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## Gertrude Stein Among the Cubist Poets

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### Abstract

Gertrude Stein was born on February 3, 1874, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania (which amalgamated with Pittsburgh in 1907) to upper-class German parents, Daniel and Amelia Stein. Large portion Gertrude Stein's popularity stems from a modest contemporary art gallery she co-founded with her brother Leo Stein from 1904 until 1913. When she moved to Paris, she admired of the Cubist Movement and especially the works of Pablo Picasso. This research deals with Gertrude Stein and her position among the cubist poets. It gives a good detail about the beginning and the effect of such movements and its elements and ends with the conclusion that sums up the finding of the study.

**Keywords:** Cubism, Gertrude Stein, Barque, Picasso, poetry

### 1-Gertrude Stein's Brief Biography

Gertrude Stein, a modernist novelist, went to Paris in 1903 and began a literary career that produced *Tender Buttons* and *Three Lives*. Stein was also an avid art collector and the presenter of a salon where expatriate writers Ernest Hemingway, Sherwood Anderson, and Ezra Pound sat. Stein traveled to Paris, France, in 1903 to live with her brother, Leo, where they began collecting post-Impressionist paintings, assisting numerous famous painters such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso (Richardson,2015:65). At 27, rue de Fleurus, she and Leo founded a well-known literary and artistic salon. In 1912, Leo relocated to Florence, Italy, bringing several of his works with him. Stein stayed in Paris with

Alice B. Toklas, her assistant whom she met in 1909. Toklas and Stein would be longtime friends. Stein made a successful lecture tour of the United States in 1934 but returned to France, where she would reside during World War II. After the liberation of Paris in 1944, she was visited by many Americans. In addition to her later novels and memoirs, she wrote librettos to two operas by Virgil Thomson: *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934) and *The Mother of Us All* (1947)(Katz, 1983:93).

## **2-G. Stein and Cubism**

The specific provenance of each painting, its origin and effect, appeared to her to be minor worries in comparison to the one enormous truth that a new visual reality had formed on her walls. Even the can vases themselves, in her opinion, were less essential than putting them all together in a place where their value would be observed (Fendelman.,2015:481).

Gertrude Stein herself was among those who took note. Giving the act of perceiving such a high value in the worlds of art and literature surely reflected vanity and self-congratulation. She believed that paintings expressed a better explanation of aesthetic perception, one that required the artist, the object, and the viewer to be linked together in a united reality that would stay insufficient if any of its modules were missing. Stella Stein believed that the spectator was a necessary component of the aesthetic fact of art, and her paintings were no exception. The paintings' starkly juxtaposed visual elements were more of a set of instructions or a trail left by previous action than the contours of a finished object. An unseen picture, an unread masterpiece, was to Stein like a ballerina in the wings: only possibly a dancer (Ibid.482).

Perhaps it was Stein's use of her own autobiography to articulate this formula that alienated the cubists whose works she chose to demonstrate. In Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography*, critics of cubism argue that their efforts to reorganize the viewer's perceptions were seen as supplements to Stein's own work. In retaliation for what they saw as her smothering claims of patronage, they frequently

displayed hurt pride rather than firm opposition. Her fictitious autobiography was the finest format for this goal. Stein was merely attempting to elucidate the new theories and practice them at the same time, since he was always happy to bring numerous arts into action at the same time.

Gertrude Stein's believed character "Alice B. Toklas," marked with a real woman's name, illustrates Gertrude Stein viewpoints that may be a true documentation of what Gertrude Stein thinks of herself, what Gertrude Stein believes Alice Toklas appears to believe about her, or what Gertrude Stein pretends Alice Toklas truly believes about her. The domain in which the book's various pieces are turned to create a new reality is the author's imagination. Since this literary hall of mirrors runs all the way around, the differences between the author's thinking and the external reality that fills that mind are lost. Stein exploits the reader's perplexity by mocking him. "About six weeks ago," she has Alice Toklas remark at the close of the story, "Gertrude Stein replied, 'It does not appear to me that you will ever write that autobiography.' " You already know what I'm going to do. I'm going to do it for you... And she has, and this is the end result" (Stein,1926: 87).

Stein appeared to love this sort of little joke, and her copy of the *Autobiography* implies that she made changes to give the impression of doubtful authorship. The printed version omits the author identification and merely indicates that it would be Alice B. Toklas' "autobiography." The original edition, which is now part of Yale's Beinecke Library's Stein collection, states on the opening page: "*Twenty-five years with Gertrude Stein and Autobiography by Alice Babette Toklas.*" Gertrude Stein's Alice B. Toklas has been redrawn, with the words "Sincerely yours, Alice B." replaced by "Alice Toklas". The book's premise is that reality is a trick of the light. Like other Alices in literature, her Alice shrinks and grows according to the vagaries of the imagination. (Stein,1973: 84).

