

Contexts for Reading Gertrude Stein's
The Making of Americans

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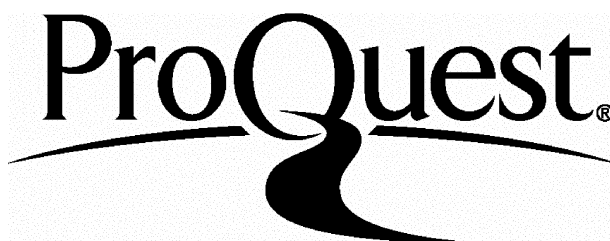
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Abstract

This thesis provides a contextualizing approach to Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1903-1911), using her notebooks, correspondence and college compositions dating from the 1890s, as well as the more well-known *Fernhurst*, *QED*, and 'Melanctha'; the study ends in 1911. Each chapter discusses representative texts with which Stein was familiar, and which had a discernible effect on the themes and style of the novel. In view of a critical tradition which has often obscured her nineteenth-century contexts, this reading provides a clearer definition of the social and intellectual environment which shaped her literary experiment.

In chapter 1 I consider the influence of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics* (1898). Stein's college themes and the speech, 'The Value of College Education for Women' (1898), reveal her feelings about the possibility of female creativity. Stein's essay, 'Degeneration in American Women' (1901), which was only recently discovered, is also informed by contemporary gender politics.

Stein's inclusion of sections of her early novella, *Fernhurst*, into the middle of *The Making of Americans* may be seen as the pivotal episode of the novel, demonstrating Stein's disillusion with the realistic idiom. It is influenced by her reading of Alfred Hodder's philosophical work, *The Adversaries of the Sceptic* (1901), and his novel, *The New Americans* (1901). These are discussed in chapter 2.

In chapter 3 I discuss the characterological intent of Stein's novel in relation to Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1903). Stein's work presents direct stylistic similarities to and verbal echoes of Weininger, not only in her use of his types. Weininger's anti-Semitism and anti-feminism influence Stein's images of American as masculine and robust, and Jewish as effeminate and degenerate. Stein eventually satirizes the sexologist's method.

Finally, in chapter 4 I show how the inadequately addressed question of Stein's Jewishness may be linked to her reception of contemporary immigration stories. These include Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917) and Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912). Stein's college essay, '*The Modern Jew Who Has Given up the Faith of his Fathers Can Reasonably and Consistently Believe in Isolation*' (1896), which represents Stein's clearest expression of her view of race, and a college theme which is her earliest attempt at an immigration story, also throw light on representations of Jewish and American identity in *The Making of Americans*.

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Abbreviations

AS *The Adversaries of the Sceptic*

F *Fernhurst*

MA *The Making of Americans*

NA *The New Americans*

SC *Sex and Character*

WE *Women and Economics*

INTRODUCTION

‘She began at this time a long book which has not yet been published called “THE MAKING OF AMERICANS BEING THE HISTORY OF A FAMILY’S PROGRESS”. She used this as a study of style. It is tremendously long and enormously interesting and out of it has sprung all modern writing.’¹

STEIN’S CONTEXTS

In 1902, while still living in the United States, Gertrude Stein began making notes for a story of three generations of a recently immigrated but assimilated, bourgeois American family, which, when she started writing it in 1903, she called ‘The Making of Americans Being the History of a Family’s Progress’. This project, based on her own German Jewish family, who had arrived in America in the 1840s, very quickly petered out; Stein moved to Paris and completed instead the three stories of black and immigrant working women which comprise *Three Lives* (1905-6, published 1909). Following favourable reviews, she returned to ‘The Making of Americans’ and transformed it, between 1908 and 1911, into her 925-page *magnum opus*, published in 1925, *The Making of Americans* (hereafter *MA*).²

Since its first publication *MA* has commonly been seen as a failure, if often a glorious one.³ Only one full-length study has so far been published on *MA*, despite its gigantic proportions and its status as one of the earliest documents of literary modernism.⁴ Its apparent unassailability may be overcome by a contextual study which resituates it within the concerns from which it originated. There has been no such contextual study.

Evaluating *MA* in later years, Stein declared that it was completely new. While she claimed that Joyce had ‘one hand in the past’, in her work she said ‘the newness and

¹ Stein, autobiographical notes for *Geography and Plays*, 1922, Yale Collection of American Literature (hereafter, YCAL).

² The edition I am using is *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family’s Progress* (Normal, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995). This is a facsimile reprint of the original 1925 Contact Press edition.

³ Aiken, ‘We Ask for Bread’, *New Republic*, April 4, 1934, 219; Bridgman, *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 61; and Fullbrook, *Free Women* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1990), 74-80, all regard it as a ‘disaster’.

⁴ Moore, *Gertrude Stein’s The Making of Americans*.

difference is fundamental'.⁵ In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein sees Henry James as the 'parent' to whom she is 'naturally antagonistic', and perhaps this is a useful way of looking at her approach to influence.⁶

There has been a perception of *MA* - partly fuelled by Stein's own rhetorical insistence that it represented a complete break with the past - as a work which somehow defies traditional attribution of context and cultural inheritance. Ammons, for example, generalizes that Stein's language is 'Simple, unliterary, decontextualized';⁷ Bowers states that 'Stein's work will not support a traditional exegesis because it cannot be reduced to messages or even to themes outside the world of the text.'⁸ These comments are based on Stein's later work, and the late publication of *MA* clearly complicates its reception; nevertheless it makes it all the more important to affirm the origins of Stein's brand of modernism in turn of the century debates. By 1925 *MA* still had the power to appall its readers (or rather, its non-readers, since many of them confessed to being unable to read it), but it was completed in 1911, making it a document of a pre-war era occupied with a different set of problems, and also making it one of the first and most daring modernist literary experiments - its relation to contemporary debates is therefore particularly significant.

Benstock argues that 'we can no longer 'map' modernism without mapping its conceptual definitions and founding assumptions'.⁹ Stein is clearly not a referential author on the scale of Joyce, but that does not mean that references are absent from her work. *MA* richly exemplifies modernism's concern over how to make use of the past. Stein was extraordinarily well read, in terms of volume, scope and diversity of reading - but her voracious reading was culled from what took her fancy, and she was not a conventional reader.¹⁰ Benstock has claimed that Stein's allusiveness 'needs far greater attention than it has so far received'.¹¹

⁵ Stein quoted in Haas, editor, *A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Gertrude Stein* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1971), 29.

⁶ *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 87.

⁷ *Conflicting Stories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 97.

⁸ *Gertrude Stein* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 153.

⁹ 'Expatriate Sapphic Modernism', *Lesbian Texts and Contexts*, ed. Jay and Glasgow (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 184.

¹⁰ 'Stein's way of absorbing influence was aberrant and unusual'; Katz, 'The First Making of *The Making of Americans*: A Study Based on Gertrude Stein's Notebooks and Early Versions of Her Novel (1902-1908)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1963), 269.

¹¹ *Textualizing the Feminine* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 199.

Because of a tradition of reductive readings of Stein that concentrated on her Paris salon and her influence on other writers, Bush has been keen to assert that Stein does more than look backwards.¹² Her work, particularly of the period after *MA*, has been allied with postmodernism by a number of readers. However, the subject of this thesis is the early part of her career, which began in the nineteenth century.

Critics of Stein's work have frequently felt the lack of a 'personal history or a cultural background' that B.F. Skinner missed in *Tender Buttons*.¹³ *MA* is built on her 'personal history', but it also clearly has a 'cultural background'. It is also partly because Stein, self-styled queen of vanguard modernism, held herself aloof from issues of Jewishness, just as she articulated a nonchalance about feminism which sometimes sounds like outright misogyny, that *MA* has not often been read as a cultural document. In the 1960s Katz wrote about a tradition which had obscured her proper contexts; that tradition has been disrupted but not entirely overcome.¹⁴

Hoffman in 1965 and Brinnin in 1968 both began their studies of Stein's work with suggestions of the relevance of the cultural milieu of the first decade of the twentieth century, but the contextual approach to *MA* has been fragmentary and inconsistent.¹⁵ Many writers have dropped tantalizing hints at the influences which I discuss here, and the cultural and literary trends with which *MA* interacts. It seems right that these different contexts should be brought together, and that these suggestions should be rendered rather more definite.

More recently, critics have had more specific ambitions for incorporating Stein within various cultural and intellectual traditions, which I explain below. Many have been honest about their own perplexity, or at least have transferred it into an appreciation of Stein's many contradictions.¹⁶ Bush also counsels us to 'expect from the novel a variety of tones, and indeed contradictory attitudes to the fate of American

¹² *Half Way to Revolution* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1991), 291.

¹³ Skinner, 'Has Gertrude Stein a Secret?', *Atlantic Monthly* 153.1 (January 1934), 52.

¹⁴ 'The First Making', 33-34; 198.

¹⁵ Brinnin, *The Third Rose* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1968), xiv; Hoffman, *The Development of Abstractionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), 16.

¹⁶ e.g. Fichtelberg *The Complex Image* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 173; Fifer, *Rescued Readings* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 33; Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 60; Bush, 'Toward the Outside', *Twentieth Century Literature* 24.1 (Spring 1978), 27.

history turning into social behaviour'.¹⁷ But it is not so anomalous that we cannot make conclusions about it which indicate its wider relevance.

MA is both the result of a particular set of encounters with a particular set of texts and contexts, and a part of a general response to social and intellectual currents. It is an instructive example of a modernist's arrival at the techniques of modernism, by both idiosyncratic and collective paths.

Many of Stein's critics have concentrated on her uniqueness or anomaly.¹⁸ In fact *MA* was reliant on a response to the literary past that she later wanted to forget. This includes both early emulation and eventual deliberate distancing. *MA* is indeed in many ways unique. The latter stages of *MA* are markedly separate from the realistic style of the beginning: the change came within *MA* itself. This shift in emphasis relates to Stein's idea of a generational shift between two centuries, which to some extent she links to England (or Europe) and America. It came partly as a result of her ambitious plan of reading her way through English literature.¹⁹

A further problem in the perception of *MA* has been its generic classification. *MA* resembles an autobiographical novel, a family saga, and a modernist version of the *Künstlerroman*, but it was also conceived as a history, and evolves into a complex study of psychological traits and typology. Stein herself frequently referred to it simply as 'The Long Book'; several critics refer to it as a 'chronicle';²⁰ one critic calls it an 'anti-novel', another a 'meta-novel'; there is a reluctance simply to call it a novel. One reviewer, avoiding such distinctions, just referred to it as 'prose'.²¹

The question of how *MA* stands up to the terms of history, autobiography, and scientific venture should be considered in the light of Stein's later flouting of genre (for example, her 'sonnets', which exhibit practically none of the traditional attributes of the sonnet,²² or her operas/plays), and transgression of discipline - literary "portraiture" taken to extremes - as well as the upheaval in these classifications which was general to the period, but there remains the fact that during the writing of *MA* Stein made the most

¹⁷ 'Toward', 33.

¹⁸ For example, Bush refers to her 'extraordinary and original combinations of issues', *ibid.*, 38.

¹⁹ Katz, *op. cit.*, 10.

²⁰ Hoffman, *op. cit.*, 105; Katz, *op. cit.*, 160.

²¹ Knapp, *Gertrude Stein* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1990), 153. Weinstein, *Gertrude Stein and the Literature of the Modern Consciousness* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1970), 45. Anonymous, clipping from *Daily Oklahoman*, 25 February, 1934 (YCAL).

²² 'Sonnets That Please', *Bee Time Vine and Other Pieces, 1913-1927* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1953), 220-21.

important transition of her literary career. It was at first a traditional story, in line with Stein's obsession with normality. This thesis attempts to describe the change, and to consider why it occurred.

Hemingway wrote that *MA* 'began magnificently, went on very well for a long way with great stretches of brilliance' but then degenerated into repetitious rubbish.²³ His evaluation identifies an important turning point; following the final version's early 'magnificent' passages Stein was to decide that 'country house living' is 'an old story' (*MA* 283); in other words nineteenth-century class distinctions are broken down, along with the ways of representing them. 'I was trying to escape from the narrative of the nineteenth century into the actuality of the twentieth', she wrote.²⁴ But as I have implied, although she professes to be moving beyond them, early influences and interests persist.

Stein's letters of the period show that she was reading Arnold Bennett, who had a similar 'artistic obsession with ordinaryness' to her own,²⁵ and whose *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902) and *The Old Wives Tale* (1908) had established him in a realist tradition which was hardly challenging the precepts of genre.²⁶ Of all contemporary English authors, she chose to send copies of *Three Lives*, when it was published in 1909, to Bennett, Wells, author at this time of several realistic middle-class novels (among many other things), Shaw, and Galsworthy (whose *The Man of Property*, the first novel of what would become the Forsyte saga, had appeared the year before): the 'four Olympians' of the contemporary English literary scene, as the friend she had asked to distribute the copies dubbed them.²⁷ Originally Stein aspired to the popularity that each of these writers had attained.

In a passage in the original opening chapters of 'The Making of Americans' (1903), Stein states that American painters 'use the old world' for its 'accomplished harmony between a people and their land'.²⁸ We might add that at this stage her American

²³ *A Moveable Feast* (London: Arrow Books, 1994), 16.

²⁴ Letter from Stein to Rousseau Voorhies, *Chicago Daily News*, March 14 1934 (YCAL).

²⁵ Keating, *The Haunted Study* (London: Fontana, 1991), 234.

²⁶ February 11, 1911, letter from E.L. Erving to Stein: 'I was interested in what you said about Arnold Bennett. From his books I feel that it is perfectly possible that he isn't the real thing, but there is a lot in him.' (YCAL.) Unfortunately, there is no way of telling from this reference what Stein's expressed opinion had been, but one would imagine that by 1911 she did not see him as 'the real thing'.

²⁷ *The Flowers of Friendship*, ed. Gallup (New York: Knopf, 1953), 47. Galsworthy was an unenthusiastic recipient; Wells, after initial bewilderment, professed to admire the work and made repeated plans to meet up with Stein, but never did. There is no record of what either Bennett or Shaw made of the book.

²⁸ *Fernhurst, QED and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), 138.

writing, too, drew on the English scene for its expression of the same virtue. Her novella *Fernhurst* (1904-1905) is set in a world where epigrams are exchanged over cups of tea;²⁹ the entanglements of *QED* (1903) are played out partly in drawing rooms and on the steamer between America and Europe, during museum visits and New York lunches, and at the opera;³⁰ *MA* begins in a world of riding parties and marriage proposals, has its cast of low and high born characters, is on one level a generational family saga, and for the first hundred and fifty or so pages carries out its conventional scheme with perfect authorial tact.³¹ It belongs really to an earlier world than the rest of the novel. Stein's grouping together of 'emotional women and romantic children' makes it clear that she regarded this world as a feminine domain, not just in its characters but in its expression of a female voice, a female literary idiom. But 'sentimental feeling' is attributed to both men and women, and 'I want some time to understand sentimental feeling' becomes a refrain in the book (e.g. 449). The book demonstrates a nominal allegiance to the novel of sentiment understood as a feminine and bourgeois discourse. Stein was keen to belong to the bourgeois, but also to exist outside it.³²

To understand the reasoning behind the momentous stylistic shift that occurred during Stein's writing of *MA*, it is necessary to see it as a book that reflects the new social arrangements of its time. This can be suggested by the different ways of making Americans - and the making of an American national character - that it rehearses. Written at a time of growing American nationalism and interest in the idea of national literature, and epically conceived, although its epic possibilities are never fully confronted, it asks the same question that had been asked since Crèvecoeur's famous 'what is an American?'³³

Stein's obsession with completeness, her attempt to realize a modernist myth of completeness, is implicit in this 'making of Americans'. In *MA* the word 'make' has many uses; chief among them are the sense of economic making - making a fortune or 'making it'; 'coming together to make a whole' in terms of procreation; and the internal

²⁹ *ibid.*, 12.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 75, 89.

³¹ One reviewer compared it to *Buddenbrooks* and *The Forsyte Saga*; anonymous, clipping from *New York Nation*, 11 April 1934 (YCAL).

³² Clark's attempt to 'restore the sentimental *within* modernism, and the sense of great struggle over subjectivity that the resulting contradictions precipitated' is relevant here; *Sentimental Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 4.

³³ *Letters from an American Farmer* (London: Dent, 1912).

making, or constitution, of a person's character.³⁴ In each case there is an emphasis on completion. Each of these becomes a way of addressing Stein's own artistic making of the novel. The word 'making' as it appears in Stein's title means all these ways of becoming complete.³⁵ This completeness will reflect on Stein's authorial sense of completeness; as she puts it, being 'full up' with her characters (e.g. 508).

Just as the word 'making' in Stein's title has many meanings, so does the presumption of 'progress' in the subtitle, 'being the history of a family's progress'. Some critics have seen this as intentionally ironic.³⁶ In *MA* Stein subverts the assumption of the deliberately blithe opening sentence of William Carlos Williams's 'satire on the novel form',³⁷ *The Great American Novel* (1924): 'If there is progress then there is a novel.'³⁸ In particular, the progress of the woman, the Jew, and the self-made genius in America represent Stein's own struggle to establish her artistic integrity in her first novel.

The American national image presented in *MA* is closely bound up with the essential movement, in the book, from the freedom of the West to the constrictions of the East, and a final striking out again for the West. Stein had an early belief in progress which was disrupted during the writing of *MA*. In a college piece of December 21, 1894, she explained that 'all ages must be transitional. If they were not, the world would be at a stand-still and death would speedily ensue.'³⁹ In *MA* there is certainly a sense of the transitional stage which her own generation has reached, as well as the transitions undergone by previous generations. From the writers I discuss in the thesis Stein gleans a notion of American masculinity and American femininity as breeds apart, distinguishing themselves by continual motion. There are different kinds of movement; a masculine, pioneering movement, which is approved of, and a feminine, nervous and ineffectual movement, which is bad.

³⁴ In one passage the three uses occur together (*MA* 427).

³⁵ For other readings of the word 'making' in Stein's title see Bush, 355 and Meyer, introduction to *MA*, xvi.

³⁶ e.g. Gygas, *Gender and Genre* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 20.

³⁷ Williams, *Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1951), 237.

³⁸ *The Great American Novel* (Amherst, Massachusetts: Folcroft, 1973).

³⁹ In this theme she also recognizes the trumpeting of the new age that every age indulges in, and which *MA* also performs.

Stein's image of America relies on contemporary nationalist feeling for the building of a new race.⁴⁰ The making of an American national character and an American national literature are linked. In particular, *MA* develops the trope of the outsider or divided personality as hero,⁴¹ and the concept of a universal consciousness which is related to contemporary discussions of 'The Great American Novel'.⁴²

Many critics have struggled with a conception that Stein's 'I' must be somehow democratic, like Whitman's, for example.⁴³ I think there is some weight behind an assumption that *MA* employs the idea of the universal American,⁴⁴ even if the American in question happens to be Stein herself. *MA* offers an opportunity for the study of how individual or autobiographical stories feed into family stories or chronicles, which in turn feed into the national story or collective novel.

The undermining of hierarchies by the disruption of word order in *MA* has also been seen to have social repercussions. It is not hard to see the radical implications of the idea that 'a book such as *MA* compels us to question the efficacy of our conventional word organization in describing a non-Aristotelian, psychological, process-centered universe'.⁴⁵ Bush has drawn attention to Whitehead's equation of 'language with social order' in this respect; he states that Stein like Whitehead is 'concerned with the nature of process defined in terms which would ask traditional philosophical questions and turn them towards an aesthetics and a socio-cultural psychology'.⁴⁶

There remains the difficult question of the extent of Stein's awareness of the place of her own effects within contemporary debates. When asked in 1933 how she envisaged collectivism she replied that she did not envisage it. There was, she said, 'no such animal'.⁴⁷ Her answers to questions from the *Partisan Review*, in 1939, on the

⁴⁰ See, for example, Chessnut on 'the formation of a future American race', 'The Future American' (1900), *Theories of Ethnicity*, 17, or Roosevelt's 1888 study of Governor Morris; see DiNunzio, ed., *Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 95.

⁴¹ Dearborn, *Pocahontas' Daughters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4.

⁴² For example, those of Howells and Norris (see bibliography).

⁴³ On Stein and Whitman see Fichtelberg, op. cit., 170-71; Couser, 'Of Time and Identity', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 17.4 (Winter 1976), 787-804.

⁴⁴ On the trope of the all-inclusive American mind, see Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States*, 130-131; 168.

⁴⁵ Weinstein, op. cit., 44-45.

⁴⁶ *Half Way to Revolution*, op. cit., 291; 290.

⁴⁷ 'Answer to: metanthropological crisis, a manifesto' (YCAL); published as 'Answer to Eugene Jolas', *How Writing Is Written: Volume II of the Previously Uncollected Writings of Gertrude Stein* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1974), 53.

political dimensions of her writing were vague and dismissive.⁴⁸ She is perhaps more difficult to fathom in this respect than many other writers; partly because of the smokescreen of her own self-conscious naivety (and also the substantial non-mimetic element of her work which leads it to be seen as emanating from an ivory tower),⁴⁹ and partly because of unsightly glimpses of genuine ignorance. For example, in late 1934, in an interview to various reporters on her arrival in the US after a thirty year absence, one of them, frustrated with her seeming unawareness of public affairs, asked her whether she knew Calvin Coolidge was dead - she replied 'Of course, he could have died while I was on the boat.' Coolidge had died on 5 January 1933, nearly two years earlier.⁵⁰ Nevertheless in this thesis I will present evidence of Stein's extreme caniness when approaching social questions.

As a result of her generally undoctinaire approach, there has been some confusion over Stein's politics. In the early days her Bohemianism could lead her to be seen as 'the left-winger from the left bank of Paris'.⁵¹ Stein herself told a reporter for *The New Masses* that she was 'a better communist than the communists'.⁵² Fullbrook sees Stein as attempting 'to embody a democratic ethos in a non-realist mode',⁵³ whereas Ammons suggests that Stein uses 'the appearance of revolution to advance herself in the existing, privileged order',⁵⁴ and Cook claims 'She was Jewish and anti-Semitic, lesbian and contemptuous of women, ignorant about economics and hostile towards socialism'.⁵⁵ Most controversial has been her supposed complicity with the Vichy regime, but even this has been disputed.⁵⁶

My position here, which I think is now the general consensus, is that Stein's work has moments of misogyny and anti-Semitism. What I wish to show is how these ideologies interacted with the debates surrounding Darwinism, feminism, psychology and assimilation, and that the boundaries of allegiance are far less clear-cut than these

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁹ William Carlos Williams repudiated this idea when he said that her work, by 'attend[ing] to its own comprehensive organization' became 'most human', 'The Work of Gertrude Stein', *Pagany*, 1 (January-March 1930), 44.

⁵⁰ *Time*, Nov. 5, 1934.

⁵¹ *Chicago Daily News*, March 8, 1935.

⁵² Schneider, 'Home Girl Makes Good', *New Masses*, 27 November, 1934, 21-22.

⁵³ *Free Women* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1990), 57 (on *MA* particularly, 74).

⁵⁴ *Conflicting Stories*, *op. cit.*, 104.

⁵⁵ 'Women Alone Stir My Imagination', *Signs* 4 (1979): 730.

⁵⁶ See Damon, 'Gertrude Stein's Jewishness, Jewish Social Scientists, and the "Jewish Question"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 42, number 3 (Fall 1996). In 1942 Stein also wrote an introduction to Pétain's speeches; see Van Duren, 'Portrait of a National Fetish', *Modernism/Modernity*, 3.3 (1996).

labels can convey. Stein's misogyny and anti-Semitism are in fact often derived from the very ideologies which seem to represent their opposite.

If Stein conforms to the complicity of conservative, even fascist, ideologies and literary experimentation among modernist writers;⁵⁷ if in her later career, as Benstock writes, she was 'increasingly drawn to a politics of oppression, anti-Semitism, self-protectionism, and social and economic privilege that closed [her] off from any clear understanding of the political stakes between fascism and communism',⁵⁸ this may cast a shadow over the meanings of *MA*. It does nothing to prevent *MA* from being a fascinating cultural document as well as a fascinating literary venture; perhaps it broadens its interest and relevance.

