one, sometimes it is a combination thing, sometimes it just happens to be existing. As I am saying the Dehnings had family living in them that was not really expressing Mr. Dehning or Mrs. Dehning or in a way the two together nor in a way the three children. Really one knowing each one of them would be thinking family living would have been a different thing in them from what it really was in them. Really I suppose certainly it was a combination of being in Mr. Dehning and Mrs. Dehning and the three children.

Julia Dehning grew into strong and sweet and passionate womanhood, and she was busy directing the family life and aspirations. She and her mother felt it was time for her to marry.

In Julia Dehning all experience had gone to make her wise now in a desire for a master in the art of life, and it came to pass that in Alfred Hersland brought by a cousin to visit at the house she found a man who embodied her ideal in a way to make her heart beat with surprise.

To a bourgeois mind that has within it a little of the fervor for diversity, there can be nothing more attractive than a strain of singularity that yet keeps well within the limits of conventional respectability, a singularity that is, so to speak, well dressed and well set up. This is the nearest approach the middle class woman can ever hope to make to the indifference and distinction of the really noble. When singularity goes further and so gets to be always stronger, there comes to be in it too much real danger for any middle class young woman to follow it farther. Then comes the danger of being mixed by it so that no one just seeing you can know it, and they will take you for the lowest, those who are simply poor or because they have no other way to do it. Surely no young person with any kind of middle class tradition will ever do so, will ever put themselve in the way of such danger, of getting so that no one can tell by just looking

that they are not like them who by their nature are always in an ordinary undistinguished degradation. No! such kind of a danger can never have to a young one of any middle class tradition any kind of an attraction.

Now singularity that is neither crazy, sporty, faddish, or a fashion, or low class with distinction, such a singularity, I say, we have not made enough of yet so that any other one can really know it, it is as yet an unknown product with us. It takes time to make queer people, and to have others who can know it, time and a certainty of place and means. Custom, passion, and a feel for mother earth are needed to breed vital singularity in any man, and alas, how poor we are in all these three.

Brother Singulars, we are misplaced in a generation that knows not Joseph. We flee before the disapproval of our cousins, the courageous condescension of our friends who gallantly sometimes agree to walk the streets with us, from all them who never any way can understand why such ways and not the others are so dear to us, we fly to the kindly comfort of an older world accustomed to take all manner of strange forms into its bosom and we leave our noble order to be known under such forms as Alfred Hersland, a poor thing, and even hardly then our own.

. . . . . .

Julia Dehning, like all of her kind of people, needed everything, for anything could feed her. It was not strong meat that Hersland offered to her, but her palate was eager, this had the flavour of the dishes she longed to have eaten and to have inside her. To her young crude virgin desire the food he offered to her was plenty real enough to deeply content her.

. . . . . .

Altogether these last weeks were brilliant days for Julia.

But always, a little, through all this pride in domination and in the admiration of her family, there was there, somewhere, in the background, to her sense, a vague uncertain kind of feeling as to her understanding and her right. Mostly she had a firm strong feeling inher, but always, a little, there was there, a kind of a doubting somewhere in her. She never in these days did any very real thinking about Hersland as a man to be to her as a husband to control her. But, somehow, a little, he was there in her as an unknown power that might attack her, though she knew very well she had in her a wisdom

> and experience of life that she could feel strong now always inside her.
>
> . . . now it had come to her, to see, as dying men are said to see, clearly and freely things as they are and not as she had wished them to be for her.
>
> And then she would remember suddenly what she had really thought he was, and she felt, she knew that all that former thought was truer better judgment than this sudden sight, and so she dulled her momentary clearing mind and hugged her old illusions to her breast.

To David Hersland, the father of Alfred, sometimes his wife was important and sometimes not at all. He was a big man with an uneven temperament, whose world was all within himself, who"was all full up inside him. There was not much of any way that anything could enter into him."

> A woman had to be a part of the inside of him to content him. She had to have a power in her, to give him a feeling, or she had to be appealing and so to be a part of the feeling he had inside him. There was not much of any way that anything outside him could enter into him.
>
> A woman to content him could never be outside him, she could never be an ideal to him, she could never have in her a real power for him. With men, outside him, there was for him a need in him to fight with them. A woman could never be for him anything outside him, unless as one who could in a practical way be useful to him as his sister Martha had always been and now she had been useful to him and made a marriage for him, had found a wife for him who was pleasing to him, who had come out with him to Gossols to content him. Such a woman as his sister was for him, was like any other object in the world around him, a thing useful to him or not existing for him, like a chair in his house to sit in or the engine that drew the train the direction in which he needed just then to be going. Such a woman as his sister Martha, as a woman could never be interesting to him, nor any other woman who remained outside him, either when she could be to him an ideal for him or a power in a way over him, not that some women with power in them were not attractive to him, but with such a kind of woman, and he met them often in his living and they had power with him, such a woman always did it for him by entering into him by brilliant seductive managing

and so she was a part of him, even though she was apart from him, and so she had power with him. Such a one until he would be an old man and the strength in him was weakening and the things he had in him did not make inside him a completely tight filling and so things outside him could a little more enter into him, until he would come to be an old man and the need in him would come to be more a senile feeling, an old man's need of something to complete him, such a one could never come to be a wife to him, could never be a woman to be his wife and content him. He needed such a woman as his sister Martha had found for him, a woman who was to him, inside him and appealing, whose power over him was never more than a joke to him, who sometimes when a sense for beauty stirred in him was a flower to him,whom he often could forget that she was existing, who never in any big way was resisting, and so she never needed fighting, was always to himself a part of him and inside in him, and so in every kind of way she was contenting to him.

With Mrs. Hersland, rather strangely, "her children were to her like well to do living, not important to her feeling."

And so visiting and being, well to do living and her children, these never gave her a strong feeling of being important inside her through them, it was only through her husband and the governess and the seamstresses and servants and dependents that she could ever have an individual kind of feeling.

. . . . . .

Some women have it in them to love others because they need them, many of such ones subdue the ones they need for loving, they subdue them and they own them; some women have it in them to love only those who need them; some women have it in them only to have power when others love them, others loving them gives to them strength in domination as their needing those who love them keeps them from subduing others before those others love them. This will come clearer when this kind of women comes into this history of many kinds of men and women.

Mrs. Hersland was not of these two kinds then, she had a gentle little bounty in her, she had a sense in her of superior strength in her from the way of living that was the natural way of being to her, she had a larger being from the

> children who were always to her a part of her. She had in her a little power from the beauty feeling she had for her husband in his living with her; she was for him then a tender feeling in him, she was for him then a pleasant little joke to him resisting to him, she was to him a woman for his using as she was to herself part of her children, that was the simple sense in her that never gave to her a sense of being important to herself inside her.

It was through her husband and the governess and the seamstresses and servants and dependents that Mrs. Hersland could achieve an individual, an important feeling in herself. She had a feeling for right rich being that was natural to her. She liked it and felt important when she had around her poor people who were employed by her, who were different she thought from herself, who were with her because they had need of her. And the feeling was strongest in her in her relation to a governess, Madeleine Wyman.