Eventually, Stein reasoned, the discrepancies in appearances activated the

viewer's imagination; in the Autobiography, imagination is always the one who saves confusion from the edge of catastrophe. When everyone has capitulated to its allure, the traditional distinctions vanish and all levels of experience are seen to coexist on an equal footing. The simplest and most inconsequential aspects of life travels done, meals eaten, images seen and acquired become totally interwoven elements in Stein's imagined reality. The form of fictitious autobiography, as well as the emphasis on enumerating the insignificant, subverts even the artist's traditional function in selecting and arranging his material (Fendelman,2015:483).

Her escape behind Alice Toklas' skirts is only another way of stressing her new objective, which is to not limit what unfolds in arbutus and expand art until it includes all. Stein's role is analogous to the one assigned to Picasso in Apollinaire's study on cubist painters. " "A new guy," he continues, "and the world is his new presentation." He goes over the components and the details.... The enumeration has epic grandeur and will rupture into drama when directed..." (Apollinaire, 1970: 19).

Stein set no limits around herself while pursuing the mere process of enumeration. In her Autobiography, Gertrude Stein describes cubism as the "nameless personality" - a phrase coined by Braque in his rejection of cubism. This notion is only used to explain how Stein grew confused about which influences influenced which artists. Barque says that the cubists' drive for "originality" drove them to "erase their own individuality," fooling the uninitiated. He considers Stein to be like those innocents because of the way she describes artists she and Alice Toklas have known, dismissing the possibility that her discussion of painters she and Alice Toklas have known is part of her own nameless self. Picasso's "Accordionist" and Braque's "Man with a Guitar" were made by some global aesthetic spirit, Braque says (Fendelman, 2015:484).

Two paintings of the Platonic dance of forces are completely independent of expressive content or personal qualities. The emphasis on subsurface order

does not provide the impression that the displayed objects lack individual existence. Braque's "Being and existence" draws the viewer's attention away from their position as "being" and toward their past in the domain of "existence". What Braque overlooked was Gertrude Stein's desire to illustrate the contradiction that limiting individual viewpoints may lead to the possibility of shared visions. Despite the fact that these two paintings depict the same dance, they never allow themselves to be easily grouped together as depictions of Platonic form. The author's method is influenced by the difficulties of distinguishing between "actual" and "imaginary" people such as "Gertrude Stein" and "Alice Toklas." Relationships occur from the arrangement of Alice Toklas's shallow banter, which, in their self-contradiction, must either disintegrate the book or draw the reader into it to put the right (Fendelman.485).

The reader is engaged as a type of juggling, balancing in his mind the opposing pulling inclinations toward fiction and history and giving them life through motion that they could not have. The voice of Alice Toklas constantly talks of the raw material of imagination, the day-to-day minutiae of her existence. When she declares that Gertrude Stein has given purpose to her existence, we are reminded that this is true in the most evident sense since Stein developed the same voice with which Alice Toklas talks. However, if we are to seek the root of this meaning, we must do it through the channel of Alice Toklas's wandering recollections. There is no way for the reader to keep half of what the book has to offer, but all of it makes a restless package.

Presumably Stein had some of these issues in mind when she declared that "composition is explanation," using "composition" as a synonym for "arrangement." Because the corollary to this primary premise is that "nothing changes from generation to generation but the object seen," she would feel justified in assuming that the appropriate arrangement of fluctuating visible appearances must lead to the reemergence of unchanging and invisible realities (Stein.1925:26). The artist's job was to constantly rearrange things. She believed

that when each generation saw new things, it lost its connection to the forms. The artist's creations were intended to aid the responding observer in locating them. The juxtaposition of appearances may, in the viewer's mind, generate a unity, some formal arrangement comparable in origin to the unity that unites all the many modalities of viewing Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas in the *Autobiography*. However, the idea of an imaginary autobiography is merely one of Stein's methods for constructing a stunning composition from which an explanation may emerge.

The reoccurring themes of Alice Toklas' raise concerns regarding the link between creative production and the nature of reality, in addition to the form. Throughout the *Autobiography*, she returns to tales about how various personalities or kinds might be depicted, what portraiture means, and, most importantly, how the artist's or viewer's imagination acts upon the world around him until it becomes a unity of which he is a part. The most renowned of them focuses on Picasso's image of Gertrude Stein. It's the story of how an artist becomes so engrossed in his subject that a reciprocal bond develops between the two. The artist's imagination and his model's undigested reality combine to form a third reality that is independent of both the artist and the model, but more essential than either since it reveals something common to both.