CRITICISM OF *THE MAKING OF AMERICANS*

Leon Katz's 1963 PhD dissertation, 'The First Making of *The Making of Americans*: A Study Based on Gertrude Stein's Notebooks and Early Versions of Her Novel (1902-1908)', was ground-breaking in its collation of biographical, contextual and critical information on the text. Most of the material in it has never been published.⁵⁹ Katz's transcription and numbering of the notebooks is also invaluable. For biographical and source information, I have relied on this and a number of studies.⁶⁰ Works which focus on some aspect of Stein's contexts have obviously been particularly useful.⁶¹ Further reference to relevant readings will be made in appropriate chapters.

⁵⁷ 'Expatriate Sapphic Modernism', *Lesbian Texts and Contexts*, op. cit., 198 n.4.

⁵⁸ 'Paris Lesbianism and the Politics of Reaction, 1900-1940', *Hidden from History*, ed. Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey (New York: NAL, 1989), 333.

⁵⁹ A section on Weininger was published in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 24.1. See also Katz's introduction to *Fernhurst*. For publication details throughout the following survey of criticism, see bibliography.

⁶⁰ I have found Katz, 'The First Making', Mellow, *Charmed Circle*, and Wineapple, *Sister Brother*, most useful. See also Hobhouse's *Everybody Who Was Anybody* and Wagner-Martin's 'Favored Strangers'. On Stein's laboratory work see Hoffman's appendix to *The Development of Abstractionism*. Miller reproduces the Radcliffe themes, and several collections of letters supplement those found in the Stein archive at Yale; see bibliography. Numerous lost generation memoirs deal with Stein's salon days; again, these are listed in the bibliography.

⁶¹ See Spencer, *Patterns of Nationality*, and Wald, *Constituting Americans*, on Stein and nationalism; Dearborn, *Pocahontas's Daughters*, on *MA* as a generational narrative; and Berman's recently published *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of the Community* on *MA*'s representation of the community. See also Doyle's recent 'The Flat, the Round, and Gertrude Stein', on Stein's attitude to race and narrative. Although it concentrates on 'Melanctha', North's *The Dialect of Modernism* is extremely significant for a reading of *MA*'s language. Armstrong's *Modernism, Technology, and the Body* deals suggestively with Stein's relation to the period's experimental psychology. Bush's difficult *Half Way to Revolution* gives many useful insights into the philosophical ferment of her day. Ruddick offers an appraisal of 'Stein and Cultural Criticism in the Nineties' in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 42.3.

Contemporary reaction to *MA* was complicated by the fact that although it was finished in 1911, it was first published in 1925 - a great deal of this is hostile; some of it is included in Curnutt's excellent anthology *The Critical Response to Gertrude Stein*; a lot of clippings collected by Stein herself are preserved in the Yale Collection of American Literature. Perhaps the most useful contemporary responses for my purposes here have been those of William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and Katherine Anne Porter.

Where Stein's literary and social contexts are concerned, criticism has concentrated - often without direct reference to *MA* - on turn of the century feminism,⁶² on attitudes to race,⁶³ on Jewishness,⁶⁴ and on contemporary psychology.⁶⁵ The major context for the recent reception of *MA* is post-war feminism, and in particular a deconstructive feminism.⁶⁶

Many of the lesser known and early works and manuscripts which were for a long time unavailable, and which will be the subject of chapter 1, have only really been dealt with so far by feminist critics. Of these, I have found Doane's *Silence and Narrative* particularly suggestive. Doane identifies a theme of matriarchy in *MA*, as well as hints of incest (so does Ruddick in *Reading Gertrude Stein*). 'Stein both writes about and

⁶² Armatage, 'Gertrude Stein and the Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement' and 'Gertrude Stein: The Mother of Us All'; Blankley, 'Beyond the "Talent of Knowing"'. On Stein and Gilman, see Doane, *Silence and Narrative*. Several critics have mentioned Weininger's effect on *MA*; the most informative are Damon, Katz, Moore, Wineapple, and Will. I discuss these readings in chapter 3.

⁶³ For Stein's relation to primitivism in 'Melanctha', see Braddy, 'The Primitive in Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha"', Cargill, 'The Primitivists', Pavlovskaya, *Modern Primitives*, and Saldívar-Hull's extremely hostile 'Wrestling Your Ally', which calls Stein a 'white supremacist'. Readings of Stein's other works reflecting her involvement in racial debates can be found in Smedman, 'Cousin to Cooning', and Webb, 'The Centrality of Race to the Modernist Aesthetics of Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*'.

⁶⁴ Damon, 'Gertrude Stein's Jewishness' and 'Women, Dogs and Jews'; Hindus, 'Ethnicity and Sexuality in Gertrude Stein'; Van Duren, 'Portrait of a National Fetish'; and Wagner-Martin, 'Gertrude Stein', in *Jewish American Women Writers*. None of these go into much detail about *MA*.

⁶⁵ There has been a great deal of work on Stein and William James, whom I have therefore felt able to deal with only glancingly in this thesis. See, for example, Levinson, 'Gertrude Stein, William James and Grammar'; Ruddick, 'William James and the Modernism of Gertrude Stein'; Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject*; Weinstein, op. cit. See also Bridgman, op. cit., 133-134; Bush, *Half Way to Revolution*; Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 209-289; Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1978), 27-63; Sutherland, *Gertrude Stein* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1951), 1-13; Walker (chapters 1 and 5); Watts, *Rapture Untold* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 44-65.

⁶⁶ See for example DeKoven and Burke, who both apply Kristeva to Stein. On Stein and *écriture féminine*, see also Benstock, in *Textualizing the Feminine*, and Stimpson, 'The Somagrams of Gertrude Stein'. See also Schmitz's *Of Huck and Alice*; although his work on Stein's wordplay does not focus on *MA*, he places her in interesting relation to some unexpected contexts.

stylizes beginnings in *MA*', Doane tells us.⁶⁷ Doane suggests that Stein attempts to vindicate and then begins to question the middle class family.

Other feminist readings tend to concentrate on images of the body in Stein's work, and on Stein's development of a new literary language.⁶⁸ This is linked to erotic strategies of encodement,⁶⁹ and queer theory.⁷⁰

Some feminist interpretations see the pattern of *MA* as charting a movement away from patriarchal authority, in some critics' eyes to the extent of a metaphorical patricide,⁷¹ or the rejection of a specifically religious authority in favour of a female mysticism.⁷²

Feminists have been divided between seeing Stein as a feminist foremother and as a misogynist, even a self-hater. It is an indication of Stein's ambiguity that she is capable of being co-opted to either side.⁷³ Fullbrook, attempting to reclaim Stein for the modernist canon, sees her portrayal of women as combining 'philosophical sophistication and exquisite tenderness'.⁷⁴ Benstock, however, states that 'Stein saw serious writing as a male activity, one to which she made claim by playing the role of the male, by seeing only male modernists as her colleagues and competitors'.⁷⁵ This

⁶⁷ *Silence and Narrative* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), xxxvi. Neuman, writing about autobiography in *Gertrude Stein* (1979), also stresses the importance of beginnings.

⁶⁸ Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*; Gyax, *Gender and Genre*; Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein*; Watts, *Gertrude Stein and Rapture Untold*.

⁶⁹ See Marcet, 'This Must Not Be Put in a Book', and Fifer, who uncovers an unexpected vulnerability in Stein's self-image in her 'obsessively sexual' notebooks: 'Readers of these notebooks will be shocked and saddened by the intensity of Stein's self-hatred'; *Rescued Readings*, op. cit., 33.

⁷⁰ Cook was an early chronicler of Stein's lesbian persona in 'Women Alone Stir My Imagination'. See also Fifer, *Rescued Readings*; Abraham, *Are Girls Necessary?*; Meese, *(Semi)Erotics*, and Benstock, 'Expatriate Sapphic Modernism'. See also Simon's translation of buried language of love between Stein and Toklas, in *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas*. Stimpson's work has been very influential in all these areas: see bibliography.

⁷¹ See Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein*, and Gyax, *Gender and Genre*.

⁷² See Watts, *Rapture Untold*.

⁷³ On Stein's misogyny see Benstock's 'Expatriate Sapphic Modernism', and 'Paris Lesbianism and the Politics of Reaction, 1900-1940'; Cook, 'Women Alone Stir My Imagination'; Cope, "'Moral Deviancy" and Contemporary Feminism'; Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land*, volume 2, *Sexchanges*; Secor, 'Gertrude Stein', and 'The Question of Gertrude Stein'; and Stimpson, 'Gertrude Stein and the Transposition of Gender'.

⁷⁴ *Free Women*, op. cit., 57-58.

⁷⁵ *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900-1940* (London: Virago, 1987), 12. On Stein's relation to the modernist canon, see also Benstock, 'Beyond the Reaches of Feminist Criticism'; Benstock claims that Stein belongs in a special position outside the canon. See also DeKoven, 'Gertrude Stein and the Modernist Canon', and "'Why James Joyce Was Accepted and I Was Not'". On Stein's relation to Hemingway see, e.g., Perloff, "'Ninety Percent Rotarian'"; Wagner, 'Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein'. On Stein and Henry James, see Caramello, 'Reading Gertrude Stein Reading Henry James', and Nadel, 'Gertrude Stein and Henry James', *Gertrude Stein and the Making of Literature*, ed. Neuman and Nadel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988). On Stein and Proust, see Lewis, *Time*

adoption of a 'male' voice, along with what Ruddick describes as the gradual displacement of the 'bourgeois' narrator of *MA* by the scientific and the autobiographical voice, will be examined in the thesis.⁷⁶

CHAPTER PLAN

The organization of the thesis is broadly chronological; I take a different literary or cultural influence in each chapter, and investigate Stein's thematic and stylistic use of the ideas related to it by looking at particular works which it is possible to ascertain that she read. I have approached these works in the order in which Stein herself read them, to indicate the development of her reading.

In chapter 1 I discuss the gender politics of Stein's era, with particular reference to Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Although Gilman is perhaps most celebrated as the author of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, I focus on the relation of *MA* to another work, *Women and Economics* (1898).⁷⁷ Pointing out some similarities and areas of overlap between feminist and anti-feminist debate of the era - in Felski's words, the 'shifting complexities of the modern in relation to gender politics' - helps to illuminate some of Stein's mystifying statements on women.⁷⁸

From the nineteen seventies onwards a steady onslaught of feminist readings (involving a brand of post-war feminism entirely alien to Stein) ensured that her avant-gardism began to be over-connected with an explicitly feminist doctrine. These later, revisionist readings have sometimes relied on an implicit feminist agenda without recourse to feminism's historical meanings for Stein; I would like to alter the terms of these debates by returning to Stein's involvement with the feminism of her day.

At the end of the nineteenth century, feminism was far from homogeneous, and becoming ever less so.⁷⁹ While many feminists still saw vitally important differences

and *Western Man*, Sutherland Gertrude Stein (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1951), 95, and Neuman, *Gertrude Stein* (Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1979), 27.

⁷⁶ *Reading Gertrude Stein*, op. cit., 57.

⁷⁷ The edition I am using is *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

⁷⁸ *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 18.

⁷⁹ The period between 1884 and 1915 has been seen as one of the most crucial in feminism's history (Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), 184). Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 190: 'Obviously, late Victorian feminism was full of contradictions and conflicts,' particularly concerning the subject of motherhood. Showalter is writing about Britain, but the same is true of American feminism.

between the sexes, others lent themselves to direct social reform on the basis that those differences did not exist.⁸⁰ With no single unifying ideology, feminist debate of the period constituted 'a palimpsest of earlier debates'.⁸¹ Adherence to specific issues necessarily worked beyond distinctions of left and right. The work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (at that point Stetsen, but I shall refer to her as Gilman) was so effective partly because it was able to 'confront scientific anti-feminism on its own terms.'⁸²

Women and Economics is important for its radical ideas about the home and its criticism of traditional family structure, and was most notorious in its day for its equation of marriage with prostitution. Connections with *MA* are to be found in the debate about theories of gender distinction (leading later into Stein's theory of oppositional types); the interest in women's education and definition of female creativity, or genius; the importance of racial motherhood; and ideas linking family, home, and progress, in their connection to economic 'making'. In this chapter I look at Stein's notebooks as evidence of the sensibilities governing the origins of *MA*. I also consider a group of earlier Stein texts: the themes written at Radcliffe, and two pieces that reflect Gilman's ideas quite exactly, the speech 'The Value of College Education for Women' and the essay 'Degeneration in American Women', only recently discovered.⁸³

In chapter 2 I discuss the impact on *MA* of the contemporary writer, Alfred Hodder, focusing in particular on a section of the narrative which I call the 'letter episode', which introduces a gap between what Stein means to say and what she is forced to mean.

Stein first read Hodder's novel *The New Americans* as soon as it came out in 1901; Hodder reported conversations with Stein about it in his letters.⁸⁴ I argue that she used scenes from Hodder's novel as well as his life to define her characters in *Fernhurst* and *MA*. Hodder is the inspiration for Phillip Redfern, who appears in both these works. The concept of 'the specious present' which Hodder had formulated in *The Adversaries of the Sceptic* would inform the 'continuous present' of *MA*, with significant repercussions

⁸⁰ Russett, *Sexual Science* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 13.

⁸¹ Tickner, op. cit., 153.

⁸² Clark, op. cit., 13.

⁸³ Its discovery and attribution to Stein is described in Wineapple, 'Woman Is Woman Is Woman', *American Scholar* (Winter 1998), 107-112. The late discovery of the essay has meant that most assessments of Stein's attitudes to feminism (barring only Wineapple's own) have been incomplete.

⁸⁴ Wineapple, *Sister Brother* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 138.

for the novel's way of coping with time in narrative. Importantly, Hodder's name also recurs in Stein's notebooks for *MA* as one of the models for her perception of character. Because chapter 2 of the thesis deals with the relatively unknown figure of Alfred Hodder, it will be worthwhile to explain his background and his connection with Stein.

'Learned, of broad sympathy and practical ideals, Mr. Hodder was a writer of distinction and a realist of rare ability, and possessed a love for his country which found its expression in his advocacy of a stronger state and greater independence in private life.'⁸⁵ In the patriotic language of encomium which it lavishes on all its entries, this is how *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* for the year 1922 describes him. In a significant oversight, the encyclopedia mentions only one of Hodder's marriages, the final one to Mamie Gwinn, and states erroneously that he died 'without issue.' In *MA*, the Redfern/Hodder affair (the notebooks refer to Hodder, not Redfern) serves as the locus of a discussion of virtue.

Hutchins Hapgood, a mutual friend of Stein and Hodder,⁸⁶ summed up Hodder's personality by saying that he was 'hardly a person of our realistic time, yet one who perversely considered himself almost unprecedentedly connected with the truth.'⁸⁷ A seeker of truth is what Stein presents him as, and what she herself aspires to be, in *MA*.

Hodder was born in 1866 in Ohio. At the age of nineteen he went to Colorado to read law, and was admitted to the Colorado bar in 1890. In Colorado he also married a dying young woman, Olive Dickinson, in order to look after her in her final days. Subsequently he studied philosophy under William James at the Harvard graduate school. His work at Harvard was interrupted by a journey to Europe, where he claimed he was continuing his studies. In fact his movements were dictated by the pursuit of his romantic career.

It seems that when Hodder met Jessie Donaldson, probably at Harvard in 1890, he told her 'that he was already married and could not divorce'. After Olive's death, Hodder and Donaldson 'held a personal ceremony, and Jessie took his name.'⁸⁸ This matter was to become the crux of a bitter dispute in later years when Hodder left Jessie for another woman. According to Jessie, they were married. According to Hodder, they

⁸⁵ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (James T. White and Co., 1922), vol. 18, 21.

⁸⁶ Hodder was one of his best friends; Stein became alienated from him, or vice versa - see *A Victorian in the Modern World* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1939).

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 222.

⁸⁸ *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) Vol. 10, 903.

were not. 'In 1891-1893 they were in Germany and Switzerland, where both studied; their daughter Olive was born in the [William] James's summer flat in Florence, Italy, in 1893.'⁸⁹ In 1896 Hodder returned to America to take a post at Bryn Mawr, teaching English and drama. It seems his intention was to leave Jessie and their daughter behind, but they soon followed him, and Jessie was known at Bryn Mawr as 'Mrs Hodder'. In 1897 their son was born.⁹⁰ During this time, Hodder was accused of various liaisons with his students, but the greatest scandal of his career was over his 'extramarital' affair with his fellow lecturer, Mamie Gwinn, who had herself already been romantically linked with the first Dean of Bryn Mawr, Martha Carey Thomas. This affair became the subject of Stein's novella, *Fernhurst* (1904-05, published 1971), subsequently incorporated into *MA*.

In 1898, Hodder declined reappointment at Bryn Mawr, and Jessie and the children returned to Europe. Alfred had promised to join them - but he never did. Instead he continued his passionate relationship with Gwinn, and eventually eloped with her to Europe, marrying her in June 1904. In November his daughter died. Alice James encouraged the suicidal Jessie to return to the U.S. and sue for support,⁹¹ which she did in 1906, but Hodder died 'under somewhat mysterious circumstances' in New York in March 1907, before the case was tried. 'Though Jessie did not benefit from Alfred's estate, she ... continued to cherish his memory.'⁹² Jessie Donaldson Hodder in fact went on to be a very influential women's prison reformer.

Hodder's published career can be briefly summarized. *The Adversaries of the Sceptic* (1901) was a version of his doctoral thesis.⁹³ In New York, after leaving Bryn Mawr, Hodder wrote for the *New York Nation*, contributing essays and stories. Here he also became private secretary to District Attorney William Travers Jerome; he described his experiences during Jerome's 1901 municipal campaign in *A Fight for the City*

⁸⁹ *ibid.* See also Golden, Finding Aid for the Alfred and Mary Gwinn Hodder Papers at Princeton, <http://libweb.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/aids/hodder.html>.

⁹⁰ Hodder never believed the boy, J. Alan Hodder, to be his child, and consequently treated the boy coldly. But it seems his fears were unsubstantiated - Hutchins Hapgood recorded, on meeting the boy years after Hodder's death, that he was 'the living image of Alfred Hodder' as a young man (Hapgood, *op. cit.*, 221-222).

⁹¹ Hodder comments on the lawsuit, which was 'about as nasty as can be', in a letter to Hapgood, YCAL MSS 41, Box 4 [n.d.]: 'There was not the slightest reason why she should have been consulted about my marrying or not or whoring or not; but she is perfectly accurate in her guess that I find her presence and her remarks exasperating.'

⁹² *American National Biography*, *op. cit.*, 903.

⁹³ *The Adversaries of the Sceptic; or, The Specious Present: A New Inquiry into Human Knowledge* (London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1901)

(published serially in the “Outlook”, 1902, and in book form 1903). Under the pen name of Francis Walton he also co-wrote a collection of underworld sketches with his friend, Josiah Flynt Willard, the professional tramp. His only novel, *The New Americans*, was published in 1901. This is the work I will concentrate on in reference to Stein.⁹⁴

Handsome, courteous, humorous, and brilliant, Hodder understood his own brand of masculinity well, as his novel shows: both its strengths and its weaknesses. In his private life he was liable to idealism and though always on guard against the advances of the opposite sex, fatally incapable of rebuffing them when it came to the crunch. Such, anyway, is the myth which surrounded him. It was always felt that women would be his downfall. Bertrand Russell observed that ‘he had a very brilliant mind, and in the absence of women could talk quite interestingly.’⁹⁵ Hodder the New Man, however much like ‘a young god’ he appeared to even his closest friends, was something of an evolutionary failure. ‘He died’, wrote Hutchins Hapgood, with a mixture of admiration and reproof, ‘I really believe, of too much bachelor life.’⁹⁶ He died, in fact, in severe bodily pain (probably from chronic gastritis), as well as mental aggravation on account of a lawsuit brought by the woman who claimed to be his wife, whom he once described as ‘a lady whose business in life was to live in Europe and to let me alone.’⁹⁷ To many of those who knew him, he came to represent the failure of one idealistic form of masculinity.

William James had recommended Hodder for his Bryn Mawr post, and he was indeed a most highly favoured student - the only one who could say his child was born under the great man’s roof.⁹⁸ As a result of his work at Harvard under Josiah Royce, who stated that he ‘was as an undergraduate the most promising student of philosophy who had ever gone through the university,’⁹⁹ Hodder had set to work on a doctorate in philosophy, eventually published as *The Adversaries of the Sceptic* (1901). In his

⁹⁴ *The New Americans* (New York: Macmillan, 1901).

⁹⁵ Wineapple, op. cit., 137.

⁹⁶ Hapgood, op. cit., 152.

⁹⁷ Letter to Hapgood [n.d.], YCAL MSS 41, Box 4. His last days were darkened, it seems, by the collaboration of James and Royce, his heroes, against him in support of the commonlaw wife’s lawsuit. Hapgood comments on ‘the strong disapproval of William James, who had the freest of all minds, but who accepted the prevailing sex-ethics unquestioningly.’ Hodder too had been involved in similar intrigues when he refused to testify for Bird Sternberger in her divorce case, despite having been one of the men to uncover Sternberger’s infidelity. See *Sister Brother*, op. cit., 182. Stein herself, as Bird’s cousin, was avidly interested in the case (see Katz, op. cit., 224-232); it was the basis of the original story of *MA*.

⁹⁸ See Wineapple, ‘Woman is a Woman is a Woman’.

⁹⁹ Hapgood, op. cit., 164.

Preface to this work Hodder acknowledges his mentor, Professor Royce, whose seminars on Kant at Harvard 1891-2 he particularly valued.¹⁰⁰

A tentative friendship existed between Hodder and Stein, although by the time Stein became a published writer Hodder was already dead. This is important, as Stein's own writerly identity in the early stages of her career is connected to her feelings about success and failure which were prompted in part by his example.

Hodder's involvement in political machinations over the government of New York brought him into contact with Stein's cousin, Fred, which was probably how they met (in 1901 or earlier),¹⁰¹ but Hodder was well-known as a brilliant student among the Steins' Harvard milieu, and the subject of widespread gossip among the Stein clique as well as the population of Bryn Mawr. They belonged to the same loose circle of friends.¹⁰²

We know that Stein was reading *The New Americans* when beginning to think about the construction of *MA*. Writing to a friend in 1901, she enthused. 'There is a lot of wonderfully brilliant writing in it ... I should be devoting my energy to meditating on how 7 volume novels are written.' Stein and her friends were very familiar with Hodder's work¹⁰³ and as au fait with the facts of his life as it was possible for them to be, given the delicacy of his affairs. Just before writing *Fernhurst*, in 1903, Stein visited him in New York.¹⁰⁴ He also came to visit at rue de fleurus in 1904.¹⁰⁵

Through the connection between the two writers, we can trace how one of Stein's most obtrusively modern tactics relies on the preoccupations and conflicts of Hodder's era, the era of her own early period. In particular this involves a questioning of the ideal of masculinity. Hodder's influence will provide a useful spur, and direct us also to points about reading and authorship which are present in his own writing, and linked in Stein's mind to a difficulty surrounding her conception of her own creativity.

¹⁰⁰ *The Adversaries of the Sceptic*, op. cit., 5.

¹⁰¹ See *Sister Brother*, op. cit., 137.

¹⁰² Stein also knew Martha Carey Thomas 'well, but not intimately', according to Toklas, in conversation with Katz, op. cit., 59, n.3. Toklas was not sure how well Stein knew Mamie Gwinn.

¹⁰³ Mabel Foote Weeks to GS in a postscript to a letter of Dec 21, 1900: 'Do you like Mr Hodder's story in the Dec. Harpers? Leo and I have been having a rather rancorous discussion about it. I don't think it is any good.' (YCAL). See also letter to Stein from Marion Walker Evans, from which it is clear that Stein has recommended Hodder to her friend.

¹⁰⁴ See Wineapple, *Sister Brother*, op. cit., 213.