Madeleine Wyman was the last one of the three governesses the Herslands had had in the house with them in their middle living in that part of Gossols where no other rich people were living. When Madeleine was with them, then in the middle living of Mr. Hersland and Mrs. Hersland, Mrs. Hersland had in her her most important being, she had in her then her completest feeling of being herself inside her to her being. She had this in her from her relation to Madeleine Wyman. Madeleine was twenty-four then. She stayed with the Herslands two years, two years after, she married John Summer. Then she went away to another town with him and she came to Gossols sometimes and then she would see Mrs. Hersland. Later then she went travelling to live again the early being of Mr. and Mrs. Hersland which was her possession. Travelling, eastern living had for her this meaning, she was then again living the early life of Mrs. Hersland and Mr. Hersland then. Later Mrs. Hersland was weakening and later she died and then when Madeleine Summer met the young Hersland people she told them what their mother had been, she told them what travelling and eastern living had meant to her, Madeleine, it had meant the re-living of their mother's early living, of their mother's and their father's early being.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Hersland and Madeleine Wyman were then for a while then closely in each other's living, Madeleine always then all the rest of her living was in her being in Mrs. Hersland's living. In Mrs. Hersland later there was weakening, she had never had Medeleine Wyman in her as real being. In Mrs. Hersland, real being was rich right living, her Bridgepoint family living and her marrying, and her country house living and her children. Later in her living she was weakening inside her, she was scared then, her children were big around her and outside her, trouble was coming then, the country house living was ending and often then Mr . Hersland forgot her as being and later then she died away from among them and they soon, all of them then, lost remembering her among them. So then this was real being in her this was really being herself inside her. This was a real history in her. Her early living, later when she talked so much about it to Madeleine Wyman it was real in her but it was important to her then more than it really was as being in her. It was sentimental feeling and romantic feeling in her, it was not real being in her. To Madeleine Wyman, this early living of Mrs. Hersland was being, it was real being inside her, inside in Madeleine Wyman, it was not sentimental and romantic in her, it was real being in her. It was a little too then real being in Mrs. Hersland but in talking it came to be to her feeling more important than it was then in her being. This was the difference then between them. Mrs. Hersland then had a real being from her early living but it was not, later then, so important to her being or her feeling as in her talking of it to Madeleine Wyman she made it come to be in her Mrs. Hersland's feeling. Later more and more when she was weakening it was all fainter and fainter in her. In Madeleine Wyman, Mrs. Hersland and Mrs. Hersland's early living was real being. It came to be always stronger in Madeleine Wyman always more and more a part of her being, Mrs. Hersland and Mr. Hersland and their early living. Later the Hersland children had a sore feeling at her having such possession.

David Hersland, the father, more and more found the men who admired him a cushion around him whereby he could rest. Though they could not enter into his being, he came to have a tender feeling for them in his later life.

As I was saying men working with him in his business living mostly went their own way to an ending of the things they began with him. Mostly to all of them there was danger to them in his way of going on to an ending. There was for them too much of beginning in his way of ending. Those who followed with admiration in them were mostly men who had not enough in them of themselves inside them to begin a big thing with him, they were outside him

they were outside his business living, they were full of admiration for him, they felt in them part of the big feeling of being as big as all the world around them when they were with him. These men were to him like the people in the small houses near him, in that part of Gossols where no other rich people were living, except that they came closer to him, they were not important to him they were not inside him for him but they were a comfort to him, they liked to know he had been fighting, they liked to know he had been brushing people away from around him, they were always there for him, they were not inside him to him, they were not important to him to his feeling, but they made akind of support around him when he was resting up from fighting, they made a kind of cushion for him to keep him from knowing when he was through with fighting that he had not been winning. They were beginning to be important to him at the beginning of the ending of his middle living, earlier in his living they were all to him as the people in the small houses near him, in his country house living, he was hearty for them, he was a good neighbor to any one, he was good to do things for any one of them who asked him to do things for them. Some of them in the beginning of the ending of his middle living were more and more important to him as padding, not to fill him but to keep him from knowing it in himself that he was not strong in winning that the nature in him would not carry him to the last end in fighting which is winning, that when he turned away in a blustering fashion he was not brushing people away from him. He never knew it inside him that he was not brushing people away from around him when he went away from them in another direction in a blustering fashion until his children in his later living when they were angry with him for his impatient feeling said it to him.

And, finally, Miss Stein in <u>The Making of Americans</u> found quarrelling very interesting.

Quarrelling is not letting those having attacking be winning by attacking, those having resisting being be winning by resisting, those having dependent being be winning by dependent being, those having engulfing being be winning by engulfing being. This is quarrelling in living, not letting each one by some one be winning by the being in them. This is certainly quarrelling in living. There is a great deal of quarrelling in living, that is reasonably certain and that is a very natural thing as certainly very many are not winning with the being in them.

The Making of Americans, even for those who can read it and for those who have read it, is a difficult book which does not quite justify its existence either as a work of fiction or as a text-book on human types and the relations possible between them. Conrad Aiken, reviewing the abridged edition in the New Republic, spoke for many who had attempted to read the book when he said:

> the book can only be described as a fantastic sort of disaster. If there is a maximum in unreadibility, "The Making of Americans" falls short of it only by the several hundred pages which, apparently, M. Faÿ has omitted from this abridged edition. In an attempt to restrict herself to the use of only the simplest words (for no matter how complicated a psychological statement), Miss Stein falls into a tireless and inert repetitiveness which becomes as stupefying as it is unintelligible. The famous "subtlety of rhythm" simply is not there: one could better find it in a tom-tom. The phrasing is almost completely unsensory, flat and colorless -- or, as Mr. Skinner admirably puts it, cold. The abuse of the present participle, in a direct but perhaps simple-minded assault on "presentness," amounts in the end to linguistic murder.
>
> In short, the book is a complete esthetic miscalculation: it is dull; and although what it seeks to communicate is interesting, the cumbersomeness of the method defeats its own end. The analysis of human types is sometimes exceedingly acute -- if one has the patience to worry it out -- but as here presented it sounds as if someone had attempted to paraphrase Jung's "Psychological Types" in basic English.[59]

Allowing for Mr. Aiken's slightly exaggerated tone, it must be admitted that much he says is fairly accurate. The phrasing is abstract and colorless, as if Miss Stein had decided to step beyond the consideration of the pattern of experience, to the pattern of the pattern of experience. And this is treason in an author who prided herself on the fact that her concern was with words, with the "putting down on the paper words which dance and weep and make love and fight and kiss and perform miracles."

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[59] Conrad Aiken,"We Ask for Bread" New Republic, 78:219. April 4, 1934.

It seemed that at this time human values were not interesting to Miss Stein as they had been before. It seemed that she wished to make abstract, to map out rather than to describe in human terms and with a warm sympathy, people and their relationships. And it was logical that the words she chose, and the phrasing of these words, became in their turn abstract and somewhat mechanical. And the book itself records her progress away from fiction towards a philosophy of her own making. The fiction exhibits less and less of that "reality" which is the justification for the author in this field. And yet before rigor mortis set in, Miss Stein had several rather interesting things to say about life and people.

CHAPTER IV

THE LATER FICTION OF MISS STEIN

We enjoyed Granada, we met many amusing people english and spanish and it was there and at that time that Gertrude Stein's style gradually changed. She says hitherto she had been interested only in the insides of people, their character and what went on inside them, it was during that summer that she first felt a desire to express the rhythm of the visible world.

It was a long tormenting process, she looked, listened and described. She always was, she always is, tormented by the problem of the external and the internal ...

These were the days in which she wrote Susie Asado and Preciocilla and Gypsies in Spain. She experimented with everything in trying to describe. She tried a bit inventing words but she soon gave that up. The english language was her medium and with the english language the task was to be achieved, the problem solved. The use of fabricated words offended her, it was an escape into imitative emotionalism.

No, she stayed with her task, although after the return to Paris she described objects, she described rooms and objects, which joined with her first experiments done in Spain, made the volume Tender Buttons.

> She always however made her chief study people and therefore the never ending series of portraits.[60]

During this period between the years 1907 and 1914 Gertrude Stein did not concern herself with fiction. After The Making of Americans her one attempt had been A Long Gay Book which remained unfinished, "a magnificent fragment" says Paul Rosenfeld. It was not until 1922 and the publication of Geography and Plays that there is any evidence that Miss Stein was still considering fiction as one of her mediums. In this book she included several excellent short stories, of which Miss Furr and Miss Skeene is the most satisfactory and the best known.

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[60] Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p.145-6.