That this may not be a realistic portrayal of Gertrude Stein and Picasso's actual relationships, Stein exploits their friendship to infer this meaning. Picasso's portrait of her is seen by her as a pivotal milestone in the evolution of awareness. Stein argues that Picasso has attempted an understanding of the forces that connect experience in the twentieth century by experimenting with appearances and rearranging composition. The forces may be the same as in previous generations, but Picasso has chosen to confront them via the bewilderment of new, modern "things seen." Gertrude Stein, by implication, does the same thing in her *Autobiography*. The story starts with Alice Toklas' first visit to the *Rue de Fleurus*. Gertrude and Leo Stein let her to explore by herself and educate her

eyes, since she is perplexed by all the modern artworks on the walls. According to Alice Toklas, the new vision bewildered everyone at first, therefore it was usually better to leave them alone for a while until their eyes were acclimated to it.

Alice Toklas is seated next to Picasso at dinner and is able to make her first attempt at making sense of what she has witnessed. She complements him on his Gertrude Stein portrait. "Yes," Picasso responds, "everyone says she doesn't look like it, but it doesn't matter, she will" (Stein, 1975:14). Picasso's explanation of this formula contributes to the Autobiography's structural premise of instruction by aesthetics. Alice Toklas, perplexed by her experience with the Steins' art collection, sits down for her first tutorial on how to look at modern painting. She learns how the new photographs direct the present viewer's attention to reality by learning about the production of Gertrude Stein's portrait. In turn, Alice Toklas relates the tale of the portrait's creation in order to educate her own audience.

This incident, like many others that take on epic dimensions, has rather unknown roots. According to Alice Toklas, no one knows exactly how Picasso came to want to execute the Stein portrait:

They can remember the first time that Picasso dined at the Rue de Fleurus and they can remember the first time Gertrude Stein posed for her portrait at rue Ravignan but in between there is a blank.... Picasso had never had anybody pose for him since he was sixteen years old, he was then twenty-four and Gertrude Stein had never thought of having her portrait painted and they do not either of them know how it came about (Ibid.55).

Alice Toklas writes, "from the mystery of this initial decision arises the much larger mystery of a completely new relationship between pictures and reality." Gertrude Stein's "clear inclination then and always toward essential abstraction" (Ibid .78) her desire, that is, to construct the forms of her life out of her own thinking is shown to have been the basis of Picasso's failure to get her likeness quite right. Gertrude Stein goes to Picasso's atelier on a daily basis to pose on the enormous broken arm chair earth stove. Picasso is unsatisfied with his work day after day. At one point Andrew Green "begged and begged that it should be left



as it was. But Picasso shook his head and said 'non'" (Ibid. 57). Stein, as shown sitting at Picasso's easel, becomes a symbol of the twentieth century; in attempting to capture her, Picasso, according to Alice Toklas, is attempting to capture the contemporary. We are told that she is properly cast in this role because, in between sittings, she has embarked on her own crusade to deal with new perception by laboriously minting the sentences of the still unfinished *Three Lives* a volume that Alice Toklas claims is "the first definite step away from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in literature" (Stein,1967:66).

The ego and its capacities are the new objects observed, according to Alice Toklas' progressively developing tale of the painting's genesis. The Gertrude Stein who sits for Picasso is shown as a new contemporary hero who maintains the truth of objects and people in undistorted thinking, hence owning the potential to build a universe that embraces everyone and everything out of himself. She investigates consciousness in the same way that men in former times investigated divine will or physical principles of cause and effect; subjective imagination is the reform by which she refines a unity of experience. Picasso must therefore approximate her being whereas painting her by striking existence in his imagination. Furthermore, he must do so in such a manner that the process is implied in the completed product, as the Autobiography does later, since it is in the process itself that the artist, his topic, and his audience share a common ground of creative endeavor.

The extraordinary way Picasso completes the portrait exemplifies all of these issues; after nearly ninety sittings, he paints out the entire head, irritably saying, "I can't see you any longer when I look" (ibid.65), and implying, by the way, that what he is looking for is no longer Gertrude Stein's physical appearance. Gertrude Stein's physical appearance has contributed as much as it can to his creativity. Picasso must supply the remaining components. Picasso was able to finish the image "out of his brain... without having seen Gertrude Stein again" after fully understanding the basics of what he was doing (ibid.70). "It had been a profitable

winter," according to Alice Toklas, since "in the protracted fight with the picture of Gertrude Stein, Picasso transitioned from the Harlequin, the delightful early Italian phase to the intensive conflict that was to finish in cubism" (Ibid. 66). He had established the ideal relationship between object and observer as the main subject of his work by replacing an imagined notion for Gertrude Stein's actual look.