¹⁰⁵ See Katz, op. cit., 60, n.2. In later life Hodder's name was still cropping up in Leo's correspondence and the book of aphorisms he kept. 'Hodder was a purist and wished to use no word not in Johnson's dictionary,' he writes (Book of Aphorisms [Notebook 1], n.d., YCAL).

MA, although it may seem far removed from traditional courtship novels, has roots amongst just such narratives.¹⁰⁶ *The New Americans*, I shall argue, is the most important of these narratives to the composition of Stein's novel, not least because in both works courtship is cut short, and expectations are thwarted for both reader and character; they deal not with romantic climax, but with arrested development and failure.

Chapter 3 deals with the relation of Otto Weininger's theories to the development of MA. Incorporation of Weininger's types into the novel Stein had already begun writing before reading his *Sex and Character* introduced into that work debates not only about the place of women and Jews but about the nature of identity, memory and genius, about the possibility of progress, and about composition and the representation of character, including her own status within her novel. Weininger's anti-Semitic and anti-feminist statements lead us to discover much about Stein's attempt to discover her own social identity. Stein's use of Weininger is a reaction, deeper than a mere discipleship, prolonged over years. It is, however, far from a straightforward subscription to his idea of progress.

Although Weininger's theories are easily dismissed as absurd and seem to have been completely overtaken by the advance of psychosexual studies, he was once at the forefront of the burgeoning field of sexual theory, broadening its perspectives, even arguably a progressive.¹⁰⁷ Now he needs apologists, then he sold thousands of copies of his *Sex and Character*, first published in German in 1903, which ran into twenty-three English language editions between 1906 and 1927.¹⁰⁸ He completed the long treatise which was his only book-length work in 1902, and killed himself in 1903, at the age of twenty-three; the sensational aspect of the book's authorship may have improved its

¹⁰⁶ See Katz, op.cit., 201.

¹⁰⁷ Recent commentators such as Janik see valid areas for reappraisal in Weininger's arguments. Revisionist readings have seen Weininger as ground-breaking in his rejection of sexual dimorphism in favour of minutely differentiated levels of sexual intermediacy, and his discussion of women's sexuality. He enters into contemporary debates about prostitution, addresses homosexuality with what has been seen as liberal intent by saying that it is 'neither a vice nor pathological', and is involved in debunking the myths of motherhood. He is concerned, perhaps above all else, particularly in his final analysis of the problems his work raises, with the objectification of women, arguing against the lack of reciprocity in sexual relations. Even his misogynist concept of henids, the unspecific thought processes characteristic of the feminine mind, might be seen objectively as a valiant attempt to see into the way moments of consciousness form a complete whole. Recently he has been read as a liberal, albeit an intolerant one; see Beller in *Jews and Gender*, ed. Harrowitz and Hyams (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995). For the closeness of Weininger's terms to those of écriture feminine, see Damon, *The Dark End of the Street* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 234.

¹⁰⁸ See Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (London: Heinemann, 1906). This is the first English translation, which Stein would have read.

sales. Stein first read it in 1908, before she read Freud and while she was struggling with and on the point of abandoning work on *MA*.¹⁰⁹ Her reaction to it is remarkably important to the development of that novel, as has frequently been stated. The nature of this influence has, however, never been fully explored, which is even more remarkable, and explicable only perhaps by the unsavoury nature of much of Weininger's thesis - that it expresses violent antipathy towards women and Jews.¹¹⁰

One of the most concrete pieces of evidence for the permanent importance of Weininger to Stein is circumstantial but worth mentioning. In the Stein archive at Yale there is a copy of Sprigge's *Gertrude Stein* to which Alice Toklas has made a small number of unimpressed amendments. When Sprigge discusses whether Stein was influenced by Freud, Toklas crosses through the section and writes the word 'Weininger' next to it.¹¹¹

The frequently quoted letter to Stein from Marion Walker Williams serves for contemporary corroboration, and typifies the bemusement of those to whom she recommended Weininger:

In an idle moment I read that book on sex which you said exactly embodied your views - the one by the Vienes [sic] lunatic. It struck me that you made a mistake in your statements - it was evidently before not after he wrote the book that he went insane. We had a considerable amount of fun, however, in calculating the percentage of male and female in our various friends according to his classification. But he was really a very half-baked individual.¹¹²

The approach to character in *MA* has been seen as having similarities to an Elizabethan theory of humours.¹¹³ Clearly a more immediate context was that of contemporary social science. But it is important to stress that it was in Weininger that Stein found

¹⁰⁹ For discussion of Stein's reading of Lombroso and Weininger see Dydo, 'To Have the Winning Language', in *Coming to Light*, ed. Middlebrook and Yalom (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 58-73.

¹¹⁰ For a varied and informative overview of Weininger criticism, see Harrowitz and Hyams, editors, *Jews and Gender*, op. cit.

¹¹¹ YCAL. Will has recently published the comments of Alice Toklas to Katz on the subject of Weininger, which attest that Stein had a "mad enthusiasm" for Weininger, whom she thought "the only modern whose theory stood up and was really consistent"; *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of 'Genius'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 62.

¹¹² Marion Walker Williams to GS, June 11, 1909 (YCAL). A letter from E.L. Erving also states 'am now deep in Weininger's Sex and Character, which has a good deal of interesting stuff in it' (December 14, 1908); she also refers to him a few months later; 'Weininger says there are only two types of women - the mother and the prostitute - and I know I'm not the mother-type' (May 3 1909), YCAL.

¹¹³ For example, Weinstein, op. cit., Meyer, Introduction to *MA*, op. cit., Bush 'Toward the Outside', op. cit.; see also Stein's reference to a woman's 'temper' in 'The Making of Americans', *Fernhurst, QED and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), 147.

consolidation of the many ways in which she had learned to look at character, and inspiration for further developments along characterological lines.

In *Three Lives* Stein's treatment of the marginalized sections of American society was perhaps more striking than the moments in *MA* when she goes 'below stairs', but in *MA* she treats more discursively the notion of what it is to be foreign, and to be an American. It happens that the history of her own family is a viable one for these questions, and that her act of writing the book unavoidably becomes a discussion of what it takes to make an American novel. In chapter 4 I discuss several contemporary immigration stories, including Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* and Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*. Stein's college essay on Jewish isolationism is crucial to an understanding of her position on assimilation in *MA*.

Broadly speaking, all the writers I discuss in the thesis concern themselves with the relative claims made on the individual of race, class and self-preservation. To varying degrees they are all also undeniably cloudy thinkers. The heady portentousness with which they announce their claims is both of the era and answering to an instinct for self-promotion on the author's part. It is as if everything about to happen in the new century depends on the resolution of the issues which they have set themselves to confront.

In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin had invoked America as the site of higher civilization: 'the more energetic, restless, and courageous men from all parts of Europe have emigrated during the last ten or twelve generations to that great country, and have there succeeded best'.¹¹⁴ But even those who regarded America as the blueprint for social evolution were not content to leave this experiment to chance, to leave it unchronicled, unwitnessed, unschematized. Darwinism is an overarching context for everything *MA* tries to express about the effect of America on character.

A Context for the Contexts

Evolutionary theory is an obvious context for any family saga of the period, and a source which lies behind all the contexts discussed here. Stein's scientific background is

¹¹⁴ Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1877), I.v, 142.

part of her literary persona.¹¹⁵ She is frequently linked with William James, but Darwinian thought was the governing principle of her scientific heritage.¹¹⁶

Courses in psychology, zoology and botany at Radcliffe in 1893;¹¹⁷ tuition from James, Royce, Münsterberg and Santayana (all engaged in explaining the ‘American mental quality’),¹¹⁸ as well as Charles B. Davenport, who was to become ‘the leading eugenicist in America’;¹¹⁹ particular enthusiasm for James’s ‘Cosmology’ course, subtitled ‘A study of the fundamental conceptions of Natural Science, with special reference to theories of Evolution and Materialism, Spencer’s first Principles. Lectures and Theses’;¹²⁰ an advanced course in embryology at the renowned Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory in 1897, collecting ctenophores and studying marine taxonomy;¹²¹ publication of her work on ‘Cultivated Motor Automatism’ in *The Psychological Review*;¹²² citation of her work in the hysteria section of Ellis’s *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*¹²³ and in Llewellys Barker’s *The Nervous System and Its Constituent Neurones* (1899);¹²⁴ and further study, at Johns Hopkins in 1897-98, of anatomy, physiology, pathology and bacteriology, pharmacology, and neurology,¹²⁵ all

¹¹⁵ An article by Harry Hansen refers to Stein’s works as ‘laboratory monologues’, clipping from *New York World* (Feb 28 1929), YCAL. Bridgman calls *MA* a ‘laboratory of style’, op. cit., 89. Meyer’s recent *Irresistible Dictation* brings fresh perspectives to this image.

¹¹⁶ Katz draws attention to the Darwinian sense of winning and losing in *MA*, op. cit., 43; Bush stresses her ‘involvement with Darwinian paradigms’ in relation to her sense of time in narrative, op. cit., 357. Several other commentators have seized on this connection, e.g. Fichtelberg 1989, op. cit., 163; Brinnin, *The Third Rose*, op. cit., 12. Mizruchi, ‘Fiction and the Science of Society’, *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Elliott, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 211-215, also discusses the scientific perspective of Stein’s work.

¹¹⁷ Mellow, op. cit., 27-34. Stein’s ‘involvement with biology and zoology was profound’, Wineapple, op. cit., 106.

¹¹⁸ James quoted by Bender, *The Descent of Love* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 118. See, for example, Münsterberg, *The Americans* (1905), Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1920), and Royce, *Race Questions* (1908).

¹¹⁹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 151.

¹²⁰ *Announcement of Courses of Instruction for 1894-1904*, Radcliffe College Archives, cited by Dydo, ‘Gertrude Stein’, *Gertrude Stein and the Making of Literature*, ed. Neuman and Nadel, op. cit., 45.

¹²¹ See Wineapple, 108-12, and her section on ‘Evolution’ generally, 101-112. Dydo first uncovered the details of this trip.

¹²² 5.3 (May 1898), 295-306; reproduced in *Motor Automatism* (New York: The Phoenix Book Shop, 1969). In ‘Cultivated Motor Automatism’ Stein also shows familiarity with the work of American Darwinian psychologist G. Stanley Hall.

¹²³ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (New York: Random House, 1936) I:I:227-28. For influential discussions, see Skinner, whose approach to Stein’s experiments in automatic writing was the most damning, ‘Has Gertrude Stein a Secret?’, *Atlantic Monthly* 153.1 (January 1934), 50-57; Steiner, op. cit., 48-49; Walker 1984, op. cit., 121-22. Recent discussions can be found in Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 197-202, 209-11, Meyer, op. cit., 221-233, and Will, op. cit., 23-7.

¹²⁴ See Wineapple, 440; Mellow, 45.

¹²⁵ Mellow, 40.

demonstrate Stein's early involvement in the new sciences which branched out from evolution theory.

In *Wars I Have Seen* (1945), Stein draws a metaphorical connection between Darwin and Columbus; the discoveries of each constituted 'an opening up and a limiting'. She uses confinement and proliferation, the very processes which Darwin elucidated, to describe the process of acquisition of knowledge whereby people came to America, to be American. She parallels two sets of 'experimentation' - Darwin's work and 'discovering America, by reasoning and then finding'; America itself is an experiment. The discovery of America 'opened up a new world and at the same time closed the circle, there was no longer any beyond'. Similarly, evolution meant new realms of knowledge, but 'at the same time it made them all confined ... no excitement of creation any more.'¹²⁶ The closed circle represents completeness - and loss of faith; 'there was no longer any beyond', either temporally (Darwin's historical explanation of human origins) or spatially (Columbus' geographical location of the new world). Stein expresses the disenchantment accompanying the possession of the last knowledge, for the people of the 'new' world, faced with the responsibility of evolutionary inheritance.

These comments were written with hindsight provided by Stein's own adventures, in *MA*, in trying to find that last knowledge. In the novel she was still enthralled by a system of calculations that would, she hoped, supply her with just such completeness. She would also link Darwin's theory to 'the fact that stars were worlds and that space had no limitation and ... civilizations came to be dead ... and I I had always been afraid always would be afraid' (sic).¹²⁷ Here Stein evokes the aspect of evolution theory that emphasized death and extinction; a darkness in Darwin's vision that was, she sees, transferred to the general intellectual climate, but also expresses her own adolescent melancholy.¹²⁸ This concern with the death of civilizations was also central to *MA*, and had been an urgent question for her in the years leading up to its composition.

¹²⁶ *Wars I Have Seen*, (New York: Random House, 1945), 61.

¹²⁷ *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 242-43.

¹²⁸ See Beer, *Darwin's Plots* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 16. Stein's adolescent melancholy has been dealt with by biographers - see, for example, Wineapple 1997, op. cit., 173. Mellow states that in California she had a 'rather desperate inner life'; op. cit., 27. Stein herself refers to this in *Wars I Have Seen*, op. cit., 14.

In her autobiographies, Stein made several statements recognizing Darwinism as a shift in world consciousness and the primary influence over her formative years.¹²⁹ Taking her at her word, one could examine the use of Darwinistic comparison and classification in *MA*. However, the post-Darwinian writers I have included in this thesis, all of whom were writing at the turn of the century, have seemed to me to be more directly fruitful for a study of *MA*. The subjects I discuss also represent areas of Stein's thinking which I consider to have been undervalued. Nevertheless, each of these authors was clearly influenced by Darwin, and it will be useful to set out here some of the areas of Darwinian concern in *MA* itself.

The dissemination of Darwin's theory inevitably had a huge impact on people's imaging of their own destinies.¹³⁰ Oldroyd has summarized the situation:

If evolution theory were true, essentialism would be false and natural kinds might slide around ... No kind would be marked off clearly from all other kinds ... knowledge itself would seemingly be impossible or at least would lack all *certainty*. One would be left with a disquieting relativism, it would be impossible to gain a firm epistemological purchase on the world.¹³¹

The consequences of this for narration are, as *MA* demonstrates, enormous. Without belief in a higher omniscience, the omniscience of the novelist ('the characteristically Victorian form of realism') breaks down.¹³² The speaker is often left looking for a direction in which to move, and a reason for doing so. *MA* indeed leaves us with a 'disquieting relativism'.

Darwinism was research into beginnings, and *MA* presents us with multiple beginnings.¹³³ Stein's concern with degeneration is also evident in *MA*, related to the question of whether breeding or social pressure is the key to the maintenance of normality. Representative men, the middle class, are, at the outset, extolled, and however complex the fate of these concepts is in the novel, they are never entirely overturned as its true standard.

Darwin's model was of the slow emergence of laws from a steadily increasing number of examples. Two essential concepts were the expansion of species by

¹²⁹ For example, *Wars I Have Seen*, op. cit., 17, 144; *Everybody's Autobiography*, op. cit., 242-3, and GS to Robert Bartlett Haas, 23(?) Jan 1938 (YCAL).

¹³⁰ Darwinism has been seen to establish a trend, in literature, of considering individual destinies as functions of the species, in relation to both natural selection and sexual selection; see Beer, op. cit., and Bender, op. cit., respectively.

¹³¹ Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1980), 263.

¹³² Keating, 160.

¹³³ See Beer, 65, on the 'indefatigable process' of beginning in Darwin.

diversification and the provision of a directional effect by restriction. So two divergent movements were established: reliance on family and resemblance, and the urge towards deviation, difference, and breaking away. 'Difference' and 'resemblance' are essential to *MA*'s narration (e.g. 336-37). Stein's use of the typology which involves her 'grouping' men and women (e.g. *MA* 343-344), and 'making kinds' (e.g. 337) is an attempt both to mimic Darwin's focus on profusion of individuals, and to impose new restrictions and new certainties, to allow new laws to emerge as a means of establishing permanence where it had been so drastically eroded.¹³⁴

A further related context, which critics have not pursued, is the work of Herbert Spencer, the leading English-speaking exponent of social Darwinism. Stein had a demonstrable interest in him.¹³⁵ She used Spencer as a character in *MA*; he reappears at various stages.¹³⁶ Spencer investigated evolution as a movement from simple to complex formations in every possible configuration of life. The natural movement of structural changes was, he contended, from 'an abundance and confusion of motion' to a 'regimentation and loss of motion'.¹³⁷ In *Man Versus the State* (1884) he elaborated this principle with the belief that 'above all, there must be gained the ability to sacrifice a small immediate gratification for a future great one'.¹³⁸ This concept of 'equilibration' alleviates the fear which springs from the disturbance of certainty, the recognition that minute random mutations are continually yielding results which can neither be foreseen nor provided for.

This disturbance of certainty is equally applicable to literary form in the period, and Spencer's grand vision applies as much to composition as to daily life; for the writer it suggests a principle of narrative delay, of gradual elaboration and unfolding with an eye to the completed project. Many of Stein's strategies in *MA*, including the 'continuous present', her use of the present participle, her elongated sentences and her use of the paragraph as the unit of meaning impose a consciousness of the passing of time in the narrative, and particularly emphasize narrative delay on a grand scale.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹³⁵ Debates with Spencer, rather than Darwin, were particularly prevalent in American fiction.

¹³⁶ e.g. 365; 519. Spencer is also mentioned in Stein's notebooks for *MA*; 6-12, B-29; J-1.

¹³⁷ Medawar, *The Art of the Soluble* (London: Methuen, 1967), 44.

¹³⁸ *The Man Versus the State: With Four Essays on Politics and Society* [1884] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 140.

¹³⁹ The 'continuous present' is the term Stein used for her method in *MA*, 'The Gradual Making of The Making of Americans', *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein* (New York: Random House, 1962), 250.

Spencer believed in the final end of evolution; his 'equilibration' adds an idealistic dimension to social Darwinism.¹⁴⁰ The idea can be applied to plotting, the gradual revelation of order among superabundance of example and response. An event, or in composition a statement, disturbs a state of contentment which must be retrieved, creates disorder which must be corrected or counterbalanced by explanation and by the perfection of the grand design. The concept of equilibration helps Stein to insist on the long view of *MA*'s history, and suggests that the final product will be good. She uses the word 'equilibration' to mean the balance of natures in the individual (e.g. *MA* 377), part of her vision of character which depends on the importance of habit in creating a complete individual.

Spencer also produced a notable autobiography. The first chapter of *An Autobiography* (written just astride the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and posthumously published in 1904) is called 'Extraction', and this and the ensuing few chapters take genealogy in autobiography to a new dimension. Part one is entirely taken up by his forefathers, rather than Spencer himself. In *MA* Stein, like Spencer, was to take traditional genealogical interests to the extreme, introducing most of her characters in terms of who their parents and grandparents are. Unlike many self-made people inhabiting the fiction of the time, Stein's characters are not autonomous. There is no confusion about their origins; they have very firmly established maternity and paternity.

In 1926, soon after the first publication of *MA*, Stein claimed: 'When I was younger and determined to write I knew nothing of the ancient Greek curse on us all, heredity; now I have seen, I have weighed, I have reflected, I know, and my 'Americans' is the outcome.'¹⁴¹ The opening pages of *MA* demonstrate Stein's acknowledged huge concern with heredity. This interest is not mainly derived from her knowledge of 'ancient Greece'; it has numerous counterparts in the period's scientific discourse, in which there was an implicit urge to social engineering through the elucidation of the processes of heredity.¹⁴² Spencer's narrative, as well as stressing the importance of inheritance, is concerned, like *MA*, with 'living down the tempers we are born with' (*MA* 3).

¹⁴⁰ See Oldroyd, op. cit., 207.

¹⁴¹ Stein quoted in Willis Steell, 'An American Novel That Paris Is Talking About', *The Literary Digest International Book Review*, 4 (February 1926), 172-3.

¹⁴² Francis Galton, for example, tried to measure development by his law of ancestral regression, a formula for discovering how much a trait gets lost in its transmission to each new generation. Stein's idea of three stages converging to make the generation now alive also betrays a typically nineteenth-century privileging of the present. See Beer, 13.

Space only permits a look at one autobiographical paradigm which Spencer exemplifies, and which has connections with *MA*. Several of his memories focus on first experiences of coping with solitude. His 'most vivid recollection' is of 'being left alone for the first time.' He is clearly charmed at his own childhood self when he quotes from his father's account of his first realization of young Herbert as an individual intelligence: "One day when a very little child, I noticed as he was sitting quietly by the fire side, a sudden titter. On saying Herbert what are you laughing at, he said 'I was thinking how it would have been if there had been nothing besides myself'.'" ¹⁴³ In *MA* there is a similar instance of the realization of solitude:

It is a very hard thing then knowing what any one ever is seeing, feeling, thinking, I am all alone now and I have then an unreal lonesome feeling, it is like a little boy who was howling and they all rushed out to help him, I am all alone, he said, and all of a sudden it had scared him (*MA* 519).

Stein's use of a familiar autobiographical moment of being left alone to express her own authorial solitude has a much more disconcerting effect. The community all rush out to help the little boy, but this comforting resolution is rarely repeated in *MA*. Aloneness and self-reliance, in the absence of secure *knowledge*, are here employed in a metaphor for the author's own state of mind; all certainties are eroded, and one is left alone, but this also leads the writer to a fearful sense that 'Perhaps every one is in pieces inside them and perhaps every one has not completely inside them their own being inside them' (519). Like Spencer, Stein recognizes the importance of solitude, but also notices, like Spencer - 'I was thinking how it would have been if there had been nothing besides myself' - how childish knowledge of solitude can resound with suggestions of more mature concerns about individual and collective life. ¹⁴⁴

Although in *MA* Stein rejects the possibility of a selective autobiography, most of the material is autobiographical; it is a 'history of me and the kind of suffering I can have in me' (573). 'I am writing for myself and strangers' (*MA* 289) is an autobiographical claim in a long tradition of disclaimers and justifications which address the fittingness of the author as subject of autobiography. However, it may be useful to read *MA* as one of those autobiographical stories positioned by Marcus

¹⁴³ *An Autobiography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904), 65; 68. Anna Robeson Burr identifies this sudden consciousness of selfhood as a typically 'modern' trope in autobiography; *The Autobiography: A Critical and Comparative Study* (London: Constable, 1909), 220.

¹⁴⁴ Compare these moments with Fitzgerald's sense, in *The Crack-Up*, of being without a 'self ... like a little boy left alone in a big house' (New York: James Laughlin, 1945), 79.

'between literature and science'. Stein came to her long novel as a scientist, trying to objectify her gaze in the way that Spencer did.¹⁴⁵

A letter from Stein's friend, collaborator, and mentor in the psychology labs, Leon Solomons, advises her, in 1898: 'By and by you will attain the breadth and intellectual perspective of the scientist, which includes details by systematizing them, but which never "abstracts" from them as the philosopher does.'¹⁴⁶ Whereas normally repetition, as a facet of experimentation, is what sets 'scientific method' apart from 'the procedures of fiction',¹⁴⁷ Stein flouts such distinctions and describes the forming of habits in both author and subjects by repetition of traits (e.g. 519). The emphasis on the present, on observation, lies behind *MA*'s goal, to represent 'every kind of human being that ever was or is or would be living'.¹⁴⁸

At the beginning of the original 1903 outline of 'The Making of Americans', Stein writes like an experienced physiognomist. She implies that certain aspects of appearance and demeanour which have become fictional stereotypes for the indication of character now determine our preconceptions even in life itself. But, Stein warns, 'this is not the whole of the story'; her characters may be true to that tradition, 'or they may try to prove the story-books all wrong. Only keep in mind that futures are uncertain'.¹⁴⁹ This is doubly prophetic concerning the fate of her characters and of her book itself.

In the notebooks Stein categorizes people according to fairness or darkness (#97; A-6), or particular kinds of eyes (D-25), hands (D-17), chin (D-17), jaw (D-25) or lower lip (B-19).¹⁵⁰ With concern she notices her sister-in-law Sally's 'light blue eyes', which indicate 'a certain lack of profundity of passion', and lists other acquaintances who share the trait; 'must remember to look', she avidly notes (F-12). By the final version these plans have already gone through some ironic revision, but will be further overturned in the course of the novel. The inclusion of the original style and original

¹⁴⁵ The issue of whether autobiographies ought to be classed as art or science was being contested at this time. Marcus has traced the idea of the 'scientific' objectivity of the autobiographer, *Auto/biographical Discourses* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 56-85.