In 1926 As a Wife Has a Cow A Love Story appeared in Paris with illustrations by Juan Gris. It is an example of Miss Stein's adverbial and participial style, some of her friends and disciples have said it is one of the most delightful of her stories, but as a story it is beyond the comprehension of most readers. In 1930 in Paris Alice B. Toklas published Lucy Church Amiably, a novel which a critic later in the New Republic termed "as hard to read as the telephone book and not much more interesting".[61] Eleven years later Random House published Ida, a witty, obscure, fairly short novel, in which, still in the mood of her later period, Miss Stein uses words stripped of normal logic and totally cleansed of emotion. In 1946, shortly before her death, Brewsie and Willie was published by Random House. This book, even shorter than Ida, is a serious lecture on the postwar responsibilities of America's younger generation. There is little story, the whole consists of a discussion among G.I.s somewhere in Europe in the Occupation Forces following World War II. They are lonesome and homesick and worried about the future of America. Since her death, the most faithful friends of Miss Stein have been busy preparing some of her hitherto unpublished works for publication, and it will be some time before a real estimate can be made of her place in English Literature since 1900, with that estimate based on all of her work.

The greatest problem for critics of Miss Stein has always been that of understanding what she was attempting in her work from 1907.

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[61] This Plain Edition book was not available for this study.

The friends of this writer in America, advisedly or not, worked very hard to publicise Tender Buttons, and work of hers in this manner helped to make Miss Stein notorious rather than appreciated with any real understanding. For this study the early fiction of Gertrude Stein is most important to consider, and that of the last forty years is much less so. Always, as she has told us, her interest was with people, but for thirty years, until World War II shocked her into a realization of the state of the actual world, her preoccupation had been with the problem of literary communication, with pioneering among words to express, as Edmund Wilson has phrased it, "instinctive movements of the mind which underlie the factitious conventional logic of ordinary intercourse" and to convey "their rhythms and reflexes through a language divested of its ordinary meaning". It is impossible to attempt this without having a very deep interest in people, in the human mind and personality, as subject for the experiments, but this is not the specific, the dominant, controlling interest which a novelist to be a successful novelist has to have. With such a one this problem is one of means rather than end, and Miss Stein showed her very real wisdom in not attempting to make fiction the vehicle for her experiments, save in rare instances.

In these instances of fiction, Miss Stein was less and less interested in the relations of people, and more and more concerned with the essence of each one. It is a trend which we noted in looking into The Making of Americans, and is much more consistent withall of Miss Stein's experiments after 1907. Thus the work to be examined in this

period will not be so satisfying for this study. Relationships between characters are implicit in some of the work, but the stress is not on them, and we are treated rather to instances of Miss Stein's shrewdness than to examples of her more wise and sympathetic penetration of human motives.

Miss Furr and Miss Skeene along with A Family of Perhaps Three and Ada published in Geography and Plays, 1922, Paul Rosenfeld has termed 'mordant'. They were very short short stories, and of them Miss Furr and Miss Skeene is most often singled out for comment. Gertrude Stein identified the subjects as Miss Mars and Miss Squires, early habitués of her studio in Paris. Ernest Hemingway's short story Mr. and Mrs. Elliot recalls his teacher's earlier Miss Furr and Miss Skeene. Edmund Wilson has spoken of the story's excellence in rendering the monotony and insipidity of the feminine lives by the repetitive ragmarole manner.

> The voice Helen Furr was cultivating was quite a pleasant one. The voice Georgine Skeehe was cultivating was, some said, a better one. The voice Helen Furr was cultivating she cultivated and it was quite completely a pleasant enough one then, a cultivated enough one then. The voice Georgine Skeene was cultivating she did not cultivate too much. She cultivated it quite some. She cultivated and she would sometime go on cultivating it and it was not then an unpleasant one, it would not be then an unpleasant one, it would be a quite richly enough cultivated one, it would be quite richly enough to be a pleasant enough one.
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> They were regular in being gay, they learned little things that are things in being gay, they learned many little things that are things in being gay, they were gay every day, they were regular, they were gay, they were gay the same length of time every day, they were gay, they were quite regularly gay.

They lived together in a place where they could cultivate their voices and be gay everyday. Georgine Skeene went away to visit her brother and Helen Furr did not want to go back to her pleasant home where she did not find it gay, so she stayed on alone, and still she was gay, only she was gayer longer every day.

> She was not lonesome then, she was not at all feeling any need of having Georgine Skeene. She was not astonished at this thing. She would have been a little astonished by this thing but she knew that she was not astonished at anything and so she was not astonished at this thing not astonished at not feeling any need of having Georgine Skeene.
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> They did not live together then Helen Furr and Georgine Skeene. Helen Furr lived there the longer where they had been living regularly together. Then neither of them were living there any longer. Helen Furr was living somewhere else then and telling some about being gay and she was gay then and she was living quite regularly then. She was regularly gay then. She was quite regular in being gay then. She remembered all the little ways of being gay. She used all the little ways of being gay. She was quite regularly gay. She told many then the way of being gay, she taught very many then little ways they could use in being gay. She wasliving very well, she was gay then, she went on living then, she was regular in being gay, she always was living very well and was gay very well and was telling about little ways one could be learning to use in being gay, and later was telling them quite often, telling them again and again.

Elliot Paul was very enthusiastic about _As A Wife Has A Cow A Love Story_ and Bravig Imbs thought it was one of the most perfect pieces of writing ever made. Miss Stein wrote it, she tells us, one summer while she was delighting in the movement of the tiny waves on the Antibes shore. It is an extraordinary exhibition of Miss Stein's handling of words, but is quite outside the work of this thesis.

> Nearly all of it to be as a wife has a cow, a love story. All of it to be as a wife has a cow, all of it to be as a wife has a cow,a love story.
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> . . . . . .
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> And prepare and prepare so prepare to prepare and prepare to prepare and prepare so as to prepare, so to prepare and prepare to prepare to prepare for and to prepare for it to prepare, to prepare for it, in preparation, as preparation in preparation by preparation. They will be too busy afterwards to prepare. As preparation prepare, to prepare, as to preparation and to prepare. Out there.
>
> Have it as having having it as happening, happening to have it as having, having to have it as happening. Happening and have it as happening and having it happen as happening and having to have it happen as happening, and my wife has a cow as now, my wife having a cow as now, my wife having a cow as now and having a cow as now and having a cow and having a cow now, my wife has a cow and now. My wife has a cow.

It was at this time that Gertrude Stein liked to set a sentence for herself as a sort of tuning fork and metronome and then write to that time and tune.

In The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas Miss Stein tells us a little about Lucy Church Amiably. It was, she said, a shortish novel - "a novel of romantic beauty and nature and which looks like an engraving." It was in the adverbial and participial style, and has been published only through Miss Toklas's Plain Edition in Paris.

More than one critic has pointed out that Miss Stein's accomplishment in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas is in a sense the same as that of a novel. Writing in the New Republic in 1933, Edmund Wilson stated:

> Gertrude Stein has written her memoirs. But she has attributed them to her friend and companion of twenty-five years, Alice B. Toklas: . . . It is Gertrude Stein's

> imaginative projection of how she and her life and her circle look to Alice B. Toklas . . . Yet Miss Toklas's personality is by no means idistinguishable from Miss Stein's: Miss Stein has created her as an individual. And thus "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas" has something of the character and charm of a novel - a novel of whichthe subject is the life which Miss Stein and Miss Toklas have made together in Paris, the salon over which they have presided, the whole complex of ideas and events of which they became the center: a social-artistic-intellectual organism.[62]

Mr. Wilson indicates the masterly and mischievous treatment of the two ladies' differing attitudes to Hemingway:

> Gertrude Stein and Sherwood Anderson are very funny on the subject of Hemingway. The last time that Sherwood was in Paris they often talked about him. Hemingway had been formed by the two of them and they were both a little proud and a little ashamed of the work of their minds. . . .
>
> As I say he and Gertrude Stein were endlessly amusing on the subject. They admitted that Hemingway was yellow, he is, Gertrude Stein insisted, just like the flat-boat men on the Mississippi River as described by Mark Twain. But what a book, they both agreed, would be the real story of Hemingway, not those he writes but the confessions of the real Ernest Hemingway. It would be for another audience than the audience Hemingway now has but it would be very wonderful. And then they both agreed that they have a weakness for Hemingway because he is such a good pupil. He is a rotten pupil, I protested. You don't understand, they both said, it is so flattering to have a pupil who does it without understanding it, in other words he takes training and anybody who takes training is a favourite pupil. They both admit it to be a weakness. Hertrude Stein added further, you see he is like Derain ... And that is Hemingway, he looks like a modern and he smells of the museums. But what a story that of the real Hem, and one he should tell himself but alas he never will. After all, as he himself once murmured, there is the career, the career.
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> For some years after this Gertrude Stein and Hemingway did not meet. And then we heard he was back in Paris and telling a number of people how much he wanted to see her ...