The center of such a painting is neither the object set against other objects nor the substance of the object disclosed. Rather, it is a notion that the artist has about the outside world. The further he explores his own concept, the closer he gets to embodying true objectivity. His issue isn't gathering new facts, but rather clarifying his thoughts on what he's previously seen. The tale of Picasso's portrait is thus a wonderful metaphor for what Stein accomplishes in the *Autobiography*, because Picasso's relationship with her is analogous to her relationship with Alice Toklas. It is also the connection Stein imagined she had with her characters while writing *Three Lives*. The portrayal of the models in all of these examples is closer to reality since it was first absorbed in the artist's head, only to be re articulated afterwards as a concept that sprang from him.

Picasso recovers swiftly from the shock of witnessing Gertrude Stein having her hair chopped short, according to Alice Toklas, since he finally understands this process. Although he is first upset that the likeness between her and the photograph has been removed, he quickly realizes that the resemblance is unimportant. Gertrude, "he cries out on first encountering her, "What is it, what is it. "Measuring the degree of the change, he says "And my portrait".... then his face softening he adds, "*mais, quand meme, tout est, all the same it is all there*"(Stein,1933: 70). It is an observation that is a mirror image of one he said before when he saw that Gertrude Stein will ultimately resemble the painting even though she did not when she portrait it. It's also similar to Gertrude Stein's statement on the painting: "to me, it's 1." (Brinnin ,1959:74). Each of these examples alluded to the potential of a reality in which experience stimulates but

does not dominate.

The status of an art item is determined not by its reflection in other things, but by the conflicts and harmonies it causes when it is in contact with a spectator. A work's success or failure is assessed by its ability to elicit active engagement from its audience and, as a result, to instill in the audience the impression that they share a similar nature with the surrounding universe. The greatest achievement of art, according to Stein, is to persuade its followers that human awareness and outward reality are not Taliento each other. As a result, when Gertrude Stein gathers a group of artists for lunch, she positions each one next to his or her own work. Everyone but Matisse gets the joke and leaves happy. Each painter sees a unique combination of subjective and objective reality in his or her own work.

In this view of art, portraiture is crucial because it builds the most difficult connection of all: that between man and man. Picasso's depiction of Gertrude Stein Stein's rendering of Alice, Toklasor Picasso's rendering of Gertrude Stein is a testament to the artist's ability to overcome solitude when he recreates life out of imagination. Stein seems to believe that such a reproduction would conquer the fluctuating character of appearances by reencoding them to existence. The greatest achievement of art, according to Stein, is to persuade its followers that human awareness and outward reality are not Taliento each other. As a result, when Gertrude Stein gathers a group of artists for lunch, she positions each one next to his or her own work. Everyone but Matisse gets the joke and leaves happy. Each painter sees a unique combination of subjective and objective reality in his or her own work.

To escape that level of cynicism, art is elevated to the level of religion for her. She is unable to accept that any topic, particularly a human one, can elude the artist. "One of the things that constantly troubles her about painting," Alice Toklas observes, "is the problem that the artist experiences and that drives him to painting still life, because the human being, after all, is not paintable" (Stein,1975:146). No one can deny that Stein derived Picasso's ideas from

Picasso. The evidence simply reveals that Picasso's 1906 self-portrait, which is presently on display at the Philadelphia Museum, has essential structural elements with the 1906 Gertrude Stein image, which is on display at the Metropolitan. Stein's explanation for the resemblance in look is open to anybody who wants to utilize it, just as one may accept or not believe her when she claims she genuinely meant to write "everybody's autobiography." Perhaps she was content just knowing that no one would ever be able to tell where one imagination began and the other ended in her work. That is, after all, the requirement for writing someone else's autobiography.

### **3. Conclusion**

Though Gertrude collected cubist paintings, particularly those of Picasso, Cézanne had the greatest visual effect on her work. Stein addresses the issue of reality perception partly because the artists desired to reflect the world in a new way. As a cubist poet, she draws attention to the idea that all sides of an item are constantly there, even though we cannot see them at all times by showing it from every angle. As a result, she not only incorporates simultaneity into her works, but she also adds a new dimension to it: time. Here is a connection to the new dynamic environment in which the artists and cubist poets lived, feeling the urge to express themselves via cubism. She also claims that she and the Cubists inverted the treatment of temporality in their own artworks.

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