¹⁴⁶ Solomons to Stein, 27 February 1898, YCAL.

¹⁴⁷ See Beer, 160.

¹⁴⁸ 'The Gradual Making of The Making of Americans', op. cit., 246.

¹⁴⁹ 'The Making of Americans', op. cit., 147-48.

¹⁵⁰ For reference to Stein's notebooks throughout the thesis, I have followed the numbering system employed by Katz in his typed transcript, available at YCAL.

interest in physiognomy before the transition to the new style displays the projected obsolescence, for Stein, of both the form and the subject of the family novel.¹⁵¹

MA's catalogues have a statistical urge. Stein's presentation of the process of professionalization within one family in *MA* draws on what she calls 'middle class' values and on all its attendant philosophies.¹⁵² Stein claimed to have lost interest in the abnormal at medical school.¹⁵³ Her fantasies of normality, like those of the eugenicists, hold a horror of and an attraction to the bourgeois family of good breeding. Family sagas, novels about 'descent', frequently enact that word's other meaning of degeneration and decline;¹⁵⁴ Mann's *Buddenbrooks* is a relevant parallel for *MA*'s plot design.

In *MA*, a form of social Darwinism is in action; 'unsatisfactory males'¹⁵⁵ are made extinct, and life and death are seen in terms of success and failure; the women are very often small and helpless (e.g. 276). Mrs Hersland's 'weakening' (133-34) marks her as one who will soon have 'died out', and is contrasted with the 'domineering, fighting' and 'hearty' strength of Mr Hersland, who is the image of 'success' (138). If men's power comes through physical struggle, women's comes from seduction, 'if a woman held her power with [Mr Hersland] it was because of brilliant seductive managing, and so there would not be aroused in him any desire of fighting'.¹⁵⁶

Stein's description of the Hersland family home draws partly on the Montesquieuan or Jeffersonian ideal of the American farm house, but the relation between father and children within its grounds draws on a different archetype, which involves 'mostly fighting' (125). As Keating points out, 'murderous relationships between fathers and children ... were becoming the norm in fiction' at this time,¹⁵⁷ expressing intense feelings of conflict between past and present. *MA* has no shortage of psychologically

¹⁵¹ See Gyax, op. cit., 13. The final result is a large scale rejection of former literary principles which are also included within the novel.

¹⁵² The theories, for example, of Émile Durkheim, who ascribed normality to middle-class values (in, e.g., *The Division of Labour*, 1893), or Belgian typologist Adolphe Quetelet's '*hommes moyens*', whom he elevated to the status of arbiters of all humanity (e.g. *A Treatise on Man*, 1835).

¹⁵³ Draft of letter to Lennard Gandolac, YCAL.

¹⁵⁴ Higham identifies a surge of optimism in America's literature of the period, *Strangers in the Land*, op. cit., 110. This seems an over-simplification if we consider such novels as Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) or Howells's earlier *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), which deal with the down side of success.

¹⁵⁵ Bender, 22.

¹⁵⁶ Here Stein enters a contentious debate of her time, the question of female choice in sexual selection having infiltrated New Woman fiction and the responses to it. See Bender, 13-14.

¹⁵⁷ Keating, 232. See also Toews, 'Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism,' *Modernism/Modernity* 4.1 (January 1997), 44.

violent fathers, who seem to authorize the discord involved in progress which Freud laid out in 'Family Romances'.¹⁵⁸ The Hersland father is angry, violent and overbearing. The children are referred to as 'three big struggling children', with Darwinian significance, while the 'little gentle mother' (45) is one of the casualties of evolution.

We might refer also to two stories which unfold next to each other in *MA*, both of which use archetypal scenarios to express the characteristic late Victorian theme of 'intergenerational conflict':¹⁵⁹ the family by the fireside for a story of feminine domesticity disrupted by incest between father and daughter (489),¹⁶⁰ and the popular figure of the amateur naturalist, who collects moths despite telling his son it is cruel, for the story of the inheritance of masculine aggression (489-90).¹⁶¹

Bender has argued that images of the garden are often used to explore the Darwinian implication of violence within the family itself - 'and even within the individual mind'.¹⁶² These observations give new nuances to the first lines of *MA*; 'Once an angry young 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"' (*MA* 3). There is a sense that this cyclical movement eventually will provide variation, direction, change and order, that it is necessary for growth into adulthood.¹⁶³

In *MA* Stein gave her own rendering of a scene so prevalent in contemporary autobiographies as to form a collective memory of childhood in her description of her own childhood home (*MA* 35-36). It is the common image of wildness and entangled nature held within limits. Around the house is a hedge of roses - significantly, they are 'not wild, they had been planted'; Bender shows that gardens 'where Darwinian experiments in the propagation of plants reflect the turn of the century interest in

¹⁵⁸ Freud, 'Family Romances', *Three Essays on Sexuality* [1905], trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1995), 226.

¹⁵⁹ Keating, 228.

¹⁶⁰ See Will's reading of this passage, op. cit., 49-50.

¹⁶¹ Stein saw this passage as important enough to make a recorded reading of it; 'The Making of Americans, Parts I and II', *Gertrude Stein Reads* (Caedmon audio TC 1050, recorded in New York, 1934-5).

¹⁶² Bender, op. cit., 18.

¹⁶³ These opening lines have provoked much comment. Examples are Gygas, op. cit., 14; Doane, op. cit., 92-93; Ruddick 1990, op. cit., 58; Bridgman, op. cit., 66-67; Fullbrook, op. cit., 74; Bush 'Towards', 38-39; Walker 1984, op. cit., 43. Stein is generally believed to have borrowed the story from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, as Doyle has recently noted, the anecdote occurs in the preface to Oliver Wendell Holmes's 1867 *The Guardian Angel*, which seems a more accessible source for Stein. Holmes

eugenics and degeneration' are common in the period's literature.¹⁶⁴ There is an interest in propagation and breeding here which links the roses, which 'were very sweet and small and abundant' with the rich people inside the fence. The poor people pick the roses and the family set their dogs on them, but they return. This theft signifies a larger social tension; here is middle-class America assailed by the people on its margins. Artificial selection cannot entirely contain or suppress the growth in the garden; the roses continue to grow; 'evolutionary adaptation permits no fixed classes of life according to species, race, or even sex';¹⁶⁵ the deviations and mutations, the pressing on boundaries are what constitute life itself, and movement between kinds is possible. The traditional walled garden of the family is invaded by societal pressures.

Among these is a new uncertainty about the nature of courtship, which saturated the period's fiction; *MA* is one particularly extreme literary refiguring of its conventions.¹⁶⁶ The original story of *MA* was the courtship of Julia Dehning and Alfred Hersland contained within a conventional family saga.¹⁶⁷ In the 1903 'The Making of Americans', the scenery that was eventually obscured in the final version was clearly laid out, with perhaps an Anglicized point of view; at the Dehning's 'country home', 'the young people played tennis, bathed and rode and sometimes ... sailed and fished. In the evenings the elders played at cards while the young folks lounged and talked or danced'. All in all it is 'an ideal background for young women ready to be wives,'¹⁶⁸ waiting to be selected.

In *MA* suitors vie for women's affections, women are described as flowers, fulfilling a need for external beauty (88), a young girl's metamorphosis into beauty is tracked (102). Couples dance the quadrille in a courtship display (536),¹⁶⁹ women learn the charm that musical power has over the opposite sex. Men contend with each other in every day life as if it is a fight, the Hersland father having the impulse 'almost always'

comments that 'there is something frightful' in the generational transmission of characteristics. Doyle also states that the story was in common currency in eugenics at the time; op. cit., 257; 269.

¹⁶⁴ Bender, op. cit., 18.

¹⁶⁵ Bender, 16.

¹⁶⁶ Although he does not discuss her in detail, Bender lists Stein as one of the writers who 'developed' 'the Darwinian analyses of sex that Howells and James had begun in *Their Wedding Journey*', exploring 'the biological nature of sexual love'; 315, 342, 343.

¹⁶⁷ Weinstein, 32.

¹⁶⁸ 'The Making of Americans', 139.

¹⁶⁹ 'later then James Henry played and all of them danced pretty solemnly in a quadrille'; the name of the musician here is clearly an inversion of that of one of Stein's masters. The fact that he 'later killed himself' may be symbolic.

to fight other men (87); there are several passages which discuss different ways of being 'brutal' in one's behaviour; the idea of courtship as rivalry eventually colours a view of all human relations as battles; attacking, fighting, and succeeding become the prevailing ways of describing character itself (e.g. 365).

The terminological echoes of Darwin in Stein's language have not been explored. Bender identifies certain words which when used by turn of the century novelists often signify a Darwinian meaning.¹⁷⁰ Some examples of these in *MA* are 'struggle' (e.g. 45), 'existence' (e.g. 104); 'difference' (e.g. 411), 'variation' (e.g. 284) and 'habit' (e.g. 7). In *MA* there is also 'the instinct for mating' (68), the grouping of people into categories or families (in both the social and scientific sense), the continual reference to 'many millions' (e.g. 115-16), and the general movement in the book from simplicity to complexity of relations. But Stein goes further than other writers of her day. She does not simply refer to these evolutionary concepts; she converts evolutionary theory into a style which symbolically enacts it.

Stein later described the method of *MA* as an attempt to convey a particularly American sense of 'a space of time that is filled always filled with moving',¹⁷¹ suggesting both movement and stasis;¹⁷² in the novel itself she describes the similar paradox of the narrative 'hasten[ing] slowly forwards' (*MA* 34). Stein's representation of time in *MA* is intrinsically related to a Darwinian idea of evolutionary time, with demonstrable changes occurring over immense periods.

A conventional plot, by confirming its own predictions, offers the reader a sense of satisfaction.¹⁷³ *MA* does not conform to this contract between author and reader; it continually predicts and rarely fulfils; see for example the promises the narrator makes about the future of the plot on page 620. It becomes impossible for the reader to hold in his/her mind the number of projected futures for the story.

¹⁷⁰ Bender, xi.

¹⁷¹ 'The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans', op. cit., 258. The transcendental quality of this phrase has been acknowledged. See Bloom on Stein and Emerson, *Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 4-5, and Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation*, op. cit., 129-164. For interpretation of the phrase see also, for example, Bridgman, op. cit., 252, and Benjamin T. Spencer, *Patterns of Nationality* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1981), 71.

¹⁷² As a description of a particularly American condition, the space filled with moving also suggests Turner's thesis in 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' [1893], that 'movement has been [the] dominant fact' of American life; *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 37.

¹⁷³ See Beer, 162; 181.

Stein's disruption of causality makes uncertainty about the future an explicit part of the reading of *MA*. Repetition, involution, omission and stasis replace what should be more or less straightforward narrative progression, reinforcing the thematic uncertainty about what the future holds for Americans. Repetition, not progress, becomes the source of security; 'always more and more then there is contentment in the secure feeling repeating in every one gives to every one' (*MA* 227).¹⁷⁴ *MA* is famous for the sheer bulk of its repetition, of which there are several different types and levels. The anecdotes which infringe on the catalogues of *MA* tend to be based around repetitious acts, incorporating a race, or a struggle. Natural selection itself depends on repetition.

Stein saw both her own technique and the formation of her characters as 'every kind of mixing and every kind of keeping separate',¹⁷⁵ which could also serve as a description of the circumstances necessary for change to take place under natural selection. The proliferation of life forms is literal: 'There are very many kinds of them ... and of each kind of them there are always very great many millions of them always living and very many millions of them always have the being in them' (*MA* 490). Stein also signifies proliferation with the extensive use of the same words over and over again, allowing their meanings to deviate and mutate, very gradually. Converting a theory which offers 'no vestiges of a beginning ... no prospect of an end'¹⁷⁶ into a written style is artistically difficult if not impossible to manage, if pursued to the extreme to which Stein takes it.

While her insistence on resemblance and repetition in her use of character types could seem reductive, and her refusal to leave things indistinct means that *MA* at times descends into enumeration, Stein may be showing how the surface sameness of the species obscures many minute differences. Chance mutations of indefinably small gradations bring about change in meaning. Nothing is insignificant in this novel of relations. Character shows itself in 'continuous repeating, to their minutest variation' (*MA* 284); Darwin conceived natural selection as a number of different forces converging upon 'prolific, unconstrained and directionless variation'.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ See Walker, 'History as Repetition', *Modern Critical Views*, ed. Bloom, op. cit., 178.

¹⁷⁵ *MA*, 153. There is a suggestion here, too, of racial 'mixing' and 'keeping separate'; again, this suggests Stein's view of America as a social experiment.

¹⁷⁶ The geologist Hutton, quoted by Beer, 156.

¹⁷⁷ Depew and Weber, *Darwinism Evolving* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), 155.

Stein's repetition draws attention to the effects of chance and contingency on the evolution of composition. Power relations are exposed as everyone in whatever environment - a nation, a business, a marriage - is involved in 'resisting' or 'attacking'. These relations are reflected in the multiplicity of effects created by tiny variations in the most basic elements of the sentence. Stein points to the power of prepositions, and the little differences that give vastly different meanings or outcomes. When describing an individual's characteristics she uses variously 'in them', 'from them', 'to them', 'of them', as if trying to discover which of these is the most descriptive of character, and best expresses where it comes from or goes to. *MA*'s superabundance of connective words suggests that the relationship between people can be represented by the relationship between words, as if trying to replace connections where they have been worn away by the world's changing view of history and family (see, for example, *MA* 103).

Stein's elaboration of power relationships in place of characterization, and her reliance on contingency within her own plot, occur partly by default. At one point within *MA* itself, the narrator observes that she does not know how to plot:

I can never have really much feeling of what specifically they [her characters] will be doing from moment to moment in their living ... I just felt like mentioning this thing and so I have just mentioned it here so that every one can be certain that I have not any dramatic constructive imagination (*MA*, 538).

Although this might seem tantamount to authorial suicide, Stein's point here is that she is able to provide an entirely different form of observation.

Stein's recollection of her early discovery that she and her brother were only born because of the deaths of two older siblings reinforces her view of the contingency of all life,¹⁷⁸ which affects her conception of literature in *MA* - it need include no determinism, or teleology. A self-professed turning point came on her realization that she could not accept her brother's belief that 'all classification is teleological'.¹⁷⁹ Her own system, her classification, may seem to break down because it never reaches completion, but Stein understands its limitations, and makes them part of the scheme, relying on the power of contingency to provide what seems like a directional effect.

¹⁷⁸ See *MA*, 89, 796. This moment resurfaces elsewhere in Stein's work, e.g. *Everybody's Autobiography*, op. cit., 115.

¹⁷⁹ NB-D, 8, and NB-14.

Stein later described the prose of *MA*, in terms reminiscent of Darwinian proliferation and differentiation, as ‘endlessly the same and endlessly different’.¹⁸⁰ *MA* was not published until 1925, but it is fixated with the circumstances of its own nineteenth-century conception, even while it represents the most outlandish sort of modernism. It is itself obsessed with new births and beginnings, looking backward, like so many post-Darwinian autobiographical stories, to the moment of its own birth.

So suggestive are Stein’s connections with Darwinian thought, which I have only briefly been able to trace here, that one might feel justified in writing a sequel to *Darwin’s Plots*, using Stein and other American writers. On the other hand, the relative directness and immediacy to Stein’s work of the contexts I will be employing in the rest of the thesis - this was the odd assortment of books which she was ruminating over as she wrote *MA* - has justified their preeminent place here.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Gradual Making’, op. cit., 243.

CHAPTER ONE

Feminism and Anti-Feminism

'I always did thank God I wasn't born a woman.'¹

'Not, as Gertrude Stein explained to Marion Walker, that she at all minds the cause of women or any other cause but it does not happen to be her business.'²

INTRODUCTION

Despite much confusion about her political allegiances, most critical accounts do not see Stein as part of the same complex set of problems which faced other writers confronting the changing shape of feminism at the turn of the century. In this chapter I address this subject, with particular reference to Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gilman's *Women and Economics* (1898, hereafter *WE*) is her manifesto for 'the improvement of the race through maternity'. In *MA* Stein too was concerned with the upbuilding of the race, the literal making of Americans.³

Stein famously cultivated an attitude of nonchalance about women's issues. In her personal life she adopted a masculine pose by being among the first of the Left Bank ladies to cut off her hair and dress in androgynous clothes (although her femininity is one of the most prominent features of most admiring personal accounts of her).⁴ Despite her avant-gardism, she was frequently seen as old-fashioned by the younger generation of expatriate women writers - Djuna Barnes criticized her sentimentality.⁵

Stein's unpublished work goes beyond indifference to feminism to what in fact suggests an active antipathy towards other women. However, there is also evidence of more reflective involvement in the debates of nineteenth-century feminism than has previously been recognized. Within *MA*, Stein occasionally claims that the qualities she describes are genderless - nevertheless she continually reverts to gender distinction,

¹ *QED*, in Fernhurst, *QED and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), 58.

² *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 92.

³ On the convergence of race and gender theory, see Gilman, *Difference and Pathology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁴ Anderson, for example, described Stein presiding over a 'word kitchen', 'an American woman of the old sort ... clean, strong, with red cheeks and sturdy legs, always quietly and smilingly at her work' (*New Republic*, October 11, 1922), 171.

⁵ 'Matron's Primer', *Jewish Record*, 8.3 (June 1945), 342-43.

specifically applying certain attributes to men or women, and her opinions on gender are central to its argument.⁶

Despite numerous feminist readings of modernism in relation to the historical feminism with which it interacted,⁷ surprisingly little work has been done on Stein's own relationship to the feminism of her day.⁸ Armatage cites some of the critical commonplaces about Stein's own attitude towards feminism, including Bridgman's claim that 'she had never publicly advocated female emancipation', and Mellow's that 'she was not an ardent supporter of the woman's rights movement'.⁹ Armatage suggests that, although she saw women as 'the weaker sex by far, pathetic and deluded', Stein's 'views coincided with those of the conservative reformers like Catherine Beecher, who sought to improve the condition of women without altering any of the existing social structures'.¹⁰ Armatage also claims that Stein called Alice Toklas 'Alice B.' in memory of Susan B. Anthony.

While Stein was still a medical student she made a contribution to the woman suffrage debate in a speech called 'The Value of College Education for Women' (1898). It is evidence of Stein's highly conflicted attitudes that here she seemed to side with the New Woman, while in another piece written in 1901 or 1902, 'Degeneration in American Women', the college woman bore the brunt of her displeasure for neglecting the duties of motherhood. These pieces, and Stein's college themes, demonstrate her interaction with two images of nineteenth-century feminism - the suffragist and the New Woman - which were frequently antagonistic, and seen to uphold the different agendas of economic and sexual rebellion, respectively.¹¹

The notebooks for *MA*, where Stein's character types are first mapped out, indicate her misogynist leanings. Katz has described how Stein used the women around her to

⁶ She finds it difficult to decide which gender is harder for her to know (*MA* 391). See Stimpson, 'The Mind, The Body, and Gertrude Stein', *Critical Inquiry*, 3 (Spring 1977), 489-506, on Stein's increasing mistrust of women in *MA* (particularly *MA* 205-206).

⁷ For a summary of this literature see Felski, op. cit., 18.

⁸ Rosenberg lists Stein among 'feminist modernists' who 'Repudiating the "natural" ... set their novels in "unnatural" worlds' - in Stein's case, 'beyond the threshold ... of conventional literary form' - and refers to her as part of the 'second generation' of New Women, *Disorderly Conduct* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 289, 177.

⁹ 'Gertrude Stein and the Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement', *Room of One's Own*, 3 (1977), 28-36.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 30-31.

¹¹ See Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), 183 on suffragists' attempts to repudiate the image of the New Woman, which had become a figure of ridicule, and Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 216, on the distance between Victorian feminist protest novels and political suffragist literature (216).

initiate the investigations into character which formed her 'Diagram Book', and later the schemes of the novel itself.¹² Among these women were her cousin Bird Sternberger, who was involved in a high-profile divorce case;¹³ Bernard Berenson's wife Mary, who behaved snootily towards her; Annette Rosenshine, her emotionally infirm acolyte; and Alice B. Toklas, her future partner, whom she at first viewed with distrust. The beginnings of *MA*, then, are feminine, and this is suggested in the matriarchal structure with which the book opens, but they are also bound up with misogynistic generalizations.

For instance, 'A woman like Bird conceives herself what she isn't but she leaves out the thing she is. That is true of many women and also many women are the two things'; from the belief that Bird has lied to her stems the conviction that women are naturally duplicitous (notebook J-3). A note on the 'female' type, concerning Annette Rosenshine, mentions vanity and sentimentality; 'so much slippery oozy female in her that is only querulousness ... all spinsters are querulous, jolly Mary Berenson is ugly, all spinsters are ugly' (J-3). She also characterizes women as liars (C-43) and makes the cynical statement: 'I have in truth some penetration; I am able to say when a flea bites me from what woman it came' (NB-B). But these belittling observations also lead to broader female concerns; commenting on Bird's divorce case, she decides to write about 'Power of public opinion made as in teachings like Bird's of her children destruction of individual power and liberty' (6-28), and then also 'My ideas of liberty' (6-29).

Love affairs are one of the main ways by which character can be told in the notebooks. The puzzle is how two very different people (originally, Julia and Alfred; later, anyone in any relationship) are supposed to 'make out' together in matrimony, coming together to make a whole; 'well to be married early, since they get into sexual differences later', Stein states matter-of-factly (B-29). Sexual indiscretions are addressed fairly openly, and different sexual codes are often attributed to different classes. She writes of 'David's astoundment [sic] at Helen B's indignation at man talking to her while she is waiting for him, but what the hell did you expect' (MA-39). A similar scenario of strange men illicitly touching or talking to women is repeated

¹² 'The First Making of *The Making of Americans*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1963).

¹³ Toklas writes that Bird 'was an early social worker, particularly interested in mother classes. She took this very seriously, giving an air of importance to it. Gertrude wrote the papers Miss Gans [Bird] read at their meetings'; *What is Remembered* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 54.

several times (B-29): 'Didn't you see that little one trying to touch your breasts'(1-31). The language of these little scenes is quite open, becoming muted in the transferal to *MA*.

The almost farcical plot layout for the episodes surrounding Julia's divorce suggests an acceptance of sexual promiscuity; Stein rather daringly intends to include a story about the discovery of an unfaithful wife's underwear (MA-44). She lists characteristics explicitly as signals of her subjects' inner, sexual natures,¹⁴ and discusses 'pathological' sexuality, albeit obliquely (C-10). 'Same with men' comes after several of these comments - in other words she draws her conclusions from women and then transposes them to men. She sets out the revelation of her categories as 'various types, in relation to femininity and religiousness' (J-8), where femininity is related to romance and sex ('root of their being is intensity of emotion' (DB-6)), before moving on to masculine types (e.g. J-18, 2).¹⁵

Stein's notebooks also convey an early interest in suffragism. She promises to include 'Dissertation on women's education for Selina from other book' (6-8).¹⁶ She intends that her character Julia will become dean of a women's college (MA-5). Elsewhere Stein reminds herself of 'Francis and his characteristic attitude toward woman's suffrage and trusts. Day we all went down to register F protesting' (6-26). Stories of women's experience of suffrage are taken from life and given a cautionary note - Bird's 'great struggle' for independence (#42, 2), and the story of 'Dora Israels. Her failure and effort, her movement, her illusion, her love and her incapacity to do the thing she has always in her mind. suffrage devotion' (#37a).

An interest in women, sex and suffrage, then, recurs, and with these the name of one particular feminist author - Charlotte Perkins Gilman (then Stetsen); 'Selina gets mixed up with Charlotte Perkins Stetsen becomes free and funny a little crazy like she is now' (6-9). Stein's interest in feminism is not an approving interest:

Mrs Eddy and Marion and Adele, the importance of women, their belief in them, their domination over a man, their genuine intellect and their horrible literalness and practicality, their assertive dominating quality, and their lack of practical efficiency, their greed and vanity ... their intellect is very genuine but unoriginal, it is personal and

¹⁴ e.g. 6-10 to 6-14.