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62 Edmund Wilson, "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas", New Republic, 76:246. October 11, 1933.

> They sat and talked a long time. Finally I heard her say, Hemingway, after all you are ninety percent Rotarian. Can't you, he said, make it eighty percent. No, said she regretfully, I can't. After all, as she always says, he did, and I may say, he does have moments of disinterestedness.
>
> After that they met quite often. Gertrude Stein always says she likes to see him, he is so wonderful. And if he could only tell his own story.
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> . . . . . .
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> However, whatever I say, Gertrude Stein always says, yes I know but I have a weakness for Hemingway.[63]

Mr. Wilson comments on this and similar incidents in the book with his usual thoughtful care:

> Yet it is hard to tell how much deliberate irony there may be in the presentation of all this through the medium of Alice B. Toklas. There is evidently a certain amount of pure mischief in her treatment of Hemingway, as to whom a distinct difference is indicated between Miss Stein's and Miss Toklas's opinions. And it is hardly conceivable that the creator of Miss Furr and Miss Skeene can be insensible to the humors of Miss Toklas and Miss Stein. A cool and pervasive irony has always been one of the characteristics of Gertrude Stein's writing; and there is certainly more artistic impersonality in this book than most of the comments I have heard allow. When you have read it, you take away an impression of Miss Stein and Miss Toklas in Paris, not in the least like anything you get from the memoirs, say, of Margot Asquith or of Isadora Duncan, but, rather, like your recollection of one of the households of Jane Austen.[64]

The idea that this autobiography was something like a novel came from Miss Stein herself where she tells how the book came to be written:

> For some time now many people, and publishers, have been asking Gertrude Stein to write her autobiography and she had always replied, not possibly.
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> She began to tease me and say that I should write my autobiography. Just think, she would say, what a lot of

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[63] Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p. 265-271.

[64] Edmund Wilson, "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas", op. cit., p. 246-7.

money you would make. She then began to invent titles for my autobiography. My Life With the Great, Wives of Geniuses I Have Sat With, My Twenty-five Years with Gertrude Stein.

Then she began to get serious and say, but really seriously you ought to write your autobiography. Finally I promised that if during the summer I could find time I would write my autobiography.

When Ford Madox Ford was editing the Transatlantic Review he once said to Gertrude Stein, I am a pretty good writer and a pretty good editor and a pretty goodbusiness man but I find it very difficult to be all three at once.

I am a pretty good housekeeper and a pretty good gardener and a pretty good needlewoman and a pretty good secretary and a pretty good editor and a pretty good vet for dogs and I have to do them all at once and I found it difficult to add being a pretty good author.

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.[65]

The relationship between Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas would be a most interesting study, and so would those others treated by Miss Stein through the mouth of Alice Toklas in this autobiography. The book was a best-seller when it appeared in 1933, and remains one of the most fascinating histories of Paris as a center of art and literature from 1900 to 1933. Miss Stein has written of her friends and acquaintances with a great deal of wit and penetration.

While the book, strictly speaking, cannot be considered as a work of fiction, it is only because it casts so excellent a light on what Miss Stein really considered important in human relations around

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65 Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p.309.

her, that the following quotations are included in this study. In the story of her life, as in the story of the good Anna, and that of Melanctha and Lena, friendship ranked very highly. And she speaks of her friendships with dignity, and her friends with real affection.

> Bernard Fay came and stayed with us that summer. Gertrude Stein and he talked out in the garden about everything, about life, and America, and themselves and friendship. They then cemented the friendship that is one of the four permanent friendships of Gertrude Stein's life. He even tolerated Basket for Gertrude Stein's sake.
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> . . . . . .
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> There was at that time a review of Gertrude Stein's book Geography and Plays in the Athenaeum signed Edith Sitwell. The review was long and a little condescending but I liked it. Gertrude Stein had not cared for it. A year later in the London Vogue was an article again by Edith Sitwell saying that since writing her article in the Athenaeum she had spent the year reading nothing but Geography and Plays and she wished to say how important and beautiful a book she had found it to be.
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> . . . I remember very well my first impression of her, an impression which indeed has never changed. Very tall, bending slightly, withdrawing and hesitatingly advancing, and beautiful with the most distinguished nose I have ever seen on any human being. At that time and in conversation between Gertrude Stein and herself afterwards, I delighted in the delicacy and completeness of her understanding of poetry. She and Gertrude Stein became friends at once. This friendship like all friendships has had its difficulties but I am convinced that fundamentally Gertrude Stein and Edith Sitwell are friends and enjoy being friends.
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> . . . . . .
>
> Gertrude Stein and he (Carl Van Vechten) became dear friends . . . .
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> In season and out he kept her name and her work before the public. When he was beginning to be well known and they asked him what he thought the most important book of the year he replied Three Lives by Gertrude Stein. His loyalty and his effort never weakened. He tried to make Knopf publish The Making of Americans and he almost succeeded but of course they weakened.

And then there are the multitude of witty incidents which Miss Toklas reports of the life in Paris. Everyone from Hélène, the cook to Picasso and Sherwood Anderson and the literary young men of the post-war generation, exhibited their very human foibles and were observed.

> Hélène had her opinions, she did not for instance like Matisse. She said a frenchman should not stay unexpectedly to a meal particularly if he asked the servant beforehand what there was for dinner. She said foreigners had a perfect right to do these things but not a frenchman and Matisse had once done it. So when Miss Stein said to her, Monsieur Matisse is staying for dinner this evening, she would say, in that case I will not make an omelette but fry the eggs. It takes the same number of eggs and the same amount of butter but it shows less respect, and he will understand.
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> . . . . . .
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> Etta Cone offered to typewrite Three Lives and she began. Baltimore is famous for the delicate sensibilities and conscientiousness of its inhabitants. It suddenly occurred to Gertrude Stein that she had not told Etta Cone to read the manuscript before beginning to typewrite it. She went to see her and there indeed was Etta Cone faithfully copying the manuscript letter by letter so that she might not by any indiscretion become conscious of the meaning. Permission to read the text having been given the typewriting went on.
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> . . . . . .
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> Matisse and Picasso then being introduced to each other by Gertrude Stein and her brother became friends but they were enemies. Now they are neither friends nor enemies. At that time they were both.
>
> They exchanged pictures as was the habit in those days. Each painter chose the one of the other one that presumably interested him the most. Matisse and Picasso chose each one of the other one the picture that was undoubtedly the least interesting either of them had done. Later each one used it as an example, the picture he had chosen, of the weaknesses of the other one. Very evidently in the two pictures chosen the strong qualities of each painter were not much in evidence.
>
> . . . . . .

Picasso was in Spain, in Barcelona, and a friend of his youth who was editor of a paper printed, not in spanish but in catalan, interviewed him. Picasso knowing that the interview to be printed in catalan was probably never going to be printed in spanish, thoroughly enjoyed himself. He said that Jean Cocteau was getting to be very popular in Paris, so popular that you could find his poems on the table of any smart coiffeur.

As I say he thoroughly enjoyed himself in giving this interview and then returned to Paris.

Some catalan in Barcelona sent the paper to some catalan friend in Paris and the catalan friend in Paris translated it to a french friend and the french friend printed the interview in a french paper.