¹⁵ As a contemporary 'scientific' instance of this cliché, Harry Campbell, in *Differences in the Nervous Organisation of Man and Woman* (London: H.K. Lewis, 1891), also sees emotion as feminine; 'women are, as a class, more emotional than men' (although 'primitive' men may be more emotional than 'civilised' women (vii)). Campbell concentrates on diseases of 'the will', which he regards as a masculine energy, and ways of strengthening it and approaching a 'masculine' ideal.

¹⁶ The other book referred to is *Fernhurst*.

intensive but runs into theoretical general grooves [wired?] with moral purpose, Mrs Charlotte Perkins Stetsen type case (B-5).¹⁷

Here Stein dwells on the perceived unimaginative nature of the feminist type, which she clearly feels no personal allegiance to. While respecting the women's intellect, she distrusts their 'greed and vanity', and their literal-mindedness. Stein's attitude to feminism incorporates some of Gilman's more conservative directives, but it also goes further, and exemplifies the divergences between writers who have been described as 'first' and 'second generation' New Women.¹⁸

RADCLIFFE THEMES

The daily 'themes' which Stein wrote for classes in English composition at Radcliffe (1894-1895) are, aside from a few letters, her earliest remaining compositions. They demonstrate early ways in which Stein viewed the problems of sex distinction, and the female position in the modern world. 'A Modern Sonnet' shows impatience with the scientific idiom, while 'In the Red Deeps' expresses the narrator's sexual guilt - and the narrator is difficult to distinguish from the author in these early compositions.¹⁹ Although not well-written, the themes convey Stein's mixed feelings about her own feminine status.

One of the most striking pieces is simply called 'Woman' (November 20 1894):

Never again will I (ever) try to reason with a woman. She immediately gets hysterical and thinks she is calm. She acknowledges that you are right half a dozen times and then deliberately repeats the statement thinking she has gotten hold of a new point of view. At last in despair you either smile or frown according to your temperament and she goes home convinced of her remarkable argumentative powers. The eternal feminine is nice to be sure but its painfully illogical.

Unreasonable, hysterical, repetitive, pigheaded, and above all illogical. When Stein wrote this she was twenty years old, studying at Radcliffe and living off family money after the death of both her parents. She had not yet read Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, which would further testify against this feminine illogicality by categorically equating it with immorality (and which would also rely on Nietzsche's idea of the 'eternal feminine'), but she had already decided that she did not want to be classed as a woman - just at the moment when technically she had become one. Her tutor's wry

¹⁷ See also B-5,2, on C.P. Stetsen.

¹⁸ Newton includes Gilman in her definition of the first generation, and Stein as part of the second generation; 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian', *Signs* 9.4 (Summer 1984), 561-2.

comment at the end of this piece; 'point of view nobly remote', perhaps reveals an awareness of Stein's need to overcome her own illogical thinking. This was a time when she was struggling to make herself intelligible through the written word, in these daily 'themes' for her English composition class.²⁰ By describing what a woman is, she automatically places herself at a remove; in 1894, maturity is masculinity for Stein. After this point she abandons the creative writing course and her university career takes a scientific turn; these compositions no longer require her to describe her own emotion.²¹

Perhaps one reason for Stein's misogyny is contained in the epigrammatic fragment written just over three weeks later and converted, after the passage of more than a decade, into the opening of *MA*; 'There is nothing we are more intolerant of than our own sins writ large in others.' Just as Weininger claims that Jews make the most devout anti-Semites, Stein makes herself the victim of her own perverse reasoning (the double bind of self-hatred).²² In *MA* she adds that as we get older we learn to tolerate these foibles. Nevertheless exasperating women of the kind described in 'Woman' are conspicuously present in *MA*, as is Stein's early attempt to remove herself from the sexual battlefield. Point of view nobly remote, one might remark, were it not for the authorial asides which begin to infect her scientific manner until the contagious doubts spread so far as to become the only thing she wants to write about.

Less than a month after writing 'Woman', Stein expressed her doubts and dissatisfactions about the education system for women in more sympathetic terms in 'An Annex Girl' (December 12, 1894), a brief fragment set in the Harvard Annex (later Radcliffe), where Stein herself was studying:

There she stood a little body with a very large head. (and loaded) She was loaded down with books and was evidently very dismal. Suddenly there broke forth a torment, 'I don't want to be superior' she wailed despairingly, 'I am tired to death of standing with my head craned constantly looking upward. I am just longing to meet some simple soul that (don't)) want to know everything. one weak happy naive consciousness that thinks higher education is (either rot or has never heard) of it.' She gave a long-drawn (ou) Oh! and (then collapsed the books) on top of the miserable little heap.

¹⁹ Miller, *Gertrude Stein* (New York: The Exposition Press, 1949), 108.

²⁰ Evidence supporting Stein's sensitivity over charges of literary incompetence is found in her tutor's comments: 'standpoint of a morbid psychological state'; 'awkward and unidiomatic uses of language'; 'wretched sentence structure'; 'incoherent'; 'lacking in organization, in fertility of resource, and in artfulness of literary method'.

²¹ Miller suggests that 'Woman' displays 'an antipathy [Stein] harboured all her life' towards illogical and hysterical women, op. cit., 103.

²² See Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

This rather forlorn fragment demonstrates class as well as gender consciousness. In the light of Stein's subsequent career, the tutor's comment seems prophetic: 'Your vehemence runs away with your syntax.' The stunted shapes here - the 'little body', the 'miserable little heap', and the identification with the 'weak happy naive consciousness' suggest more than simplicity; in *WE*, Gilman was to denigrate physically small women on the grounds that they represented degeneration of the race; here, the 'very large head' suggests physical distortion brought about by over-education.²³ In *Fernhurst* and in 'Degeneration in American Women' Stein would contribute to this argument with more energy than collapsing into a heap, but perhaps she too was feeling the weight of the books. 'I don't want to be superior' says the renegade college girl. In Stein's notebooks for *MA* we find the following burst of self-reproach:

Oh I am a dog, how could I ever feel superior - how could I feel superior. I couldn't ever feel superior I never could have felt superior, I never did feel superior, how could I feel superior I never could have felt superior for I never felt superior. How could I ever feel superior.²⁴

However, although Fifer claims that the notebooks represent Stein's personal outpourings of self-hatred, it is possible that Stein is speaking from within a fictional role here.²⁵ Stein is hard to pin down to an authorial position.

We can trace elements of New Woman fiction in much of Stein's writing, including *MA*.²⁶ In these works, as in *WE*, gestation and birth are not just the subjects under discussion, but part of the New Woman iconography.²⁷ In *MA* Stein is sceptical of the terminology of female self-sacrifice and martyrdom that appertains to much contemporary feminist discourse (although she populates her stories with dead and

²³ Perkins compares this passage to Clarke's ideas of abnormal growth in *Sex in Education*; "'A Little Body with a Very Large Head'", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 42.3 (Fall 1996), 537.

²⁴ Notebook, 'Herland (old man) died...'

²⁵ Fifer, *Rescued Readings* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 31.

²⁶ There is no record of whether Stein was familiar with New Woman fiction, although she refers disparagingly to the New Woman in *Fernhurst*, 4. However, Showalter calls New Woman stories 'the missing links between the great women writers of the Victorian novel and the modern fiction of Mansfield, Woolf, and Stein'; *Daughters of Decadence*, ed. Showalter (London: Virago 1993), viii. While many of the stories now most associated with the term 'New Woman' (e.g. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899)) were not yet published, the New Woman novel was generally seen as 'passé' by the mid 1890s (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* (London: Virago, 1992), 69); the bulk of these writings came at a time when they may have been an influence on Stein's college writing. Gilman's own *The Yellow Wallpaper* was published in 1892.

²⁷ See, for example, Tickner, op. cit., 38, on pictorial and verbal reference to birth in suffrage art and literature.

diseased women).²⁸ However, much of her writing coincides with other aspects of the terminology of turn of the century feminism, not least her fascination with beginnings and the vocabulary of freedom and bondage enshrined in her character types.

The New Woman was typically one of the newly educated, like Stein's characters here. Protagonists of New Woman fiction often began hopeful and ended being thwarted by their own ambition. 'In the Library', a Radcliffe composition which was still in Stein's mind when she made her notes for *MA*, expresses a similar theme of disillusionment with academic pursuits to that found in 'An Annex Girl', this time a breaking out rather than a collapse:

"Books, books" ... "nothing given me but musty books." She paused her eyes glowing and her fists nervously clenched. She was not an impotent child, but a strong vigorous girl, with a full nature and a fertile brain that must be occupied, or burst its bounds....Her longings and desires had become morbid. She felt that she must have an outlet....

In the notebooks for *MA*, Stein mentions this story as a starting point for the characterization of Martha Hersland.²⁹ It is difficult to tell whether these moments of disillusionment with academic learning are autobiographical or polemical, intended to persuade the reader of the dangers of college education for girls. I will return to this strain of Stein's thinking in relation to her piece 'Degeneration in American Women'.

In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* Stein tells the story of quitting medical school; when her friends upbraid her in the name of 'the cause of women' she languidly retorts, 'you don't know what it is to be bored'.³⁰ Here Stein makes herself out to be above her peers, though paradoxically she also sounds like one of the leisured ladies subject to neurasthenic fits, 'bored to death' despite their wealth and social standing.³¹ These pieces suggest that, at Radcliffe at least, she herself was 'evidently very dismal.'

A more subtle and explicitly sexual rebellion is suggested in a strange story, 'The Temptation', where the narrator is castigated by her relatives when they notice her

²⁸ For this cliché of woman's 'purity, her freedom from coarse or selfish motives, her "habit of service"', see Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 53-54. Lasch cites Rheta Childe Dorr's *What Eight Million Women Want* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1910) as an example. Ironically, 'the assumption that women were morally purer than men, better capable of altruism and self-sacrifice, was the core of the myth of domesticity against which the feminists were in revolt. Once again, feminist and anti-feminist assumptions seemed curiously to coincide' (54). Showalter refers to the New Woman's tendency to see herself as chaste but maternal (*Sexual Anarchy*, op. cit., 45).

²⁹ MA-20.

³⁰ op. cit., 91.

³¹ In *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1935), Gilman describes her married life: 'a charming home; a loving and devoted husband; an exquisite baby ... and I lay all day on the lounge and cried' (89).

allowing a man to press up against her in church. There could hardly be a more obvious scenario for an 'exploration of the social constraints on feminine sexuality'³² of the kind that characterized New Woman fiction. The piece represents a sexual awakening.³³ Although the language Stein chooses is far from explicit, the girl's sexual desires have infiltrated the institution of the church, and her rebellion, such as it is, causes outrage in her small community:

She had not noticed this man before, she did not look at him now, but he, taking advantage of his position, leaned toward her rather heavily. She felt his touch. At first she was (oblivious to) only half aware of it but soon she became conscious of his presence. The sensuous impressions (had done their work only too well. The magic charm of a human touch was on her) was in her and she (could) did not stir. She loathed herself but still she did not move ... (Radcliffe Themes, YCAL Box 10 folders 238-239)

It is a fantasy of being sexually accosted, describing the girl's silent participation in the strange, invisible seduction. The other women display 'that rudeness peculiar to their sex', while the girl hypocritically acquiesces to the morality of her peers by pretending to be unaware of the man's actions. The scene of her sexual awakening is simultaneously public and covert.³⁴ It is also a scene of sexual rebellion, however muted, and the condemnation of her family is a lesser version of the sort of penalty commonly received by sexually open protagonists of New Woman fiction³⁵ for their 'challenge to sexual taboos'.³⁶

The piece also identifies the stultifying action of the need to confront the underside of character. Like *QED*'s illicit desires, secret kisses and moments of erotic transcendence, the scene is silent.³⁷ In this case, doubt and sexual shame prevail, and neither character nor author is able to speak openly about her intentions.

In this group of texts which deal with various sorts of transgression, this troubling conjunction of academic education and sexual knowledge is the unifying theme, and

³² Tickner, op. cit., 183.

³³ Cunningham, in *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1978), states that 'strong sexual feelings' are the norm among New Women heroines (53); Tickner identifies an 'explicitly sexual non-conformity' (op. cit., 184).

³⁴ Marcet discusses the fragment in 'This Must Not Be Put in a Book', *Revue Française d'Études Américaines*, 20 (May 1984), 209-228. Marcet compares the contact with the unseen, anonymous stranger in 'The Temptation' to a reworking of it 45 years later in Stein's novel *Ida*, noting the mixture of attraction and repulsion in her attitude to sexuality (210), and that the setting of a church reinforces the illicitness. Marcet also observes the popularity of phrases of sexual interdiction in Stein's prose (particularly *MA*), such as 'things they should not be doing', 'things that were wrong', 'things that were wicked things' (211).

³⁵ Cunningham, op. cit., 49.

³⁶ Tickner, op. cit., 183.

³⁷ See *QED*, op. cit., 61, 66, 114, 122, 132.

will be put to repeated use in the later work. For now what we need to remember is Stein's early image of woman, whether that woman is herself or the generic college woman, as hysterical, illogical, diseased to the point of nervous indisposition, claustrophobic, and subject to unhealthy, 'morbid' longings and desires.

THE COLLEGE GIRL

In *Fernhurst* (1904-05) Stein was to express quite bitter disapproval of the college system. Antipathy to the college girl, though Stein and several of her friends were college girls, would last into the mature deliberations over human nature of *MA*, and inform the feminine character types set out there.³⁸ She continues to dig at the college mentality, sneeringly referring to the 'college woman's college room' (*MA* 31), and crushingly synthesizes all these elements in the characterization of Martha Hersland. As Stein admitted in later life, probably in the early 1920s, there was something of herself in Martha's story: 'Lived in Oakland Cal. until my seventeenth year which is largely described in a very long book [i.e. *MA*] which has never been published. Then at eighteen went to Harvard that is Radcliffe'.³⁹

In 1928 Stein expressed her mature attitude to Radcliffe when approached for a charitable gift in a letter from Ada Comstock, a mutual friend of Stein and college companion Emma Looz Erving. On the back of the letter is a draft of Stein's response. It was, she wrote, 'undoubtedly an admirable cause but my activities do not concern themselves with organised causes and so I am of no use for such a purpose. Not that I have any objection to organised causes but they just don't happen to be my affair.'⁴⁰ Evidently pleased with this line, she included it in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in her famous denial of allegiance.

The notebooks contain numerous allusions to the college girl type,⁴¹ and to Stein's own insecurities at college, where, after all, she had been informed by one teacher that her work of making brain tracts was an 'excellent occupation for women and

³⁸ On reactions to the new phenomenon of the college girl, see Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982), 28-53. For information on prominent figures and debates in the women's colleges see Frankfort, *Collegiate Women* (New York: New York University Press, 1977).

³⁹ Draft of letter to Miss [Main?], n.d.

⁴⁰ Ada Comstock at Radcliffe College to GS, April 24 1928. Stein also added 'This does not interfere with my very great pleasure in the actuality of Radcliffe and my very best for it'.

⁴¹ See, e.g., NB 'Important for later life...' on college life and class differences; C-23 on college girl type.

Chinamen'.⁴² For example, in the notes for David's characterization she writes 'Use that time in the J.H.W gardens when I got sick and feared flunking my exams', and for Martha's characterization she would use

adolescent reading from my novel in the library bring in in fact the whole history of wandering around the hills and adolescent struggle [?] of college intercourse a little loosens it up inside of Martha also my high school xperience (sic).⁴³

The notebooks also reveal that part of the plan for *MA* was a 'satire' on women's colleges, making use of *Fernhurst*, which was set in one.⁴⁴

The title of *The Making of Americans* suggests a new beginning, a people being made from the democratic starting point of having nothing except their Americanness to define them. In the introductory passages of *Fernhurst* there had been 'a people to remake', men and women, but even at this stage Stein believes that they are not equal, that men are stronger, and that 'women should content themselves with attaining to womanhood'.⁴⁵

After *Fernhurst*'s first publication in 1971, some work was done on its attitude to feminism. A particular point of contention was the narrator's diatribe, addressed to the character based on Martha Carey Thomas:

Toward Helen Thornton the dean of Fernhurst, her youth spent in a struggle to make women better - constant of purpose - noble in aim ambitious for the welfare of her race we the generation of women who have rights to refuse should I suppose be silent and not bring the world to observe the contradiction in her doctrine and the danger of her method. What! Does a reform start hopeful and glorious with a people to be remade and all sex to destroy only to end in the same old homes with the same men and women in their very same place. Doctrines that have noble meanings often prove in action futile.⁴⁶

Notice here the emphasis on the home, the typical centre of feminist debate, and the link between making a new race of people and the destruction of all sex - this is Stein's vision of the feminism of the 1890s, and she appears to approve of this urge to androgyny. Stein's rhetoric here mimics the optimistic, forward-looking rhetoric of feminist texts such as *WE* or Olive Schreiner's *Woman and Labour* ('I should like to say to the men and women of the generations which will come after us ... that it was in the

⁴² Cited in Mellow, *Charmed Circle* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1974).

⁴³ MA-20.

⁴⁴ 10-4 and 10-5.

⁴⁵ *Fernhurst*, in *Fernhurst, QED and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), 7 (my italics), 5.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 7. See Stimpson's reading of the opening of *Fernhurst* in 'The Mind, The Body, and Gertrude Stein', *Critical Inquiry*, 3.3 (Spring 1977); Armatage, 'Gertrude Stein: The Mother of Us All,' *Sixpack*, 5 (Fall 1973), no page numbers; Doane, *Silence and Narrative* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press,

thought of your larger realisation and fuller life that we found consolation for the futilities of our own'⁴⁷) only to flatten them with the statement of 'the same old homes with the same men and women'. Whereas Gilman and Schreiner see a bright future for the new generation, Stein sees a future governed by exactly the same principles, leaving women - and men - in exactly the same place.⁴⁸

Had I been bred in the last generation full of hope and unattainable desires I too would have declared that men and women are born equal but being of this generation with the college and professions open to me and able to learn that the other man is really stronger I say I will have none of it. And you shall have none of it says my reader tired of this posing, I don't say no I can only hope that I am one of those rare women that should since I find in my heart that I needs must. (*F* 7-8)

Here I wish to examine what use this self-confessed 'posing' is to Stein. Stein's reaction to Thomas' speeches and writings, which were in fact quite reasonable affairs, on such subjects as 'College Entrance Requirements',⁴⁹ 'Coeducation vs Separate Education', and the health and marriage rate of college women, was violent.⁵⁰

In fact the early lives of Stein and Thomas were more similar than the former cared to mention, although they belonged to different generations, a point which Stein makes much of in emphasizing their differences. In a manner typical of the college woman, both formed strong bonds of female friendship and were deeply influenced, early on, by a strand of literary sentimentalism which endorsed such friendship. Frustrated with the possibilities open to them, both travelled to Europe, where both were influenced by the sexologists.⁵¹ The path they followed was a similar one - until this point, at which Stein decided she would no longer pursue her education. Perhaps this similarity is what makes Stein begrudgingly admit 'I know this kind very well' (*MA* 438).

In the original *Fernhurst*, this is how Martha Carey Thomas's (Helen Thornton's) development within the women's movement is described.

1986), 38-39, and Blankley, 'Beyond the "Talent of Knowing"', *Critical Essays on Gertrude Stein*, ed. Hoffman (Boston, Massachusetts: Hall, 1986), 198-9.

⁴⁷ Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), 29-30.

⁴⁸ By the 1920s Gilman too would state that the movement had failed in that greater freedom for women had meant greater sexual promiscuity and little change in the fundamental arrangement of society. See Gilman, 'Sex and Race Progress', *Sex in Civilization*, ed. Calverton and Schmalhausen (New York: MacCauley, 1929), 109-23.

⁴⁹ 'College Entrance Requirements' [1900], *Tracts Relating to Education, 1880-1902*.

⁵⁰ 'Education of Women', *Education in the United States*, ed. Butler, vol. 1 (Albany, New York: Lyon, 1900). See also Thomas's *A New Fashioned Argument for Woman Suffrage* [1908] (New York: National College Equal Suffrage League, 1911).

⁵¹ See Horowitz, "'Nous Autres'", *The Journal of American History* 79.1 (June 1992), 89. For information on Thomas' relation with Mamie Gwinn, whom Stein tells us was not 'nice', see Horowitz, 83.

the conviction ... of the value of the world of women's labor in all fields of work was early acquired and the time being ripe and the ranks of women prepared for battle Miss Thornton became a preacher in the movement and did good service for the cause. She learned, preached, and struggled for many years, colleges were arising in the land and the time came when she saw that the work so far as it lay with her generation was complete and that the future of the race was in the hands of those who trained the generation that followed after. (*F* 16-17)

Clearly there are religious overtones here, deriving perhaps from her family's religious credentials,⁵² linked with an emphasis on racial improvement.

In *MA* this section of *Fernhurst* is dropped. The type that Miss Charles (the new name for Thomas) is - the nineteenth-century women's rights reformer - has 'religious or virtuous or moral or reforming passion'. The stridency of the earlier passage is gone; the new tone is 'scientific'. This type does not have 'a stirring from the depths of them these have it very often that this in them is a violent attacking, often continuous bragging, often moral reforming conviction, often nervous action in them, often incessant talking, incessant action, incessant attacking'(468). The objective here consists simply of 'judging of the power in them of succeeding or of failing in their living' (468), denuded of political affiliation, although in *MA* the dean's interest in 'equalisation' is again referred to (469), and 'all this is very important, very very important'.

There is some evidence to suggest a slight mellowing in Stein during the years between the composition of *Fernhurst* and the final version of *MA*. In the original draft of *Fernhurst* Stein had claimed, as she would do in 'Degeneration in American Women', that college made the students decadent; she crossed out that claim when she revised it a few years later. The vitriol is toned down, although the distaste is still there; the 'falseness' of the dean's doctrine is softened to 'contradiction', and the 'dishonor of her method' is changed to 'delusion'. The description is altogether less radical; in the original version the college, as the dean sees it, is to be 'as a man's'; here Stein changes her mind and alters this to 'as to her a college for adults should be'. So the values of 'perfect liberty within broad limits, integrity and honour' are potentially set free from a specifically masculine province. Another modification sees 'romantic women and children' becoming 'emotional women and romantic children'; this hardly constitutes a rising above traditional traits or categories. She is still casting woman as emotion, man

as intellect. Her equivocation about the women issue is an indicator of a much greater uncertainty at this stage, and her unwillingness, throughout *MA*, to rest on a final decision. It should be remembered that most of *Fernhurst*'s ideas found their way into the *MA* version intact. The dean is scorned because she believes that men and women are the same. This is not what Gilman had argued and not what Stein believed.⁵³

LETTERS ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE

Further evidence of Stein's early attitudes can be found in letters from her college friends. Their tone is mostly frivolous and funny, with occasional brief discussions of local politics thrown in with the newsy banter - for example, her friend Helen wrote to her about delivering a paper on women's colleges.⁵⁴ But usually when the subject of woman's suffrage arose it was treated with disdain. Etta Cone wrote of the 'soothing' relief she felt in the company of people who were 'calm and entirely unagitated by the vital questions of philanthropy and Woman Suffrage - questions that have put old Baltimore in a state of real turmoil',⁵⁵ and a week or so later she was writing again to Stein's brother Mike, in a letter which ended up in Stein's possession, of some other acquaintances, who 'nearly sent me to the mad house with their woman suffrage and their wild efforts to help the poor in Balti [Baltimore]'.⁵⁶

Around the same time Marion Walker Evans wrote about a new friend, Kate, to whom she had given Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, which Stein had been busy recommending. 'She is specializing at present along the lines of woman's suffrage in the prevention of venereal disease' (as was her sister, a mutual friend in Baltimore):

Kate is very good fun - you must meet her when you come. She is quite Bryn Mawr - or was - for she is getting over some of it - and is very good fun. One of the joys to which I look forward in the more or less distant future is to sit by and hear you two in an argument.⁵⁷

⁵² Thomas belonged to a prominent Quaker family. Her aunt was the spiritualist Hannah Whitall Smith whose children, Thomas's cousins, were Stein's friends Mary Berenson, Alys Russell, and Logan Pearsall Smith.

⁵³ This difference is also the focus of Edward Clarke's argument in *Sex and Education; or, A Fair Chance for the Girls* (Boston: Osgood and Co., 1874). Stein was addressing an actual controversy between Thomas and Charles Eliot, president of Harvard, who had argued that 'curricula of women's colleges were too imitative of those of men's colleges' (Frankfort, op. cit., 27-28). Thomas retorted in her opening address at Bryn Mawr in 1899 - perhaps this is the speech imitated by Stein. The speech is unpublished, but Thomas wrote an article on the subject; 'Should the Higher Education of Women Differ from That of Men?' *Educational Review* 21 (January 1901), 1-10.

⁵⁴ Letter from unidentified Helen to GS, December 23 1895.

⁵⁵ Etta Cone to GS, Feb 11, 1910.

⁵⁶ Etta Cone to Mike Stein, Feb 20 1910.

⁵⁷ Marion Walker Evans, June 11, 1909[?].

This suggests that Stein's friends were well aware of her objections to the Bryn Mawr type. Marion Walker Evans, at least, seems not to have shared them, although she appears to be in the minority among this group of friends, who are in general quite apathetic about suffrage. In another letter, which finds its way into Stein's possession, Evans wrote: 'Think of it next fall I shall be a VOTER. I do not suppose that that idea arouses half the emotion in your breast that it does in mine. You may not have been born to be an espouser of causes but I emphatically was.'⁵⁸

The words 'feminine' and 'female' as well as 'emotion' and 'emotional' were accepted as terms of mild abuse by many of the women. Defending her actions and words in response to accusation from Stein, Mabel Earle demanded 'Now is this being feminine and self-righteous?'⁵⁹ and Emma Looz Erving in similar mood castigated her correspondent, 'don't you mix me up with any situation that you and those two other misguided females created out of your emotions and sensations'.⁶⁰ Elsewhere the latter was philosophical about her own shortcomings; 'It's the damned emotions that ruin us females.'⁶¹

Many of these friends were happily married. Her sister-in-law even advised Stein to 'go and get married'.⁶² Although marriage was clearly not for her, Stein had been voicing similar opinions to Marion Walker Evans (a doctor), who replied 'marriage is an admirable institution. I highly recommend it if accompanied by steady work outside the sphere of women. But don't talk to me about wife and mother and whole end of woman!'⁶³ On another occasion she hinted at Stein's preference for art rather than babies. 'What is the use, pray, of my going on producing a fine baby every two years on purpose for you to play with, if you don't come home and play with them? You haven't an objet d'art in your whole collection that can [upstage?] either of them.'⁶⁴

WOMEN AND ECONOMICS

We know that Stein read and was impressed by *WE* because she says so in her speech on 'The Value of College Education for Women', which she delivered to a Baltimore

⁵⁸ Marion Walker Williams to Mabel Earle, n.d.

⁵⁹ Mabel Earle to GS June 6, 1907.

⁶⁰ E.L. Erving to GS, June 21, 1906.

⁶¹ E.L. Erving to GS, Sep 1, 1908.

⁶² Sally Stein to GS, June 12, 1897.

⁶³ Marion Walker Evans to GS, Easter 1901[?].

Women's Club in 1898, and which itself is based on Gilman's arguments.⁶⁵ The book is based on social evolution, with a particular interest in motherhood.⁶⁶ While it aims at scientific impartiality, it is in fact overwhelmed by an extreme tendentiousness; it is of course a political dissertation. Its simple stridency was probably attractive to Stein. In many ways *MA* corroborates Gilman's condemnation of the evils brought about by 'the sexuo-economic relationship'.

One of the most important premises of *WE* is that women, at their current stage of development, are undeniably inferior to men, although Gilman never states it quite so baldly as that. Gilman claims for women no superiority to, or even equality with men in arts or sciences, trades or professions. The book is fairly cautious as manifestoes go, and might be called conservative, particularly in its advocacy of racial motherhood, were it not for the basic link of prostitution and marriage.

The sexuo-economic relation and its dysfunctions are what concerns Gilman, but in more elemental terms, before the sexual complications, the besetting sin of modern culture as she sees it is 'the lack of adjustment between the individual and the social interest' (104). This is the cause of all the other evils ascribed to both sexes. Everyone has the task of becoming less male or female and more human. *MA* implicitly asks how we are to complete this task, which becomes a matter not just of sexual but racial advancement.

Throughout *WE*, evolution holds the key; self-preservation and race preservation are the two meaningful activities of life. Evolution theory played an important metaphorical as well as theoretical role in much fin de siècle feminist argument. The application of Darwin's theory to gender was widespread across the political spectrum.⁶⁷ One sentence from *The Descent of Man* justified numerous accounts of differential psychology, most of which were highly chauvinistic. Darwin had written of 'man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman', owing to the

⁶⁴ Marion Walker Evans, June 11, 1909.

⁶⁵ She told her audience *WE* was 'worthwhile considering'; Armatage, 'Gertrude Stein and the Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement', *Room of One's Own* 3.3 (March 1977), 29.

⁶⁶ 'The sexuo-economic relation' is Gilman's term; see *Women and Economics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), e.g. 337.

⁶⁷ Bender, *The Descent of Love* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 181. On the complications of Darwin's discussion of male and female variation, see Richards, 'Darwin and the Descent of Woman', *The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought*, ed. Oldroyd and Langham (London: Reidel, 1983), 57-111.

male's 'greater general variability'.⁶⁸ Feminist evolutionism also tended to conflate sexual and racial progress,⁶⁹ and the idea of mothers as custodians of the race pervades *WE*, and much of the other most influential feminist and anti-feminist writing of the period.⁷⁰

Gilman believed that society was entering into new, freer relations as part of 'social evolution' (*WE* 205). For the good of all concerned, humanity must dissociate the economic unit from the sex unit. She advocated the break-up of the economic unit of the family, that relic of patriarchy (151; 156-7). Although Stein was not a socialist, Gilman's idea of the family as an institution that retards democracy is very important to *MA* with its foundation of new combinations of individuals. The plot of *MA* entails an ideological movement away from family; Stein and Gilman were both interested in new patterns of communal living.

Racial progress, according to Gilman, is no longer to be achieved by the family but by the individual. 'Democracy means, requires, is, individual liberty' (*WE* 144). Stein's idea in the *MA* notebooks had been to discuss 'my ideas of liberty', and *MA*'s implicit reflections on the state of democracy in America depend also on this contradiction between freeing the individual and combining the individual; 'The last freeing of the individual makes possible the last combination of individuals' (*WE* 144).

Gilman wants a higher form of collectivity than the family; clan loyalty can only be dangerous. Freer women will be able to explore more combinations, better unions, and the 'higher specialization of individuals' will first be accomplished in America (271). Stein could adopt this sense of the family as integral to describing, discovering, new civilization, even if it has to be done away with.

One can see elements of Stein's desire to describe every kind of man or woman in Gilman's recognition that :

In the further development of society a relation of individuals more fluent, subtle and extensive was needed. The family ... is only useful while the ends to be attained are of a simple nature, and allow of the slowest accomplishment (*WE* 216-7).

⁶⁸ *The Descent of Man* (London: John Murray, 1877), 564; 224.

⁶⁹ See Bender, *ibid.*, 10 for link of sexual and racial difference.

⁷⁰ Publication of *The Descent of Man* in 1871 had 'sharpened discussion of the role of women as mothers - as progenitors of the race', and, relatedly, 'helped to focus attention on the role of social values and individual will in shaping a nation's racial destiny', Tickner, *op. cit.*, 186. Geddes and Thompson discuss 'reproductive sacrifice' in *The Evolution of Sex* (London: Walter Scott, 1901), 290. Spencer had argued that 'women ... are apt to suffer grave constitutional ills from ... celibacy...', *The Principles of Ethics*, 2 vols (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892-93), 1.534.

While people are still arranged as families in *MA*, the slowness of evolutionary time does seem applicable to their progress; 'moving through a country is never done very quickly when a whole family do it' (*MA* 40). Gilman emphasizes the need to move away from home to get better, reach maturity, progress (222). Movement is an essential part of American life and the progress of the family as Gilman sees it, as progress leads to 'the transitory individual home' (264). Stein's Americans, too, are filled with movement.

Gilman cites Spencer's definition of evolution - homogeneity always moving towards heterogeneity - and concludes that 'the home, in its rigid maintenance of a permanent homogeneity, constitutes a definite limit to social progress' (*WE* 223).⁷¹ But, in a seeming paradox, she really wants more home, an extended version of the home. It is easy to see parallels with *MA*'s movement away from the family, and toward a new form of home.⁷²

Stein, financially very well off, but dependent on her family, was one of those implicated in the upheaval Gilman describes. Stein's realization around this time that she would probably never be a mother adds an extra dimension to the racial drive of Gilman's arguments. She was herself uninterested in being the 'womanly woman ... part of the ideal Malthusian couple',⁷³ and the instrument of racial progress. In her case, posterity would have to be content with her creation of *MA*, her 'eldest son', as she later called it.

THE VALUE OF COLLEGE EDUCATION FOR WOMEN

In conversation with Alfred Hodder in 1901 and 1902 Stein was sceptical about the benefits of women's education.⁷⁴ *Fernhurst*'s narrator's introduction of a speech extolling these benefits has been seen as 'a strong polemic against women's colleges'.⁷⁵ The seed of this polemic is found in Stein's own speech about women's colleges delivered six years previously, 'The Value of College Education for Women', which

⁷¹ See Felski, op. cit., 154ff., for discussion of feminist evolutionism of the period; also Tickner, op. cit., 186-192, and Duffin, 'Prisoners of Progress', Delamont and Duffin, eds, *The Nineteenth-Century Woman* (London: Croom Helm, 1975). See also Love, 'Darwinism and Feminism', in *The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought* ed. Oldroyd (op. cit.).

⁷² Stein had always rebelled against what she classed as the sentimentality of the home (see her theme of March 13, 1895), despite her invocation to the middle-class muse at the beginning of *MA*: 'middle-class, middle-class ... the one thing always human, vital, and worthy' (34).

⁷³ Tickner, op. cit., 196.

⁷⁴ See Wineapple, *Sister Brother* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 138.

builds on Gilman's arguments in *WE*. Although the speech supports women's colleges, its overriding concern is to promote maternity as the right course.⁷⁶

The speech was Stein's attempt to convince the Baltimore women's group that 'you people are in the wrong' about women's education, defending her own choice to go to university. A girl who does not go to university, she argues, is unaware of 'the facts concerning health and education that she should have been learning ... to prepare herself for maternity'. In other words, the influence of college education was to 'rightly sex women'; as a result of this women need no longer feel dependent and could widen their opportunities. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on training of their bodies, not their minds. Stein added that college was also valuable for the time away from home: 'with no one to protect you or be fond of you unless you earn it ... without any aid of family or heretary [sic] friends ... you must earn whatever you get and through that discipline you become a self respecting human being.'⁷⁷ Part of what Stein rails against is the culture of female dependency and reliance on the family: the familiar concern that women should earn their welfare instead of parasitically drawing on the wealth of men.⁷⁸

As Doane notes, Stein's contention that women had the status of 'commodities to be sold into marriage' was clearly derived from Gilman, as was the belief that marriage had given woman 'an overdeveloped sex desire that has turned a creature that should have been first a human being and then a woman into one that is a woman first and always and a human being only if it so happens.'⁷⁹ According to Doane she also drew on 'the new image of the "well-rounded" mother devoted to husband, career, and children, and argued against the dangers of excessive sexuality to which women were apparently especially prone due to their traditionally defined gender roles.'⁸⁰ Stein's use of Gilman also extended to emulation of a pseudo-anthropological approach which involved citing

⁷⁵ Doane, op. cit., 33.

⁷⁶ I have been unable to consult the manuscript of 'The Value of College Education for Women', as it has been lost by the Baltimore Museum of Art, as has the transcript of the speech, which was sent to the BMA from the Beinecke collection. For information I have relied on brief readings by Armatage 1977, op. cit., 29-30; Bridgman, op. cit., 36-37; Doane, op. cit., 34-36; and Wineapple, op. cit., 117-118. However, all the quotations here are Stein's own words as cited by these critics. Doane states that in *Fernhurst's* 'polemic' Stein 'exactly reversed' the argument of 'The Value of College Education...'; the final point of each argument is, however, the same - women are better off in the home (35). As Doane suggests, *Fernhurst* is Stein's attempt to revise her own formerly naive ideas on the subject.

⁷⁷ Quoted Wineapple, op. cit., 117, 118, 118.

⁷⁸ Roosevelt challenged this image in his essay on 'The Parasite Woman: The Only Indispensable Citizen' (1917). See DiNunzio., ed., *Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 323-327.

⁷⁹ Stein, quoted Doane, op. cit., 36.

⁸⁰ Doane, op. cit., 35-36.

examples of animal behaviour; for example she compares the society girl's conspicuous display of herself to the sexual display of a peacock.⁸¹ Such animal examples are also used to support Stein's contention that the human female by rights 'only becomes a female during her motherhood. She is not concerned with sex at any other time'.⁸² This might seem a curious contention from a female medical student specializing in nervous diseases in women, but is hardly an uncommon assumption.⁸³ Stein concluded that modern woman needed to 'rightly realign and purify' her sexual nature, and become autonomous. The need for woman to be rightly sexed, as well as maternal, is more important than her need to be educated.

Doane has noted that advocates of women's education were driven at this time to couch their arguments in discussions of how it could enhance their womanhood and better prepare them for their womanly duties, in order to dampen the threat they posed.⁸⁴ Gilman's conservatism was certainly along these lines, and was part of her success. In Stein's speech, this attitude results in a not particularly nuanced view of education as the groundwork for being an intelligent wife, an educated mother.

DEGENERATION

'The Value of College Education for Women' is not Stein's only response to the theories of *WE*. 'Degeneration in American Women' (probably written between October 1901 and early 1902) is Stein's most overt discussion of racial motherhood and degeneration.⁸⁵ In *WE* Gilman had argued that universal linking of sexual and economic relations had led to a damaging, even pathological over-emphasis on sexuality, and the end result was women's failure to further the progress of the race; this 'maternal culpability' was not unique to Gilman, but she was its most renowned exponent.⁸⁶ 'Degeneration in American Women' presents similar arguments.

Concerns about degeneration, and particularly the erosion of the middle class, were of course rife, as the self-sufficiency and acquisitiveness which the spread of democracy

⁸¹ Quoted Wineapple, *op. cit.*, 117. See *WE* 35.

⁸² Quoted Doane, *op. cit.*, 36.

⁸³ Campbell, *op. cit.*, concludes, after conducting a survey, that most women have no sexual feelings at all before marriage (200-202), and that 'the sexual instinct is very much less intense in woman than in man' (210).

⁸⁴ Doane, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁸⁵ The essay was written in response to an article by George Engelmann, 'The Increasing Sterility of American Women' (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, October 5, 1901). See Wineapple, *op. cit.*, 409.

had enabled meant that 'good families' were having fewer children in order to safeguard their wealth.⁸⁷ Nordau's *Degeneration*, with its agitation about the fin de siècle frame of mind, had appeared in 1892. Stein's use of the word 'degeneration' at all at this stage is suggestive. Her essay confirms her alliance with ideas of 'race suicide' which Roosevelt criticized college women in particular for in 1905,⁸⁸ with the general politicization of theories of population current in the period, and with an emphasis on maternalism in its scientific literature.⁸⁹

In *Fernhurst* the summary of different kinds of women's colleges hints at their effect on the sexual nature, whether 'decadent' or 'aggressively healthy and crudely virgin' (F 6-7). 'Degeneration in American Women' also deals with the effect of college education on women's sexuality, this time within a racial context.

In *WE* with its basis in social evolution, a racial slant is perhaps even more in evidence than is usual in feminist writing of this period. Womanhood is, in evolutionary terms, synonymous with motherhood, and the continuance of the race. Again and again in *WE*, and typically in the period's feminist literature, there is a conflation of racial and sexual politics. This is not simply an example of minority discourses, in their similar relation to paternalism as well as marginalization, clinging together for strength. Indeed, the connection often draws on anything but progressive intentions.

In conversation with Alfred Hodder in 1901, around the time that she wrote 'Degeneration', and two years before starting work on *MA*, Stein said that women 'matured more quickly - "like negroes," she put it - but then mistakenly assumed their early development a sign of ultimate ability.' But on another occasion, when she was trying to persuade Hodder that women had the right to exploit and take as much as they wanted from men to make up for their disadvantages, Hodder reports that "I suggested that the same logic would apply, and is applied, by socialists, to the case of men born weakly or stupidly or incompetant: nothing can ever make it up to them, and to the case of men born of an inferior race. But this she thought outrageous."⁹⁰ Stein was prepared

⁸⁶ See Bauer, *Edith Wharton's Brave New Politics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 29.

⁸⁷ For an application of these ideas in an American context see Bauer, op. cit., particularly chapter 1.

⁸⁸ 'Women and the Home', DiNunzio, ed., op. cit., 318.

⁸⁹ See Ward, 'Our Better Halves', *The Forum*, 6 (November 1888), 266-276. Ward, whose *Pure Sociology* presents a 'gynocentric' worldview, concludes that 'the way to civilize the race is to civilize woman ... woman is the race' (275). For the opposite view, see Grant Allen's retort to this piece; '[woman] is very much less the race than man', 'Woman's Place in Nature', *The Forum*, 7 (May 1889), 258-263.

⁹⁰ Quoted Wineapple, op. cit., 138, 152.

to make a link between women and 'negroes', but only in order to demote women in some way, not in a search for solidarity. Suffragists, who in the early days of the movement were of the same social level as the antis, 'soon discovered powerful arguments *for* woman suffrage based on the same anti-foreign grounds as the antis' pleas *against* the enfranchisement of women.'⁹¹ They objected to being told what to do by men from all corners of the world, and the majority saw 'the ignorant foreign vote' as proof that even 'barbaric' men were given power over 'civilized' women.⁹²

The period's medical and scientific literature tends to link both effeminacy and, paradoxically, excessive virility, in a derogatory manner with certain races, while in much psychological and sociological writing femininity is often equated with atavism or barbarism, and masculinity with forward-reaching or civilization.⁹³ For instance, Gilman sees woman as preserved, petrified, 'in her position of arrested development, she has maintained the virtues and the vices of the period of human evolution at which she was imprisoned' (330). The metaphor of the fossil clearly conjures up evolutionary ideas, and adds a vaguely scientific aura. The two sexes, Gilman believes, are two distinct classes - 'rudimentary women and more highly developed men' (*WE*, 269). Again, the language mimics that of the emerging social sciences.⁹⁴

In 'Degeneration in American Women' Stein addresses the problem of the declining birth rate in America with nationalistic zeal, as if the progress of America were literally a race against the old world. She places the onus of responsibility with women, particularly educated women, who, she suggests, are neglecting their womanly duties and unpatriotically contributing to the downfall of American civilization.⁹⁵ Diversity of occupation for women is an un-American activity. Stein points out

the incessant strain and stress that the modern woman endeavoring to know all things, do all things and enjoy all things undergoes. This condition of life must of necessity lead to

⁹¹ Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 125.

⁹² Felski also notes that in Anglo-American feminist discourse 'women of other races and classes were often depicted as primitive and backward, yet to be awakened to the light of feminist consciousness' (149).

⁹³ Hyams, 'Weininger and Nazi Ideology' and Gilman, 'Weininger and Freud', *Jews and Gender* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 159; 110.

⁹⁴ Russett says Gilman's idea of 'arrested development' was widespread by 1900, *Sexual Science* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 11. More specifically racial links are explored when Gilman writes about race modification in the Jews, associating them primarily with family, genius, and money.

⁹⁵ Of course Stein was not alone in linking the decadent and the New Woman. See Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 33.4 (March 1979), 434-453.

weakness and inadequacy of the genitalia as the whole physical scheme of the woman is directed towards fitness for propagation. (412)

Clearly this sense of women's subordination to their reproductive systems was a common anti-feminist line;⁹⁶ on the other hand Gilman had made a very similar point when she demonstrated the bad effect women's continual change of occupations had on their effectiveness as citizens and further, as custodians of the race. The difference is that Gilman was suggesting ways for society to combat these ill effects; Stein simply stated that women should attend to motherhood and little else.

Gilman makes the familiar claim that people have, at various stages in history, fallen into degeneration on account of their over-civilization, implying that late nineteenth-century America has reached one of those stages (24). Simplistically, it all comes down to breeding, not government. Women, says Gilman, are intrinsically over-sexed - all women, as a feature of their present day composition. This sex energy is destroying the individual and the race (141). People urgently need to guard against the 'vices of advanced civilization' (141). This is much the same as Stein's argument in 'Degeneration in American Women', where she employs threatening language about the weakness and degeneration of individual bodies, threatening in turn the constitution of America.

By 'race' Gilman usually means the human race, but not always. Sometimes she explicitly becomes an advocate for 'Anglo Saxon' blood (*WE* 147). Gilman's super-optimistic evolutionary outlook (e.g. 317) feeds into her obsession with creating a higher civilization:

The sexuo-economic relation serves to bring social development to a certain level. After that level is reached, a higher relation must be adopted, or the lifting process comes to an end; and either the race succumbs to the morbid action of its own forces or some fresher race comes in, and begins the course of social evolution anew. (*WE* 142)

Darwin's idea in *The Descent of Man* that evolution would move westwards could be employed by American writers to strengthen their own claims for America as that 'fresher race', though Gilman's idea of the rise of another rival civilization has strong

⁹⁶ Compare with Edward Clarke's influential use of the Spencerian closed-energy system to assert that the strain of college life would impair a girl's reproductive potential; op. cit., 54, 133. Clarke's alarmist thesis suggested that girls might actually drop dead from intemperate methods of study. See also G. Stanley Hall on 'Adolescent Girls and Their Education', promoting motherhood as the proper female destiny, *Adolescence* (New York: Appleton, 1904), II.561- 647.

similarities to the fears of earlier Darwinians such as Galton.⁹⁷ At the end of 'Degeneration in American Women' Stein shows a similar consternation:

To conclude: unless the American woman can be made once more to realize that the ideal of maternity is the only worthy one for her to hold, until she can be made to realize that no work of hers can begin to compensate for the neglect of that function we are going the same way as France except that with true American push we are going France considerably better and a few years are showing a worse record than she has after ages of degenerative civilization.⁹⁸

Stein's observations are symptomatic of widespread alarm over the possible failure of American democracy when tested by new social configurations brought about by woman suffrage campaigning and the immigration boom, and of the disintegration of a utopian outlook. The supposed statistical evidence proving the existence of symptoms of degeneracy at the end of the nineteenth century would seem to make the new world as bad if not worse than the old. Interestingly in the light of *MA* and its 'old people in a new world, the new people made out of the old', Stein insists that the increase in sterility 'is true of every class of the American population and that there is in no portion of the community that lives its fair quota of population except the foreign and this virtue is lost by the first generation born in America.'⁹⁹ Here, she goes so far as to suggest the degenerative or corrupting influence of America on immigrants, something I will discuss more fully in chapter 4.

Although it is supposedly about the human race as a whole, *WE* is grounded in American concerns. Class and race consciousness loom beneath its democratic surface. The underlying current is that Gilman is only addressing women of the 'higher races' and 'higher classes' (140).¹⁰⁰ 'Degeneration in American Women' is also extremely class conscious, but the problems which Stein's somewhat panic-stricken essay discusses are not confined to 'the better classes' (414), because of the fluidity of the class structure in America:

⁹⁷Galton's agenda for calculations about the transmission of hereditary traits was his concern that the 'superior races' would be overwhelmed by the speed of reproduction among 'inferior peoples' (Depew and Weber, *Darwinism Evolving* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), 198). This anxiety harks back to Buffon, according to whom classifications of species could be made depending on their relative ability to reproduce.