Picasso and his wife told us the story together of what happened then. As soon as Jean saw the article, he tried to see Pablo. Pablo refused to see him, he told the maid to say that he was always out and for days they could not answer the telephone. Cocteau finally stated in an interview given to the french press that the interview which had wounded him so sorely had turned out to be an interview with Picabia and not an interview with Picasso, his friend. Picabia of course denied this. Cocteau implored Picasso to give a public denial. Picasso remained discreetly at home.

> The first evening the Picassos went out they went to the theatre and there in front of them seated was Jean Cocteau's mother. At the first intermission they went up to her, and surrounded by all their mutual friends she said, my dear, you cannot imagine the relief to me and to Jean to know that it was not you that gave out that vile interview, do tell me that it was not.
>
> And as Picasso's wife said, I as a mother could not let a mother suffer and I said of course it was not Picasso and Picasso said, yes yes of course it was not, and so the public retraction was given.

There are also valuable and revealing statements about what Gertrude Stein thought of people, in themselves and as subjects of her literary work.

> She always says she dislikes the abnormal, it is so obvious. She says the normal is so much more simply complicated and interesting.

. . . . . .

> Now as for herself she was not efficient, she was good humoured, she was democratic, one person was as good as another, and she knew what she wanted done. If you are like that she says, anybody will do anything for you. The important thing, she insists, is that you must have deep down as the deepest thing in you a sense of equality. Then anybody will do anything for you.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The next day she spent with California and Iowa in the garage, as she called the two soldiers who were detailed to fix up her car. She was pleased with them when every time there was a terrific noise anywhere, they said solemnly to each other, that french chauffeur is just changing gears. Gertrude Stein, Iowa and California enjoyed themselves so thoroughly that I am sorry to say the car did not last out very well after we left Nevers, but at any rate we did get back to Paris.

In reviewing the Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein in which The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas is included, Leo Lerman has applied a statement by Thomas Wolfe about someone else to her essence and performance as a social human being:

> There are some people who have the quality of richness and joy in them and they communicate it to everything they touch. It is first of all a physical quality; then it is a quality of the spirit .... It is probably the richest resource of the spirit; it is better than all formal learning, and it cannot be learned, although it grows in power and richness with living. It is full of wisdom and repose, since the memory and contrast of pain and labor are in it .... People who have this energy of joy and delight draw other people to them as bees are drawn to ripe plums. Most people have little power of living in themselves, they are pallid and uncertain in their thoughts and feelings, and they think they can derive the strength, the richness, and the character they lack from one of these vital and decisive people.[66]

No writing by her friends has yet been able to communicate satisfactorily the reason why she drew people so strongly in Paris, why she had so many friends, why her influence as a personality was so great in life and in literature.

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[66] Leo Lerman, "A Wonderchild for 72 Years", Saturday Review of Literature, 29:18. Nov. 2, 1946.

Ida appeared in 1941, and a critic for *Time* mentioned that its heroine was purportedly modeled on the Duchess of Windsor. That information is most helpful in reading the book, it gives a sense of proportion to a work that is otherwise rather incomprehensible. Not that that item accounts for all that makes up the short novel. The prose is again abstract and the story itself slight and then usually obscure. The *Time* reviewer covered several aspects in his brief review:

> Most readers require of prose that it make concrete sense as they think sense should be made. So Gertrude Stein, who uses prose to build a series of abstractions, either infuriates most readers or elicits defensive jeers. But readers who are willing to listen to notes in music -- as things without an explicit message -- can get from her work a rare pleasure. The three stories in her earliest (1909) book, *Three Lives*, being anchored to sense, are good ones to start on. Her latest book, *Ida*, much more abstract, is a good one to go on with.
>
> The heroine of *Ida* is purportedly modeled on the Duchess of Windsor. That fact need trouble no one, short of a tenth reading or so. Ida is a woman who likes to rest, to talk to herself, to move around. In the course of her lifetime she has several dogs, marries several men (mostly Army officers), lives in several of the 48 states. She seems at times to be some sort of dim, potent symbol or half-goddess, sometimes a plain case of schizophrenia, sometimes a stooge for Miss Stein. In the long run, after several icily beautiful pages of suspense, she appears to settle down with a man named Andrew.
>
> How much or how little sense *Ida* makes as a story is not important. The words in which it is told are stripped of normal logic, and totally cleansed of emotion. The result is something as intricately clean as a fugue or a quadratic equation.
>
> For those who wish to make the effort, the following suggestions:
>
> Read it with care, but require no sense of it that it does not yield.

- Read it aloud.

- Read it as poetry must be read or music listened to: several times.

- Read it for pleasure only. If it displeases you, quit.

> Gertrude Stein says of Ida: "Ida decided that she was just going to talk to herself. Anybody could stand around and listen but as for her she was just going to talk to herself."[67]

Dorothy Chamberlain in the New Republic was less happy as a critic about Ida yet there is a basic similarity in the two judgements:

> Here Miss Stein tells the story of a woman's life in America; but she has succeeded in giving that life an eerie, disembodied quality that resembles nothing you know. The incongruous sequence of inexplicable episodes and characters is like a jumbled dream, or a motion picture of the hallucinations of an insane mind -- rising, focusing, dissolving. You feel rather crazy yourself, lured on into this curious world by simple words, short sentences, conversational ease, narrative force, alertness, rapidity and imminence of events, and the unforeseen, unpredictable turns of the author's mind. "Ida" is entertaining, stimulating, often funny. Also it is an anodyne, which bewilders and befogs. You don't know what it is all about.
>
> And you don't fundamentally believe in it. Not only is this word experimentation perverse, for fumigation cannot rid language of its human associations; but it leads nowhere. A book need not be comprehensible to all the world; neither should it require elucidation. Miss Stein can be readable when she wants to be . . .[68]

In such a book human relations are the first consideration neither of the author nor the critic, yet Miss Stein has managed to include several rather interesting, sometimes penetrating remarks and stories:

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67 "Abstract Prose" Time; 37:99-100, February 17, 1941.

68 Dorothy Chamberlain, "Gertrude Stein, Amiably", New Republic, 104:477; April 7, 1941.

As she walked along, she thought about men and she thought about presidents. She thought about how some men are more presidents than other men when they happen to be born that way and she said to herself. Which one is mine. She knew that there must be one that could be hers one who would be a president. And so she sat down and was very satisfied to do nothing.

. . . . . .

Ida went to live with a cousin of her uncle.

He was an old man and he could gild picture frames so that they looked as if they had always had gold on them. He was a good man that old man and he had a son, he sometimes thought he had two sons but anyway he had one and that one had a garage and he made a lot of money. He had a partner and they stole from one another. One day the son of the old man was so angry because the partner was most successful in getting the most that he up and shot him. They arrested him. They put him in jail. They condemned him to twenty years hard labor because the partner whom he had killed had a wife and three children. The man who killed the other one had no children that is to say his wife had one but it was not his. Anyway there it was. His mother spent all her time in church praying that her son's soul should be saved. The wife of their doctor said it was all the father and mother's fault, they had brought up their son always to think of money, always of money, had not they the old man and his wife got the cousin of the doctor's wife always to give them presents of course they had.

. . . . . .

Ida did not get married so that never again would she be alone. As a matter of fact until the third time she was married she would not be married long.

. . . . . .

Ida was married again this time he came from Boston, she remembered his name. She was good friends with all her husbands.

. . . . . .

Everybody knew she liked to do favors for them and wanting to do favors for everybody who wanted to have favors done for them it was quite natural that those who could do the favors did them when she asked them to do them.

It does go like that.

. . . . . .

She was married to Gerald and she and Gerald were just as old as ever but that did not bother them. They talked together at least some time every day and occasionally in the evening but that was all and when they talked she called out to him and he did not answer and he called out to her and mostly she did not answer but they were sometimes in their home together. Anyway they were married and had been for some time.

. . . . . .