⁹⁸ Wineapple, op. cit., 414. The irony that Stein would live most of her life in France pervades all her American nationalist statements, and *MA* as a whole. By 1911, when *MA* was finished, Stein had been ensconced at the rue de fleurus for eight years. The irony consciously operates in, for instance, the 'brother singulars' passage (*MA* 21).

⁹⁹ The faster reproduction among the 'lower orders' was a cause of widespread alarm (Bauer, op.cit., 28).

¹⁰⁰ The use of the terms 'lower races' and 'higher races' was commonplace in the literature of social Darwinism.

In America what the upper classes do the middle classes do and what is true of the middle class holds for the laboring classes and so we find in this country a uniform sterility and lack of fecundity varying very little from the top to the bottom. (412)

Gilman's concerns about the weakening of the American constitution (*WE* 200) may account in part for what Stein means by 'the making of Americans'. *WE* aims to show women 'a new sense, not only of their social responsibility as individuals, but of their measureless racial importance as *makers of men*' (xxxix, my emphasis).

Women, says Gilman, are weakening themselves and cultivating 'anti-maternal habits'; woman's 'racial duty of right selection' must be pointed out (201). This is exactly the motivation of 'Degeneration in American Women':

All this of course leads to a lack of respect for the matrimonial and maternal ideal for it will only be when women succeed in relearning the fact that the only serious business of life in which they cannot be entirely outclassed by the male is that of child bearing that they will once more look with respect upon their normal and legitimate function. ('Degeneration', 413)

Here Stein returns to the idea of 'wife and mother and whole end of woman'.¹⁰¹ This contradictory concept of the 'measureless' importance of women, but within the sphere of motherhood, illuminates a similar paradox in *MA*. Its women have no history, no identity, no meaning, Stein states that there is nothing inside them, often; yet they are the force which keeps the world going. The Victorian myth of motherhood allows women to remain comfortable with their own inadequacies.

Stein also takes from *WE* the idea of 'morbid', or over-protective, mothering, in 'this mis-mothered world' (*WE* 333).¹⁰² Just as Gilman calls for communal living, for the sake of children's socialization, in 'Degeneration' Stein scoffs at the idea that parental upbringing of one or two children is more successful than allowing a group of them to raise each other.¹⁰³ Motherhood means not only reproduction but education. Gilman's utopias, in keeping with her socialist drive, call for a removal of the responsibilities of education from the hands of the lone mother. In 'Degeneration' Stein casts herself on the side of 'the trained professional mind' against 'the intelligent mother'. We should notice that in *MA* the education is not done by mothers, but 'trained professionals'. Stein implies the inadequacy of females to motherhood, despite the

¹⁰¹ Marion Walker Evans to GS, Easter 1901[?].

¹⁰² A central area of debate between the suffragists and the antis was that surrounding good and bad mothering, or parenting; clearly this brought feminist debate into collision with hereditarianism and eugenics.

¹⁰³ So had Roosevelt in 'Women and the Home' [1905]; DiNunzio, ed., op. cit., 318.

Darwinian donnée of their specialization to maternity, but she also berates fathers for believing that 'one should bear children only when you can remove them as far as humanly possible from the normal conditions of a struggle for existence' ('Degeneration', 414).

Virility, mature masculinity, attained by going beyond the father's constraints, is linked to civilization, and the American ideal.¹⁰⁴ For Stein the male persona, because it depends on autonomy, on movement away from the family, rests therefore on a denigration of femininity, and the particular target is the college woman:

...among the educated classes in this country, that is among the educated women and the pseudo educated women there is a strong tendency to what we may call the negation of sex and the exaltation of the female ideal of moral and methods and a condemnation and abhorrence of virility (413).¹⁰⁵

Virility should be resurrected. Modern woman's 'cleverness' is no match for virility in the work of the world. Women are so sheltered by men's chivalry they have no idea of the extent of their own inadequacy. Stein states that for 'the real business' of life 'the male code is the only possible one' (413).

Interestingly enough, and for good or bad, this virility can, it seems, most easily be suggested simply by invoking Rudyard Kipling; both Gilman and Hodder quote him directly.¹⁰⁶ One of Hodder's characters says that women cannot understand Kipling's verse. The opening of *Fernhurst* scathingly compares the female dean, a caricature of the New Woman, to the Bandar-Log:

So the selected bandar-log begins his imitating chatter with the praise of repetition and a learned lady delights her audience with a phrase and bids them rejoice in their imperfections. "We college women we are always college girls"... (F 3)

Here Stein goes so far down the road of evolutionary evidence for female atavism as to typify women as monkeys. If we remember the 'Road-Song of the Bandar-Log', the reference becomes particularly cutting; their futile dreams:

Dreaming of deeds that we mean to do,
All complete, in a minute or two -
Something noble and wise and good,

¹⁰⁴ See Rosenberg's description of many female writers' 'adoption of the new male vocabulary' during this period (285-6).

¹⁰⁵ Roosevelt similarly refers to 'sterile pseudo-intellectuality', 'Women and the Home', op. cit., 314.

¹⁰⁶ Some time between 1896 and 1899 Stein's friend Lillian wrote asking if she had 'seen the latest production of your friend Kipling?' (A limeric beginning 'There was a small boy in Quebec'); Lillian to GS, n.d. (YCAL). Kipling also appears in the notebooks (NB 13-10). Incidentally, the original title of *QED*, 'Things as They Are', was also the title of a Kipling poem, suggesting again the influence of Kipling on the young Stein.

Done by merely wishing we could.

or their self-delusion :

Excellent! Wonderful! Once again!
Now we are talking just like men!¹⁰⁷

The narrative voice in Stein's opening is aiming at virility, at a detachment from sentiment, the impartial, 'honorable and manly' precedent which the dean of Fernhurst fails to live up to because of an insidious, gossipy femininity in this community of women. This same community exists in *MA*.

As I have hinted, in drawing attention to the role of the individual, Stein and Gilman make direct attacks on the bodies of women, particularly their too overt sexuality and, rather unfairly, but in keeping with the emphasis on degeneration, their smallness (*WE* 183).¹⁰⁸ We remember Stein's college girl, 'a little body with a very large head'. Women in Gilman's view are too enthusiastic about tending the family, and obtaining food and clothes. They need 'more personality and less sexuality' (313).

Stein, in the pseudo-scientific role of 'Degeneration in American Women', is not coy about her sexual terminology. All forms of 'sterility' from abstinence to late marriage to contraception to disease to abortion come across as reprehensible, though none are so despicable as the 'voluntary' forms. In *MA* too Stein would be extremely scornful of the 'spinster' type.¹⁰⁹

Stein's reference to 'the characteristic inefficiency in household matters of the lower class American woman' is directly inspired by *WE*; her claim that the American woman can neither cook nor sew nor manage household finances as well as 'her European sisters' is a condensation of chapter XI of *WE* ('Degeneration', 414). In *MA* Stein would stress the importance of these household duties - for example Mrs Shilling's 'living, working, cooking, directing' (*MA* 78). The neglect of such duties indicates an all-round degeneration in American life.¹¹⁰ In *MA*, the story of a family's progress, where the women are chosen by the men and appear to have no history, meaning, or identity, yet keep the world going (100), where each generation produces a

¹⁰⁷ Kipling, 'Road-Song of the Bandar-Log', *Songs for Youth from Collected Verse by Rudyard Kipling* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), 195-196.

¹⁰⁸ Gilman observes 'innumerable weak and little women, with the aspirations of an affectionate guinea-pig' (*WE*, 168). 'Lord deliver us from sweet little women', Stein agrees in her notebooks (12-15).

¹⁰⁹ e.g. *MA* 199.

¹¹⁰ This 'pseudo-feminist' position of treating housekeeping as a profession was adopted by women's magazines such as *Harper's Bazar* (Lasch, op. cit., 48).

more retrograde Martha Hersland (116-7), selection and degeneration also play an important role.¹¹¹

When Stein writes, in 'Degeneration', that 'the only serious business of life in which [women] cannot be entirely outclassed by the male is that of child bearing' she feels compelled to add a disclaimer:

Of course it is not meant that there are not a few women in every generation who are exceptions to this rule but these exceptions are too rare to make it necessary to subvert the order of things in their behalf and besides if their need for some other method of expression is a real need there is very little doubt but that the opportunity of expression will be open to them. (413)

Narcissistic evaluation of oneself as exceptional is common among the period's feminist authors.¹¹² Stein's cultivation of a male authorial persona builds on this belief.

STEIN'S MISOGYNY

"I thank the Lord I was not born a woman", runs the Hebrew prayer' (*WE* 56). Gilman is not alone in singling out this prayer. It is the cause of much soul-searching in Jewish-American women's autobiography; it is often used as the first signal to the autobiographer that she is not of the old world, that she must break with orthodoxy, and often family, in order to become American.¹¹³ Gilman uses it simply to reinforce the claim that woman has been debarred from the human impulse to make, create, do. It is significant then that it often serves as a central motif in these women's stories, often the stories of how they have begun to write. When Stein has her alter ego, Adele of *QED*, say 'I always did thank God I wasn't born a woman' she too is referring to this prayer.

Nevertheless, in the notebooks Stein describes a type of which she approves; a type which is 'impulsive, impatient, proud, original, non-temperamental, lyrical, intellectual, mature, serious, sexually masculine, and aggressive'.¹¹⁴ These are terms which specifically decry the sentimental - and modernism's anti-sentimentality was connected to anti-feminine discourse.¹¹⁵ As Gygas observes in connection with *MA*, 'A woman writer attempting to present a family history is confronted with paternal authority but

¹¹¹ See Doane, op. cit., 137.

¹¹² Bauer explains it as 'understandable', in light of 'the loss of uniqueness women face in debates about the potentiality of motherhood' (op. cit., 48).

¹¹³ For example Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* [1912] (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 33. The phrase is also queried in Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* [1895-98] (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1985), 63, 117. (Importantly, the woman's response to this statement of the man is 'I thank Thee, oh Lord, that I am what I am, according to Thy holy will.')
¹¹⁴ B-16.

also with her own female authorship.¹¹⁶ Stein employs a number of distancing effects to rid herself of what she was unavoidably seeing as the stigma of femininity, weakness or uncertainty in her writing. The most obvious is the assumption of a male persona.¹¹⁷ Stein had deliberately adopted a male idiom in her early writing, as we have seen.¹¹⁸ Armatage points out the way the autobiographical characters of *QED* refer to themselves as men when they are ‘oppressors, teachers, owners, when they are competent, strong, independent, dominant; they are women when they play the inferior role.’¹¹⁹

Certainly, at Radcliffe in the 1890s Stein had already begun to adopt a male persona, as is evidenced by letters from her classmate Lillian.¹²⁰ It seems to have been an in-joke among Stein and her Radcliffe friends to call themselves ‘the family’; one friend, Inez, was the mother, Lillian refers to herself as ‘The Infant’,¹²¹ and Stein becomes the father figure, as ‘the scientist of the family’. Significantly, the scientist must be male. The scientist’s voice is not for Stein neutral in gender, it is weighted with masculinity. Lillian addresses Stein jokingly as ‘Mein lieber Vater’, ‘my venerable pa’, ‘Beloved Parent’, ‘my pa, my aged pa’, and so on. In other letters she refers to Stein as ‘he’. The male pose can be tracked from Stein’s college themes through her early correspondence and essays into *Fernhurst* and *MA* itself.¹²²

As might be clear from my summaries so far, Gilman is often far from complementary about female character. A typical phrase might be ‘Woman’s femininity - and “the eternal feminine” means simply the eternal sexual’ (*WE* 45). ‘The eternal feminine’, the term frequently bandied in feminist discourse, used by Nietzsche to refer to an ideal womanhood which is based on procreative powers, is also used by Stein in the notebooks for *MA*.¹²³ Here she was uncovering the behaviour and character of her

¹¹⁵ See Clark, *Sentimental Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 4.

¹¹⁶ *Gender and Genre in Gertrude Stein* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 14.

¹¹⁷ For further reference to Stein’s male persona, see Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* (London: Virago, 1987), 19.

¹¹⁸ For example in ‘Woman’.

¹¹⁹ Armatage 1973, op. cit., no page numbers.

¹²⁰ Letters from Lillian [Wing Smith?] 1896-1899, YCAL.

¹²¹ October 9, 1898.

¹²² Benstock points out that misogyny was common among female writers of the Left Bank, and claims it is linked to their lesbianism, and homophobia, the theories of Ellis and Krafft-Ebing having confirmed them in their self-hatred; Benstock, op. cit., 11. The widespread shirking of political postures (described by Clark, op. cit., 35-36) which followed from this may be partly responsible for Stein’s shrug of disinterest about ‘the cause of women’.

¹²³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo, On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Vintage, 1969), e.g. 266. In Burgard’s words, Nietzsche ‘valorizes the pregnancy and birthing to which he reduces women’,

female friends in terms of their sexuality, which she usually saw as heightened and in some way perverse or indicative of a pathological mental state. Woman, says Gilman, is 'undeniably over-sexed'. This brusque, implicitly clear-headed approach to the deficiencies of their sex may have been seen by Stein as worthy of emulation.

When Gilman writes that women's qualities include 'a childish, wavering, short-range judgement, handicapped by emotion' (*WE* 337) we are reminded of some of the prejudices exhibited in Stein's correspondence. Gilman is alert to 'the false sentimentality, the false delicacy, the false modesty' which have existed, in other words the hypocrisies of women (*WE* 148-9). Hypocrisy is one of the most provoking elements of female character for both Stein and Gilman; "feminine delicacy", for example, is actually 'an expression of sexuality in excess' (*WE* 46). Adopting an attitude which Greer, writing on Weininger, claims is a common one among feminist writers, Gilman plainly states that women are amoral, because they have been denied the opportunity to form correct judgement by experience (*WE* 335).¹²⁴ This is also Stein's exact argument.¹²⁵ Woman does not know right and wrong but is very fond of moralizing, and so is bound to commit moral hypocrisy. In *WE* Gilman insists that a mother's life is a vicarious one (191), that she is bound by societal pressure to commit martyrdom for the sake of her sons (192). Most of Stein's mothers suffer the same fate, although in 'Degeneration' she had suggested that sacrifice could be overcome by maternal pride. The sacrifice which Gilman emphasizes in rather maudlin fashion may be part of the typical feminist rhetoric that Stein objects to.¹²⁶

Subject to self-consciousness and self-interest, woman is over-moral without possessing real sense, and is given to surrender, evasion, and rebellion, as well as being childish and emotional. And while she sees herself as a martyr to propagation, in fact by transmitting these characteristics to her children, woman retards human progress. This is an exceptionally important facet of Gilman's argument.¹²⁷

These deficiencies are characterized as feminine, but because everybody is born of both men and women, they are 'born in us all' - so these deficiencies are universalized.

Nietzsche and the Feminine (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 9. For an early example of pro-feminist use of the term, see Frances Swiney's effusive *The Cosmic Procession* (London: Ernest Bell, 1906).

¹²⁴ *The Female Eunuch* (London: Paladin, 1971), 341, n.7.

¹²⁵ In conversation with Hodder; see Wineapple, op. cit., 138.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, 414.

The phrase 'the moral miscegenation of two so diverse souls' (*WE* 339), used to describe normal parentage and the resulting temperament of the offspring, intimates the racial context of these gender debates. Gilman says we develop one set of qualities in half the race and another in the other half. Everyone is, therefore, a hybrid. We are all cursed with irreconcilable constitutions because of this; it is the reason for division in temperament or character - she calls people 'cross-bred' - which leads to confusion and contradiction in modern individuals. When Stein's characters in *MA* have to 'live down' their mothers (e.g. Julia, 147) one is reminded of Gilman's idea of women retarding the progress of humanity. In one case, for example, the three Hersland children all have 'important feeling'; 'That came through their being of him [their father]', but 'being of him and mixed up with the wife who bore them, made them uneven as he was always before them, uneven like the whole world together that he had in him' (*MA* 85).

This seeing of the feminine in the masculine, and the prominence given to these mixtures, reveals new combinations of dominance and dependence. 'Heredity has no Salic law' is a phrase which Gilman repeats with relish. The link of effeminacy and the weakening of the race, an unexpected point of view for Gilman perhaps, but abundant in both anti-feminist and feminist literature, is also employed in the grander schemes of *MA*, where an important question is being asked; how much will the new generation inherit from their mothers, and in what proportion will their strength be retarded as a result?¹²⁸

NERVOUSNESS

In 'Degeneration in American Women', Stein wrote that

in our modern system of education the heaviest mental strain is put upon the girl when her genitalia is making its heaviest demand and when her sexual desires are being constantly stimulated without adequate physiological relief, a condition that obtains to a very considerable extent in our average American college life. (412)

This sounds very like a diagnosis for the college girl as hysteric or nervous woman, popularly seen as the obverse of the mother figure.¹²⁹ When Stein wrote 'Degeneration' she was studying diseases of the nervous system in women. The word 'nervous' appears

¹²⁷ In fact, this is a pessimistic reversal of Darwin's theory of inheritance which suggests that women can inherit maleness; see Bender, op. cit., 175.

¹²⁸ Gilman's sense of rebuilding civilization is curiously linked to anti-feminist ideas of effeminization of culture; perversely, decline is the way forward - effeminacy in its worst sense has reached such a low that it leads instead to a new configuration of its ruins (Felski, op. cit., 149).

again and again in connection with the females of *MA* and is linked to ideas of hysteria and the heightened sexuality which dominates the notebooks. With reference to the dressmaker Lillian Rosenhagen, for example, Stein makes the tautological statement, 'in some anxious being is in them a nervous condition' (*MA* 197).

In 'Normal Motor Automatism' Stein categorized hysteria as a disease of the attention which was present in normal individuals, and equally prevalent in men and women - and this in itself though not unheard of is fairly unusual.¹³⁰ Clearly, however, in 'Degeneration' she makes a link between nervousness and sterility, subscribes in other words to that dualistic version of woman to be found in medical discourse. Here and in the college themes she expresses a deep unease about the condition of the modern American woman.

At one point in *WE*, Gilman refers to 'Americanitis' as a disease (*WE* 154). This condition, connected to neurasthenia, might be responsible for the nervousness of the American females in *MA*; race and gender again become signs of affliction.¹³¹ When Gilman wrote about female exhaustion, she was using her personal experience. Stein cast herself as the curer of such ills; in the notebooks, enumerating feminine traits of anxiousness, nervousness, weakness, and vagueness,¹³² she analyses her friend Harriet as a 'neurasthenic';¹³³ and she once diagnosed Bernard Berenson's neurasthenia and 'cured' him with a diet of eggs.¹³⁴

In the notebooks Stein reminds herself to 'Use all my doctoring experience', for the depiction of the women of *MA*.¹³⁵ She is keen to feel that she is still employing scientific methods; success and failure are judged in scientific terms.¹³⁶ This was at the time of general debate over whether women were even fit to be doctors, which was also played out in the work of the most prominent American novelists, as Bender points

¹²⁹ See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 104.

¹³⁰ Freud, for example, following a long tradition, believed hysteria to be an intrinsically feminine ailment, though he found examples of male hysterics; Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* [1893-1895] (London: Hogarth Press, 1995), 236. For literary examples of the contemporary idea that women were more hysterical than men see Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, op.cit., 40.

¹³¹ It appears to be present in the description of American women tourists in *QED*. See Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹³² B-5.

¹³³ NB #44. Here Stein's idea of neurasthenia is that it is based on fear, on not being free, and on false idealism.

¹³⁴ Wineapple, op. cit., 169.

¹³⁵ 760.25.

¹³⁶ 760.24.

out.¹³⁷ Stein herself had been discouraged from pursuing a medical career by friends and family.¹³⁸

Many of the letters which Stein was receiving from her American women friends during the 1890s and 1900s dealt as a matter of course with nervous complaints and disorders. Her cousin Bird Sternberger, for example, wrote about her mother's attacks, which affected her 'bowels, stomach and nerves.'¹³⁹ Most of these were her college friends, and all were educated women - some were doctors themselves, or closely connected with female doctors; their reports might have seemed to bear out Stein's estimation of the degenerative effect of college education on women.

Etta Cone, sister of Dr Claribel Cone, kept her friend updated on the state of her digestion; 'my digestive tract from beginning to end [is] in a nervous beastly condition, and even the old heart is beating time in a nervous way.'¹⁴⁰ Six months or so later she was still suffering: 'lordy me [my] poor insides are still so delicate that they need soothing oils and hot water bottles and alchohol [?] daily. However I shall try a change of climate for them'.¹⁴¹ But apparently the comforts of Paris could not quell the troublesome American ailments; in 1910 she was resorting to other more simple treatments.¹⁴² 'Down here I take no medicine but fresh air and plenty of eggs ... and am getting normal.'¹⁴³ (Apparently the eggs had also done the trick for Stein's sister-in-law, Sally, a fellow sufferer.) Mabel Earle would inform Stein of her sister Louise's more adventurous solution; Louise, feeling 'rather tired out', was spending the summer in a rest camp, 'a somewhat Bohemian ... arts and crafts settlement', started by a Mr. Radcliffe-Whitehead (pupil of Ruskin and friend of Morris), and populated by New York artists, friends of Lafcadio Hearn, and 'people of that sort'. 'Everyone who goes there has to do something for an hour or two a day, at least'.¹⁴⁴ The artistic temperament was clearly prone to feeling 'rather tired out.' Other friends were more occupied with procreation.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ Bender, op. cit., 156ff. Bender concentrates on Howell's *Dr. Breen's Practice* (1881), Phelps's *Dr. Zay* (1882), Jewett's *A Country Doctor*, and James's *The Bostonians* (1886).

¹³⁸ Mellow, op. cit., 38-39.

¹³⁹ Bird Sternberger to GS, n.d. (YCAL). For the Stein circle's interest in Fletcherism, see Wineapple, op. cit., 282, and 171 on the Haig diet.

¹⁴⁰ Etta Cone to GS, April 28, 1906.

¹⁴¹ Etta Cone to GS, Oct. 6, 1906.

¹⁴² On change as cure for restlessness, see Lasch, op. cit., chapter 2.

¹⁴³ Etta Cone to Mike Stein, Feb 20 1910.

¹⁴⁴ Mabel Earle to GS, August 2, 1907.

¹⁴⁵ 'The baby is a charmer, but he still excretes pus...', Mabel Earle to GS, June 6, 1907.

Meanwhile, a fatigued Emma Looz Erving was complaining to Stein about her lack of patience for her slow correspondence:

It is evident that you never labored so hard that you were literally incapable of wielding a pen in the infrequent ten minute intervals when you didn't have to be doing something. Add the whole care of a baby to everything else - and you will learn something about mental emptiness and inability that you don't know.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps this only served to substantiate Stein's suspicions about the incompatibility of being a mother and a writer (and, in this case, a doctor). Erving's letters are full of baby news, as well as the complications of her sex life, and include her own and her husband's professional encounters with what she calls 'neurasthenic females.'¹⁴⁷

Evidence of the paradoxical way in which neurasthenia could be used to represent whatever strand of the modern American disposition was seen as most objectionable is found in the two cures for the condition; one which involved rest, in other words implied it was caused by mental and bodily aggravation springing from the misplaced attempt to create, the other which suggested that artistic creation itself could be a cure for nervous disorders.¹⁴⁸ The disease is closely linked to hysteria, which itself has multiple definitions,¹⁴⁹ comprising Stein's favourite symptoms of 'dependency, fragility, emotionality, narcissism', of 'emotional indulgence, moral weakness, and lack of will power'.¹⁵⁰

In *MA* anxiety and nervousness are connected to spinsterhood (e.g. 199), and may be indicative of a more metaphorical American sterility, or absence of artistic productivity. Beard had seen neurasthenia as the artists' and women's disease, Mitchell as linked to demasculization.¹⁵¹ The ideal of America which Stein was working with was masculine, based on the pioneering spirit, but indeed in *MA* feminine motion and nervousness are linked in the description of an American upbringing (e.g. 426). Martha is born in a hotel and suffers from the lack of a fixed point for the rest of her life, the victim of nervous energy and repression (363). Stein wraps up all these themes in the preamble to the Fernhurst episode, where sexual codes are discussed, and the American

¹⁴⁶ E.L. Erving to GS, March 10, 1908.