Well he said Andrew said that he could not do without Ida. Ida said yes, and indeed when she said yes she meant yes. Yes Andrew could not do without Ida and Ida said yes. She knew she might go away suddenly, but she said yes.

. . . . . .

That was the way it was nothing did happen everybody talked all day and every day about Ida and Andrew but nothing could happen as neither the one of them or the other one ever did begin anything.

It is wonderful how things pile up even if nothing is added. Very wonderful.

Suppose somebody comes in, suppose they say, well how are we today. Well supposing they do say that. It does not make any difference but supposing they do say that. Somebody else comes in and says that too well how are we today. Well if Ida had not answered the first one she could not answer the second one because you always have to answer the first one before you answer the second one.

And if there was still a third one and mostly there was and a fourth one and a fifth one and even a sixth one and each one said well and how are we today, it is natural enough that Ida would have nothing to say. She had not answered the first one and if you are resting you cannot hurry enough to catch up and so she had nothing to say. Yes she said. It is natural enough that she said yes, because she did not catch up with anything and did not interrupt anything and did not begin anything and did not stop anything.

Yes said Ida.

So Ida is a clever book, witty rather than profound and the author and her sympathetic readers can have great fun in the maze.

But for a study of human relations there is very little solid material.

It is not that Brewsie and Willie does not possess solid thought and a provocatic criticism of life that makes it inadequate for this study, but that it is a discussion of life in America with little demonstration of character in action to make it a lively novel. Katherine Anne Porter is harsh in her evaluation of the heroes, Brewsie and Willie, who are, she insists, "as near to talking zombies as anything ever seen in a book, and she (Miss Stein) loved, not them, but their essential zombiness."[69] Other critics find the conversations in the book either very satisfactory or not at all so. Harrison Smith in the Saturday Review of Literature stated: "they reveal perfectly the common American idiom, the bewilderment and restlessness of our youth today."[70] And the Time critic made a finer distinction:

> "I was always in my way a Civil War veteran," confesses Gertrude Stein -- and, indeed, her new book about World War II veterans has much of the quaint, rheumy, talky quality of old soldiers. It is, of course, superimposed upon the girlish extravagances with which Author Stein has perplexed the English-speaking world for a generation.
>
> "My gracious, my good gracious," laments a homeward-bound G.I. . . .
>
> Expatriate Author Stein talked with scores of G.I.s in France ("they made me come all over patriotic"), and Brewsie and Willie is a report on these conversations. Many of them sound as though they had been fabricated by epigrammic babies in a precocious nursery. Samples:
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> "A leader is someone who leads you where you don't want to go."
>
> "In America they think if perfection is good more perfection is better." . . .

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69 Katherine Anne Porter, op. cit., p. 521.

70 Harrison Smith, "A Rose for Remembrance" Saturday Review of Literature; 29:11; August 10, 1946.

> But between the lines of baby talk, Brewsie and Willie is is a serious lecture on the postwar responsibilities of America's younger generation. When Brewsie and Willie (and other G.I.s named Peter and Lawrence, Nurses Pauline and Janet) begin their improbable discussions, they are full of beans and America-first; when they emerge a hundred pages later, they are more respectful of Europeans, less enthusiastic about themselves . . . . [71]

The book is a lecture out of the mouths of G.I.s whom Miss Stein had loved to talk to while they were overseas. The book is down-to-earth, humorous, and important as it shows Miss Stein's awareness of the problems facing the people of her United States. She had a greater grasp of historical and economic and intellectual relativities than most people had given her credit for. But it is not very good fiction as such, and it is not very important for what it shows of her insight into human relations. There is, it is true, genuine comradeship among the G.I.s which testifies to Miss Stein's faith in the fundamental niceness and humanity of the ordinary middle class person, and there were some statements which she gives to her characters to say which show how highly she valued the relationships between human beings. It was as if she had been away on a long journey and had come back with greater love and profounder appreciation for the simple humanity of ordinary American soldiers. It is significant and very touching to know that when she died it was with a copy of Brewsie and Willie clutched in each hand.[72] The work lacks the sophistication of all her previous work, including Three Lives, and it rings with a profound faith in and love for the very humanness of ordinary humanity and everyday simple relationships. At the last, when she surveyed the world, the abstract questioning about

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[71] "Come All Over Patriotic" Time; 48:51; August 5, 1946.

[72] "Makers of Wonder Bread", Time, 52:54-6. August 16, 1948.

the nature of language was no longer important. What was vital and demanding was that human beings might be allowed in America to think in however muddled fashion, might be able to make their own decisions and live a life in which all human values had not been squeezed out by widespread, greedy industrialism. The message to the G.I.s which Miss Stein penned in Brewsie and Willie, was warm and challenging and full of hope, and for the first time emphasized the importance of the will to each man who wanted to safeguard his own dignity as a human being. Miss Stein was worried about America as a country whose resources were being squandered by unthinking mass action, she was worried that the individual man was sacrificing his freedom and developing an employee mentality, she feared that there was no more pioneering, and she begged that the G.I.s returning to America think first and think often, and individually like free men transmit their thinking to action. The phrase and cadence was slow yet direct and satisfying as the men talked in Europe of the problems facing them at home.

> I know, said Brewsie, I know, I know Willie. Yes I know, you got to have a job, and it's all right but it's not all right, see here let me tell you about jobs. Some have to have jobs, some have got to be employed and be employees, but not so many Willie. Listen to me not so many, when everybody is employed. God, said Willie, if they only just could not be employed. I aint forgot that depression, no not yet. Yes but Willie, said Brewsie, that's what I want to say, industrialism which produces more than anybody can buy and makes employees out of free men makes 'em stop thinking, stop feeling, makes 'em all feel alike. I tell you Willie it's wrong.
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> . . . . . .
>
> Well I guess, said Henry, I got my mind confused because I just cant see any way not to have my mind confused that's

> all, see here Willie, you see it's about that employee mentality we're all getting to have, we're just a lot of employees, obeying a boss, with no mind of our own and if it goes on where is America, I say if it goes on, where is America, no sir, said Henry, no sir, I want to pioneer . . . Well I don't want to see us get more employee minded, employed by the big factory owners, employed by the strikers, employed by the government, employed by the labor unions.

And she was worried about the illusions that men have built up, and about men dying after a lifetime of never having lived.

> Well, said Ed, anyway you look at it girls,well we have to have them, an American soldier has to have wine women and song, he just is made that way. Oh is he, said Willie, you just listen to Brewsie. Well what of it, it's true anyway. Not so true, said Brewsie, not so true, kind of true but not so true. Pin-up girls, not so true, said Brewsie, wait till you get home and have to treat girls in an ordinary way, not so much wine women and song. You think you're soldiers and you make yourselves up like soldiers and soldiers have to have wine women and song, and so all American soldiers just are so sure they have to have wine women and song, American soldiers think life is a movie and they got to dream the parts in their feelings.

. . . . . .

> Listen Willie, listen, listen Willie, what's a job, you haven't got it, what's a job, you have got it, what's rushing around so fast you cant hear yourself think, what will happen, you'll be old and you never lived, and you kind of feel silly to lie down and die and to never have lived, to have been a job chaser and never have lived. Yes, said Willie, but Brewsie, now honest to God Brewsie, honest to God and it's the last time we all are here, honest to God Brewsie, can you be a job chaser and live at the same time, . . .

. . . . . .

> Not Brewsie, said Willie, he'll talk but, said Willie, Brewsie will talk but we wont be there to listen, we kind of will remember that he's talking somewhere but we wont be there to listen, there wont be anybody talking where we will be. But, said Jo, perhaps they will talk now, why you all so sure they wont talk over there, perhaps they will talk over there. Not those on the job they wont said Willie, not those on the job.

Just once in a while Miss Stein inserted an unforgetable story or sentence or incident that showed she was still master of evoking a sense of life and of people.

> Being a soldier I often think, said Pauline, is all right when there is fighting, fighting knocks the scare out of you, the scare of being alone. You never are alone when you are fighting _ I know that even when there is only one in a fox hole, you are not really alone because there is danger there but when the danger is all over like it is now and you are away from home where everybody is just like you and you have that comfort, when they are all just like you, like they are at home, when you are home too, but when you are away from home and there is no more danger and excitement of danger then the boys really feel all alone and they have to hate everybody to give themselves courage. They certainly have to sister, said Willie. They eertainly have to and they do, said Jo.
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> . . . . . .
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> How old are you Willie, said Jo, you know, said Jo, they used to say be your age and I kind of wonder sometimes are we that age, everybody says we're sad, we know we're lonesome, how old do you have to be to be sad, and how young can you be to be lonesome.
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> . . . . . .

It was late afternoon and the streets were narrow and three Negro soldiers came along,there was a very little girl and her mother, one of the Negroes fell on his knee like a cavalier before the little girl and took her hand, the mother went on and then stood slightly flushed looking at her little girl, the little girl a little flushed shook the hand of the kneeling soldier, he said a word in French, she answered him, she was a very little girl, only five years old, the other two had gone on, he rose from his knee and he went on, the little girl went along with her mother.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In Aspects of the Novel E. M. Forster has said of Miss Stein's experimentation in prose forms that "It is much more important to play about like this than to re-create the Waverley Novels." G. K. Chesterton, looking thoughtfully to the future, was not quite so sure that Miss Stein's most experimental work would survive the reluctance of readers to work for whatever might be valuable behind the strangely-ordered words.

> I grieve to say, from what I know of human nature and history, that I doubt whether posterity will even try to understand Miss Stein. . . But the theory that has been so common of late, the theory that the evolution of literature branches out into new experiments, and always follows the line of those experiments, seems to me to be flatly contradicted by all the facts of literary history. . .
>
> Nobody knows what will be the fashion a hundred years hence, except that it will almost certainly not be anything that is considered the newest fashion today . . . As a mere matter of guess-work, given the tendencies of our time, I should think it would be extremely probable that literature will give up all this notion of experiment, and not only return to type, but even to the classical type. I think it much more likely that there will then be a worship of Landor, for instance, or some rather neglected classical classic, than that the whole world will be looking back to Miss Stein as the mother of modern English prose. We see the tendency in the Thomists of France, in the Humanists of America, and I think it is likely to become rather more classical than I like. For I am a romantic person myself; and I also like my little joke, just like Miss Stein.[73]

It might be rash to say so, though the admirers of Miss Stein quite probably will do it if these words of Mr. Chesterton and other rather similar ones by Mr. Edmund Wilson do happen to be correct, but it may be that the impulse of Gertrude Stein, that "intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality", is precisely

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[73] G. K. Chesterton, All I Survey, (New York: Dodd,Mead & Company, 1933) p.66-69.

the impulse and the intellectual passion which is responsible for the as yet only faintly perceptable swing of the pendulum back to classicism. And Miss Stein may have deliberately given the first push back, rather than the final reaction. Her attempt, as Laura Riding has pointed out, was to make words capable of direct communication again not by caricaturing language, not by attacking decadence with decadence - but by purging it of its discredited experience. The aim of classical writers, of whom Walter Landor is an outstanding example, is to achieve precision in the communicating of reality by means of stringent discipline in the art of writing and speaking. The discipline entails the getting of a thorough knowledge of the writings of Greek and Latin authors, and the slow refining process of learning to say exactly what one means as simply and as directly as possible. Miss Stein's background was not classical, and she possessed the recent heritage of the psychologists rather than the legacy of the humanists, but she strove very truly and very thoroughly to communicate the reality of experience as she possessed it. She tried with simple words and rhythmic phrasings to catch and exhibit the slow progress of life and the melodic nature of the thinking process in undistinguished ordinary people. And fundamentally rooted in the philosophy of both Landor and Stein is the quiet assumption, often implied, and occasionally stated, that human beings and their relationships are what really matter. For the communication of inner and outer reality both worked to purge and to refine language that it might become a supple instrument, and economical tool to be used as forcefully as possible.

The point can certainly be labored too far, and perhaps has been.

Gertrude Stein failed often in her experimentation, and got carried away beyond the limits which her readers would tolerate. Where her experimentation with words and cadence obscures the reality to be communicated, or where the amount of substance is out of proportion with the technique involved, or where she experimented with words simply for the sake of the words divorced from meaning, she has failed to communicate the reality described by Mrs. Woolf, and has failed as a writer.

There are some critics, like Alfred Kazin, Van Wyck Brooks, and John Peale Bishop, who feel that Miss Stein failed, when she did fail, because she had a peculiar malady, she could help everyone but herself when it came to communicating reality, she had developed a literary medium, and she had no proportionate material available, "Her imagination was unpeopled", Van Wyck Brooks has said, after Three Lives in which she truly had the 'mania and the matter', "She could not command emotional content, and all the rest of her theory was a rationalization."[74]

There is a certain slur on her capability to proceed beyond Three Lives in Mr. Brooks' criticism. And perhaps he is right, perhaps only once in fiction was she capable of an integral piece of literary art. It is hard to say. It is more likely however that after Three Lives she never again entered as fully into the intense creative effort described by Conrad as essential:

> You must give yourself up to emotions (no easy task). You must squeeze out of yourself every sensation, every thought, every image, - mercilessly, without reserve and without remorse: you must search the darkest corners of

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[74] Van Wyck Brooks, Opinions of Oliver Allston (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1941) p. 238.

> your brain, - you must search for the image, for the glamour, for the right expression. And you must do it sincerely, at any cost: you must do it so that at the end of your day's work you should feel exhausted, emptied of every sensation and every thought, with a blank mind and an aching heart, with the notion that there is nothing, - nothing left in you. To me it seems that it is the only way to achieve true distinction - even to go some way towards it.[75]

Or perhaps the insecurity and lack of integrity in the age doomed much of her work:

> This is not an age for wholeness and sureness . . . The fundamental differences between modern fiction and ancient poetry may be traced to two main sources: the growth of the scientific and realistic spirit, with its predisposition to analysis and its preoccupation with homely, familiar, unheroic life; and the resultant decay of faith, appearing specifically in the loss of belief in a divine scheme and actual immortality, but generally in the corrosion of old idealisms along the whole spiritual front. Both trends have plainly often threatened the tragic spirit. Neither is irreconcilably hostile to it.[76]

At any rate, Miss Stein's career was a novel adventure, and at least two of her books, one of them fiction, will survive in the body of literature. She was a strange synthesis of many influences, and without a recognition of the variety and the relative importance of each, it is impossible to accurately calculate her contribution to English literature.

In "A Note on Gertrude Stein" in the Nation fifteen years ago William Troy remarked

> Before disposing of her work with any real comfort it is necessary to know a great deal not only about William James and Bergson and Whitehead but also about Cézanne

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[75] Joseph Conrad, Life and Letters, G. Jean Aubrey, 1927, I p.183, as quoted by Robert Liddell, A Treatise on the Novel (London, Jonathan Cape, 1947) p. 130.

[76] Herbert J. Muller, (New York & London : Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1937) p. 424.

> and Picasso and Juan Gris. Her so-called naive and primitive writing, moreover, represents such a complex synthesis of these influences that the most painstaking analysis is required to reveal them with any degree of clarity. In the end, it is much easier to turn to a "difficult" writer like Mrs. Virginia Woolf. All that will be pointed out here is that, in the general character of her mind and its central orientation, Gertrude Stein is not nearly so isolated and eccentric a figure in American letters as is so often believed.[77]

Miss Stein herself was more interested in being contemporary than in being classical. She wished to share the honor with Picasso that in their fields they were most remarkably of their century.

> When I was in America I for the first time travelled pretty much all the time in an airplane and when I looked at the earth I saw all the lines of cubism made at a time when not any painter had ever gone up in an airplane. I saw there on the earth the mingling lines of Picasso, coming and going, developing and destroying themselves, I saw the simple solutions of Braque, I saw the wandering lines of Masson, yes I saw and once more I knew that a creator is contemporary, he understands what is contemporary when the contemporaries do not yet know it, but he is contemporary and as the twentieth century is a century which sees the earth as no one has ever seen it, the earth has a splendor that it never has had, and as everything destroys itself in the twentieth century and nothing continues, so then the twentieth century has a splendor which is its own and Picasso is of this century, he has that strange quality of an earth that one has never seen and of things destroyed as they have never been destroyed. So then Picasso has his splendor.[78]

It is hard to know just how much Gertrude Stein owed to the independent vision of the artists in Paris, and how much she was influenced by the philosophers James, Bergson and Whitehead. Certainly William James was the "important person in Gertrude Stein's Radcliffe life" and he is said to have considered her the most brilliant pupil he ever had. Miss Stein has told us that

> the really lasting impression of her Radcliffe life came through William James . . .

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[77] William Troy, op. cit., p. 274.

[78] Gertrude Stein, Picasso (London, B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1946), p. 50.

> William James delighted her. His personality and his teaching and his way of amusing himself with himself and his students all pleased her. Keep your mind open, he used to say, . . .
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> . . . . . .
>
> Some years after when Gertrude Stein and her brother were just beginning knowing Matisse and Picasso, William James came to Paris and they met. She went to see him at his hotel. He was enormously interested in what she was doing, interested in her writing and in the pictures she told him about. He went with her to her house to see them. He looked and gasped, I told you, he said, I always told you that you should keep your mind open.[79]

Francis Fergusson, reviewing The Making of Americans for the Saturday Review of Literature in 1934 claimed to be able to see the influence of the author of A Pluralistic Universe and Radical Empiricism on every page of her work.

There is a paragraph in a critique on William James by George Santayana which seems to indicate where Gertrude Stein and William James were vitally similar in interest and outlook:

> His popularity rests on three somewhat incidental books, The Will to Believe, Pragmatism, and The Varieties of Religious Experience, whereas, as it seems to me, his best achievement is his Principles of Psychology. In this book he surveys, in a way which for him is very systematic, a subject made to his hand. In its ostensible outlook it is a treatise like any other, but what distinguishes it is the author's gift for evoking vividly the very life of the mind. This is a work of imagination; and the subject as he conceived it, which is the flux of immediate experience in men in general, requires imagination to read it at all. It is a literary subject, like autobiography or psychological fiction, and can be treated only poetically; and in this sense Shakespeare is a better psychologist than Locke or Kant. Yet this gift of imagination is not merely literary; it is not useless in divining the truths of science, and it is invaluable in throwing off prejudice and scientific shams. The fresh imagination and vitality of William James led him to break through many a false convention. He saw

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79 Gertrude Stein, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, p.96-98.

> that experience, as we endure it, is not a mosaic of distinct sensations, nor the expression of separate hostile faculties, such as reason and the passions, or sense and the categories; it is rather a flow of mental discourse, like a dream, in which all divisions and units are vague and shifting, and the whole is continually merging together and drifting apart. It fades gradually in the rear, like the wake of a ship, and bites into the future, like the bow cutting the water. For the candid psychologist, carried bodily on this voyage of discovery, the past is but a questionable report, and the future wholly indeterminate; everything is simply what it is experienced as being.[80]

Paul Rosenfeld has said of Miss Stein's performance:

> If the intuition of the primacy of rhythm or movement among the agents of meaning lies at the base of ultra modern work, Gertrude Stein seems from the first to have known life keenly, humorously as the succession of alternate, correlative states. She seems above all to have <u>heard</u> life, recording it as a beat; . . .[81]

And more pertinently he has stated:

> While all life is flow for Gertrude Stein, what she nonetheless seems most deeply to feel is unchanginess.
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> . . . . . .
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> Out of her writing, as from the tablets of a new law-giver, there speaks the truth known to Whitman and to Cézanne, to Stieglitz and to the new painters and poets of America, that the world is one nature, flesh moving into flesh and becoming spirit in motion, a great everchanging, everremaining body. It is in her work as indifference to particular phenomena, and love of flights concerning great spaces. It is there as perpetual search for the roots of life and location of them in the great rhythms governing motives. It is in her attempts to seize things in their eternal aspects, and to hold every little accident in relation to the great whole of things; to seize character as much as possible as a function of infinity, and relations of characters in terms of great breathing, shifting universal forces. Through its perpetual immanence there come those bits of expression of a depth and poignancy

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[80] George Santayana, "William James: Critique by George Santayana" <u>The Shock of Recognition</u>, Edmund Wilson, editor (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Doran and Company, Inc., 1943), p. 869.

[81] Paul Rosenfeld, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 113-4.

> scarcely matched by another novelist; those renditions of character that in a few poignant sentences give a feeling of the whole of life; those common phrases taken from ordinary ways of talk that strike the tone of destinies, planes of living, whole world-views.[82]

With very much less flourish, Edmund Wilson, in a passage already quoted has said of Three Lives that Miss Stein seems to have caught

> the very rhythms and accents of the minds of her heroines: we find ourselves sharing the lives of the Good Anna and Gentle Lena so intimately that we forget about their position and see the world limited to their range, just as in Melanctha's case - . . . - we become so immersed in Melanctha's world that we quite forget its inhabitants are black. . . Behind the limpid and slightly monotonous simplicity of Gertrude Stein's sentences, one becomes aware or her masterly grasp of the organisms, contradictory and indissoluble, which human personalities are.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> In "Three Lives," the rhythmic repetitions were successful in conveying the recurrences, the gradual unwinding of life, and in the dialogue they produced the effect of slow-minded people . . .[83]

It is hard to estimate just how successful Miss Stein was in her later fiction in this matter of catching the rhythms and accents of the minds of her characters, and in conveying her grasp of the contradictory and indissoluble elements of human personalities. In the latter half of The Making of Americans she had set up so complicated a system of types of people and variation in types that the essential mystery of human persons which is the message of all great writing about humans is somehow lost in the struggle, and the discussion moves to another level than that of creative fiction. And always after The Making of Americans her fiction is concerned with less fundamental

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82 Ibid., p. 116 and p. 130-131.

83 Wilson, Axel's Castle, p. 237-239.

matters than the essential nature of man. In Brewsie and Willie humans are human again and rather lovable and the dignity of the human person is implicit, but the work is hardly fiction at all. If Ida successfully exhibits the accent of the mind of its heroine, the heroine's mind is in a strange, muddled, superficial region of being.

Of Miss Stein's fiction, only Three Lives and The Making of Americans give any real, penetrating insights into the nature of man and his life and his relationships.

Edwin Muir has mentioned that for him, one of the strongest tendencies of contemporary fiction is that tendency to

> reduce all the manifestations of the human consciousness, all human relations, emotions, thoughts to their elements. Every reality which is not psysiological is now sceptically analysed into something else. The traditional, which is to say the distinctively human, conceptions of such things as love, friendship, honour, duty, are not accepted as obvious realities.[84]

Where did Gertrude Stein stand on this problem? It seems to me that in those two early books she was very interested in, deeply sympathetic to"human", personalized relations. Whether her attempt of change mid-way in The Making of Americans spring from a scientific and anti-humanistic urge to separate everyone, to sort out types of people and variations of these types, cannot necessarily be inferred, even though the process did result in a hero who was a shadow figure haunting the latter half of the book. And in Miss Furr and Miss Skeene Gertrude Stein was not departing from her earlier preoccupation with the important

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[84] Edwin Muir, Transition, (New York: The Viking Press, 1926), p. 208.

role of friendship in life, she was simply illustrating that with insipid, shallow people nothing but a shallow, unimportant relationship can result.

Miss Stein's contribution to literature is many faceted. Her total importance to that literature may not yet have been sufficiently clearly estimated. But in the field of English fiction what she had to affirm of human relations she did with a real belief that these relationships were based on human values and were worthy of much examination for this reason. And whatever there was of communicated "reality" had this same basis, this same knowledge of men's dignity and lovableness.

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