¹⁴⁷ E.L. Erving to GS, Nov 20, 1904.

¹⁴⁸ Will, 'Nervous Systems, 1880-1915', in Armstrong, ed., *American Bodies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 90.

¹⁴⁹ Representation of hysteria in the period has of course received extensive treatment. For suggestive overviews see Tickner, op. cit., 192-205, Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, op. cit., 202.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 207, 205.

¹⁵¹ Will, op. cit., 88.

characters take part in unproductive and capricious theorising about methods of eating, educating and living.¹⁵²

Lutz includes Stein in a list of authors who 'relied heavily on neurasthenic themes or images in their writings and works'. He also argues that in the opening pages of *QED*

Stein ridicules the false and weary ennui of Adele ... and Adele's defense of middle class ideals. But ... Adele comes to reject the false advertising of neurasthenic self-presentation. Quarelling with Helen, her lover, Adele shouts: "You have no right to constantly use your pain as a weapon!", rejecting, in that one line, all of the self-serving moralism of the neurasthenic life-style.¹⁵³

Helen manages to be both 'coarse' and 'decadent', as 'In the American woman the aristocracy had been vulgarised and the power weakened'.¹⁵⁴ The pervading effeminacy then is threatening to American supremacy over other races. Will writes that the neurasthenic exhaustion and distractedness 'encodes a complex national ethos', that it was used as a metaphor for 'American national "effeminacy"'. Exhaustion and weakness are also symptoms of degeneration and have moral imputations.¹⁵⁵ Nordau had contrasted the 'strong healthy' with the 'emotional degenerate mind', the latter being effeminate.¹⁵⁶

Stein could utilize the suggestion that the evolutionary strength of the American 'race' was being sapped, and more specifically that the femininity of the East with its typical aristocratic artist figures was forcing masculinity ever further westwards;¹⁵⁷ David Hersland, after the personal crisis brought about by his eastern education, must strike out again for the frontier.

Gendered and racial imputations of weak-mindedness have their effect on the voice of *MA*. Concerns about weakness creep into Stein's advocacy of the healthy life (e.g. 20, 'There is nothing more joyous than being healthful young and energetic, and loving movement sunshine and clean air'), but by the middle of *MA* the narrator admits that she herself is beginning to feel absolutely worn out. Emulate the manly paradigm as she will, Stein will not be able to escape the imputations of sickness, of *MA* as a disease

¹⁵² e.g. *MA* 122 on Mr Hersland's theorizing.

¹⁵³ Lutz, op. cit., 19, 279.

¹⁵⁴ *QED* (op. cit.), 73, 55.

¹⁵⁵ Will, op. cit., 86.

¹⁵⁶ Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 86. The general uneasiness about these distinctions is shown by Nordau's citation of Legrain's claim that 'The degenerate ... may be a genius...' (22), or Guerinsen's contention that 'Genius is a disease of the nerves' (23); Nordau inverts these claims by saying that the supposed 'guides to the promised land of the future' are actually just degenerates - hysterics or neurasthenics (24-25).

¹⁵⁷ See Will, op. cit., 96, for further discussion of this theme.

ridden text.¹⁵⁸ This is partly because it is indeed an over-individualistic novel; it really is about her narrator's own confidence and how much of it she has at any given time when she sits down to write. She is in one sense hugely constrained by style, but in another sense she has overwhelmed it with her personality.

Significantly, neurasthenia attacks people who have used up their energy on sex, coinciding with Stein's ideas about morbid female sexuality being linked to education in 'Degeneration', and her judgement of eastern colleges: 'too damn anxious to be safe'. Stein appears to concur with Mitchell's idea that writing can be bad for women. Exhaustion and distractedness in Mitchell's terms were seen to have their effects on the body, and the effects on the body to be seen in the writing. These somatic features of writing itself are made explicit by Stein's elaborate reference to body parts and functions and the body's waste materials. Stein upturns the traditional 'hierarchy of bodily functions'¹⁵⁹ and literary decorum by making these the figures which represent the creative act.¹⁶⁰

In the notebooks a draft of what was chapter 5 of the original *MA* describes two kinds of women. They are the patterns for 'attacking' and 'resisting' characters, but they also belong to a misogynist tradition of perceiving femininity in two modes; the nervous, vicious woman and the suffering saint; the hysteric and the mother. Some indulge in 'ceaseless restless action', while others are characterized by stillness; they 'dread the loss of all themselves and every second go on losing more':

The restless ones know as keen sorrow as those who make no stir; but emptiness is more sickening long kept up than overfullness. The stomach overloaded is always very sick but then it can discharge itself upon the world. The empty starving stomach can only weaken sadden, grow more helpless.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ 'The doctors have a name for what ails Gertrude Stein. They have, in fact, four names for it, to wit: palilalia, verbal perservation, echolalia, and vernigeration, which is four different ways of saying that she is afflicted with a mania for repetitiousness.' (Anonymous, clipping from *Omaha World Herald*, n.d., YCAL.) The paradox of Stein's interest in degeneracy is that she herself was to be perceived as a degenerate writer. Her supposed decadence led to appraisals of her work as decadent, in unthinking recapitulations of Bourget's premise of the author's decadence as a signal of a decadent style; see Gibbons, *Rooms in the Darwin Hotel* (University of Western Australia Press, 1973), 30. For example, see 'Home Girl Makes Good', *New Masses*, November 27, 1934: 'She has been, in a fantastic version, the bourgeois housewife, living on the labor of others and keeping a stylish house'. Michael Gold, also branding her as decadent, compared her work to 'the monotonous gibberings of paranoiacs in the private wards of asylums', 'Gertrude Stein: A Literary Idiot', *Change the World!* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937), 24.

¹⁵⁹ Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, op. cit., 262.

¹⁶⁰ See Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); 'If Veblen had equated women and waste, Stein ... renders ... waste-production as the aesthetic itself' (68).

¹⁶¹ Typescript pages, #111/ n.d., YCAL.

Hunger is used as a metaphor for the general lack of fulfillment in these women's lives, and unhappiness is the default condition in both cases. Here Stein follows Ellis, who had stated that hysteria was linked to 'sex-hunger'.¹⁶² In the notebooks Stein had written 'problem of nutrition is the problem of death'.¹⁶³

In the notebooks the idea of 'taste' in art is taken literally, described in terms of eating, having a palate and being sensitive to flavours. She writes of Neith Hapgood's over-civilized appreciation of flavours; 'the kind of gritty sugar all through things the way one gets it in New England cooking until your mouth and stomach and whole system get gritty with sugar...'.¹⁶⁴ Neith represents an effeminate delicacy and refinement which is associated with the East and degeneration.¹⁶⁵ In keeping with this she mentions her own father's interest in the 'Chinese ideal of eating'.¹⁶⁶ Those men who are obsessed with the dieting and cures for nerves which repeatedly surface here are seen as effeminate and weak.¹⁶⁷

MA is about neurasthenia, rest and agitation, exhaustion and distraction - on all from the most fundamental to the most superficial levels; it both depicts and mimics these stages; they become authorial strategies. The narrator begins as the doctor figure, diagnosing her characters in the way she had done her initial subjects, her friends and relatives, but eventually begins to suffer; the scientific voice itself is ailing. *MA* is about 'American disease' and American health; the cure depends on making whole again after fragmentation.¹⁶⁸ It is about the process of becoming, in relation to weakness, strength, freedom and slavery.

In *QED* Adele's revulsion from her sexual encounter is typically 'nervous'.¹⁶⁹ The sexual descriptions in the notebooks are frequently based on similar feelings of illicitness and revulsion. In the novel itself the description of infidelities and romantic inconsistencies becomes ever more elaborate as sexual categories proliferate. We might make an obvious link between the narrative loquacity in *MA* and Freud's presentation of

¹⁶² *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 4 vols, (New York: Random House, 1936), I:I:232.

¹⁶³ NB-MA, 10.

¹⁶⁴ MA-52, 2.

¹⁶⁵ In *Sex in Education* Clarke had referred to college girls (particularly New Englanders) as being poorly nourished; op. cit., 44.

¹⁶⁶ MA-26.

¹⁶⁷ I-8 dieting; 10-13 diets and cures.

¹⁶⁸ Will, op. cit., 90.

¹⁶⁹ *QED*, op. cit., 57.

the endless insufficiency of description for the neurasthenic,¹⁷⁰ trying to overcome that 'indefiniteness' which is a symptom of the condition.¹⁷¹

Will has discussed the 'implicit analogy between female neurasthenia and the modernist aesthetic' (92), stressing that neurasthenia can be taken as 'a product of ... and productive of' modernity (98). It seems that for Stein the disease is both the representative modern condition of American life and also to be reflected in her description of it; *MA* enacts this nervousness.¹⁷²

ART AND NERVOUSNESS

MA is largely a 'narrative of the interior', to borrow Agnew's phrase for the novels of Wharton and James.¹⁷³ Gilman had advocated simplicity not decoration in the home, as a gesture towards freedom for women (*WE* 257), and of course the whole practise of interior decoration in the era was politically and culturally alert. The opening of *MA* suggests a similar urge to simplicity, in case the endemic nervousness of the feminized home should become infectious. The Dehning family house is filled with a 'nervous restlessness of luxury' (28); Stein associates the decor with the nervous state of mind of the period she is describing.¹⁷⁴ Here, in the merchant's house, the rituals of living, eating, washing and going to bed take place in an atmosphere of commodity fetishism;

a parlor full of ornate marbles placed on yellow onyx stands, chairs gold and white of various size and shape, a delicate blue silk brocaded covering on the walls and a ceiling painted pink with angels and cupids all about, a dining room all dark and gold, a living room all rich and gold and red with built-in couches, glass-covered book-cases and paintings of well washed peasants of the German school, and large and dressed up bedrooms all light and blue and white. (*MA* 28)

The bedrooms are 'dressed up' like the women. Everything in this woman's sphere is painted, but importantly 'like a large and splendid canvas completely painted over but painted full of empty space'.¹⁷⁵ This image sums up the uselessness of the type of interior design which the women of Hodder's *The New Americans* pride themselves

¹⁷⁰ Breuer and Freud, op. cit., 136.

¹⁷¹ Will, op. cit., 90.

¹⁷² There are several occasions when *MA*'s narrator admits to being 'nervous', e.g. 348.

¹⁷³ Agnew, 'A House of Fiction', *Consuming Visions*, ed. Bronner (W.W. Norton and Co., 1989), 147.

¹⁷⁴ Stein's preoccupation with interior decorating had first been seen in *QED*, op. cit., 70. Nordau had made the link between luxury and effeminacy. In one notebook Stein advises a friend that 'you have the making of a fine woman' but 'your composition is too rich and weak living down' (*MA*-29)

¹⁷⁵ Stein's objections here may be connected to her close acquaintance Bernard Berenson's developing theory of 'tactile values' in painting. See Berenson, *Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon 1952), 120-121, on his theory of 'space-composition'.

on.¹⁷⁶ It is a sham creativity, giving only the illusion of space and freedom. Even the real pieces of art on the walls are delusive; the images of the well-washed peasants serving only to isolate the merchant family further. The sham creativity is symbolic of a sham existence, an empty space inside.

These images, referring both to the women and their surroundings, conjure the double implication of women both consuming and being commodities, with the attendant insinuation of the women's 'narcissistic identification with the immediate commodity environment'.¹⁷⁷ After enumerating the conspicuous luxuries, Stein makes an aside which situates this world historically: 'All this was twenty years ago in the dark age, you know, before the passion for the simple line and the toned burlap on the wall and the wooden panelling all classic and severe'. The implication is that the new style, in literature as well as living, should denude itself of the luxury of middle-class embellishments and concentration on the object, and move beyond materialism to a purer art form which no longer relies on an object centred narration.¹⁷⁸

She appends another strange observation: 'And always everywhere there were complicated ways to wash, and dressing tables filled full of brushes, sponges, instruments, and ways to make one clean, and to help out all the special doctors in their work.' Here Stein seems to recollect the proliferation of nervous diseases at the turn of the century and the various crackpot cures for them.¹⁷⁹ The instruments referred to suggest sexual diseases in particular. This urge toward the wholesome possibility of 'rich right American living' recalls Roosevelt's doctrine of 'strenuous living', and Stein's own assertions in 'Degeneration in American Women', where she claims that

The American population seems to have completely lost sight of the fact that the exercise of one's normal functions of living, walking, talking, thinking, being, eating and drinking is an endless joy of a healthy human being. (414)¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ More famously, of course, the interior life depicted here is reminiscent of the novels of Wharton, Howells and James. See Stein's 1918 composition, 'James is Nervous'.

¹⁷⁷ Agnew, op. cit., 150.

¹⁷⁸ See also Willa Cather's 1922 essay, 'The Novel D  meubl  ', in *Willa Cather on Writing* (New York: Knopf, 1949), where she claims: 'The novel, for a long while, has been over-furnished' (35). Cather compares the work of many contemporary novelists to that of 'a department-store window-dresser' (41); compare this with Stein's denigration, in her notebooks, of the 'goods counter aesthete' (folder 783). In *MA* the women are often depicted as unhealthily attached to the objects around them, the accoutrements of femininity - dresses and hats for example (411).

¹⁷⁹ Katz has drawn attention to Stein's concern with hereditary taints of disease, and to the moment when the doctor who deals in 'fluids' comes to see Martha (op. cit., 166, 170).

¹⁸⁰ Compare Roosevelt, 'a healthy state can exist only when the men and women who make it lead clean, vigorous, healthy lives', *The Strenuous Life* (New York: The Century Co., 1900), 3. Roosevelt is one of Stein's characters in *MA*; see notebooks, A-8; 14-18.

In *MA* Stein's middle-class narrator does not speak out against the oppressiveness of the surroundings, but rebellion stirs in one of her characters. 'It was good riches in this house and here it was that Julia Dehning dreamed of other worlds and here each day she grew more firm in her resolve for that free wide and cultured life to which for her young Hersland had the key' (28).

FEMALE CREATION

In *WE* Gilman had marked the 'pain and strain' that modern women (the best women - those of her own class) suffered from continual change of occupation (*WE* 154-55). This was a particular concern of Stein's; her tendency to draw attention to her multiple beginnings is a sign of her recognition of her own restlessness and search for direction. In 'Degeneration', there is a sense that the undeniable evolutionary certainty of the specialization to maternity exempts woman from other gainful occupations. The desire to make must be nurtured mainly in order to counteract the fact that all women know how to do is take (*WE* 118-119). In conversation with Hodder, Stein had denied that women had the ability to make on the grand scale of men's productions. In Veblenesque terms, the women of *MA* are pure consumers.¹⁸¹

Woman's identity is relational, based on belonging and belongings, while man's is autonomous, and this is linked to women's lack of artistic creativity. Gilman calls women 'an enormous class of non-productive consumers, - a class which is half the world, and the mother of the other half' (117-8). Stein told Alfred Hodder that women in their current situation could expect to be allowed to exploit and take all they could,¹⁸² and that self-sacrifice is natural to them but they become too proud of it. They are unable to figure themselves as producers, makers.¹⁸³

The most important facet of this part of Gilman's argument is that female insistence on consumerism acts as a check to art; a purely sensuous market subverts male creativity from its proper outlets. Hence Gilman objects to 'the training of women

¹⁸¹ For a reading of Stein's later career in relation to consumerism see Carson, *Consumption and Depression in Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky and Ezra Pound* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). Carson concentrates on Stein's reactionary politics and her problematic support, during the Depression, of 'money and the market' (8).

¹⁸² Wineapple, op. cit., 152.

¹⁸³ For discussion of this topic as part of the woman suffrage argument, see Tickner, op. cit., 15-16.

as non-productive consumers' (227).¹⁸⁴ To become Americans, women must themselves become economic and artistic makers. But the possibility of female creativity is problematic, for both Gilman and Stein. One of the things that women do not know how to make is art; in *The Man-Made World* (1911) Gilman claimed that art is essentially a masculine achievement.¹⁸⁵

Gilman's distinction between the sexes is that masculine energy expands and scatters while feminine energy conserves and, when properly directed, makes (*WE* 126). Masculinity therefore innovates while femininity provides stability, but there is nothing in this construction of male as procurer, female as receiver, male as progressive (often associated with breaking), female as conservative (embedded in the literal chores of making), which goes against traditional Judaeo-Christian gender roles in creativity. However, at one point in *WE* femininity is seen as the first, superior sex; the force of racial evolution has, Gilman says, been to elevate the *male* to equality with the *female*: 'the constructive force of woman has made man its instrument, and worked for the upbuilding of the world.'¹⁸⁶

On the eve of her marriage, Julia Dehning has severe doubts about the general decency of men, but these doubts must be suppressed, as to do otherwise 'would be to recreate the world and make a new one all out of her own head' (*MA* 30). Young Julia is incapable of making that new world, and consigns herself to a disastrous marriage, to the old world of belonging and being defined by one's belongings. The only way she could have made it would have been by dismantling the machinery of courtship. Stein finds herself in a similar creative dilemma. She too is forced to create a new world from her own head. There is a crucial difference here between the idea of women making a new world out of their own heads, and making a new world out of their own bodies, which is the activity which in *MA* they are strongly associated with. Creating America, Americans, takes on these different meanings in *MA*.

In *Fernhurst*, Philip Redfern addresses the character who will become Martha Hersland: 'you wonderful Western women ... Surely you have made a new world'; this might appear to chime with this building up of worlds. But (as Armatage points out)

¹⁸⁴ Veblen had rubbed off on Alfred Hodder too: he denounces the 'unproductive consumption' of women property-owners (*The New Americans* 411); one of his characters states that women, as pure consumers, cannot legitimately be seen as part of the nation.

¹⁸⁵ (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), 75-77; 250.

¹⁸⁶ Swiney, op. cit., similarly claimed that man could be defined as underdeveloped woman. See Bender, op. cit., chapter 6, on Phelps's and Jewett's use of this trope.

Martha Hersland ends up poor, alone and pathetic.¹⁸⁷ Her final striving to be a suitable companion to Redfern is in stark contrast to her grand ambitions and her early work for women (470-71). Keating identifies this as the typical pattern of late Victorian fiction; the woman challenges her world, but ends up either failing completely or 'accepting a modification of her rebellion'.¹⁸⁸ In *MA*, where this belief in the West as the pioneering frontier of the woman's movement can also be found, as well as the more general ideas of freedom and progress associated with it by writers like Jack London, the women seem to be inadvertently making a new world - first as mothers, then as divorcees. But having made the transition to adulthood via conflict with the father and movement away from home, Julia is forced to regress to childhood when divorced, by returning home to her father; divorce should be setting the New Women free, but it isn't.

Female forms of creativity in both *MA* and *WE* tend to be based around the home - sewing, cooking, and superficial accomplishments. Gilman suggests that this female desire to make, however paltry the product, should be nurtured (116). She says there is an increasing female 'desire to produce' (139), no longer just to reproduce. She devotes a section to her complaint that young women no longer enjoy sewing (*WE* 154-155). Significantly, Martha Hersland has lost the art of sewing that her mother and grandmother knew, but that there is a whole sub-community of seamstresses in the area where she lives.

For both writers, woman's creative status is confused and impeded by the conflation of work and sex (or 'loving', in Stein's more genteel terms). A wife's 'main industry is to please, - that is her chief means of getting what she wants or expressing affection...' says Gilman (*WE* 232-233). We might bear this feminist precedent in mind when Stein implies that women's creativity, 'poetically, romantically, dramatically, idealistically, sentimentally', is bound up with loving (502). These feelings coincide with being 'not very good at inventing'. Just as in 'Degeneration', those who are bound for intellectual pursuits are not those who carry out the traditional feminine roles in love and sex. But as we saw at the end of the introduction, Stein would later characterize her own style in similar terms.

Stein would have to engage with the problem of her perception of women's innate and all-consuming sexuality. Despite the fact that in her writing she steers so uniquely

¹⁸⁷ Armatage 1973, op. cit., no page numbers.

¹⁸⁸ Keating, *The Haunted Study* (London: Fontana, 1991), 168.

and eccentrically clear of the traditional iconography of the female form, her own person is interpreted by onlookers in ways which rehearse the old, easy formulations of female worth, and filter directly into ways of describing and evaluating her writing as well as her appearance.¹⁸⁹ Stein's femininity, her body and her peculiarly feminine forms of 'insanity', especially involving the craziness and *unprohibitedness* of words have been discussed by critics and made into a physical complaint, not a facet of mind.¹⁹⁰

MOTHERS

Stein also approaches the problem of female creativity through her elaborate use of the mother figure.¹⁹¹ Ruddick suggests that Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Woman's Bible* was an influence on Stein in the late 1890s.¹⁹² Cady Stanton had used Henry Lewis Morgan's *Ancient Society* as the basis for a revision of Christian doctrine, adopting, in particular, his ideas about the ancient existence of a matriarchate.¹⁹³ Similarly Gilman, also under the influence of contemporary anthropologists, writes that 'Women have made the people who made the world' (*WE* 164),¹⁹⁴ and in the opening pages of *MA*, the mothers colonize the new world.¹⁹⁵ Stein's use of the word 'Herland', the name of Gilman's feminist utopia, as her family name, indicates a coincidence of interests rather than direct imitation, since Gilman's novel of the same name was not published until 1915. But Stein's 'new people made out of the old' occupy a similar status as 'makers of men'.

¹⁸⁹ A classic example is Wyndham Lewis's reference to her writing as 'a cold suet-roll ... cut it at any point, it is the same thing ... all fat, without nerve'; *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927). Wilson refers to the 'fatty degeneration of her imagination and style', *Axel's Castle* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 239.

¹⁹⁰ Reid states that 'later ages will gather about the corpus of her work like a cluster of horrified medical students around a biological sport'; *Art By Subtraction* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 207. F.J. Hoffman, *Gertrude Stein*, 45, calls her an 'old maid'; Lewis again, op. cit.: her style, 'like a stuttering infection, is very contagious' (68). Isaac Goldberg, in 'A Stein on the Table', *Panorama*, Boston, Mass., April 1934, referred to Stein's work as 'Gertrusions'.

¹⁹¹ Doane, op. cit., 97-102.

¹⁹² *Reading Gertrude Stein* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 232-234.

¹⁹³ Part I of this influential, controversial, and widely debated work, which called itself 'the greatest literary undertaking of the century' (II:111), was originally published in 1895, and part II in 1898. The questioning of stories of racial origins, marriage relations and dependency that Stanton's exegesis provokes might have appealed to Stein, as might its interpretation of women's role in the history of nations (II:101); *The Woman's Bible* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1985).

¹⁹⁴ Gilman was one of a minority who supported Stanton's book at a convention of the National-American Woman Suffrage Association in 1896.

¹⁹⁵ The women are 'strong to bear many children', but then they die away in what seems an evolutionary shortfall (*MA* 4).

Motherhood also has metaphorical importance towards the beginning of *MA*, where Stein presents herself as the mother of her characters.¹⁹⁶ The linking of images of procreation and artistic creation, which was employed also by the New Woman novelists,¹⁹⁷ is of course problematic, as Gygax points out.¹⁹⁸ It is all very well to use them as tenor and vehicle, but they are not the same thing, and as we have seen, the maternal ideal was not straightforward for Stein. Rather than pressing her ideas polemically, they are embedded in the way she addresses her own creativity. Stein transforms the somewhat hackneyed 'image of literary maternity', into a strange, fundamental and exhausting physical process, which gets displaced by a more explicitly sexual metaphor.

The thinner of the Shilling sisters, Pauline, suffers explicitly from 'incompleteness' (83). 'She was always busy inside her in filling up the hole in her from the rest of her and so making another, for there was not enough inside her ever to entirely fill her' (83). Stein resorts again to the metaphor of the poorly nourished woman. 'This made her without any power, or appeal to any one who was near her' (83).

No matter how clichéd, these lines represent a female yearning for completeness, satisfaction of some sort, whether sexual or maternal, a feminine desire literally to be made complete, and in the process to gain dominance over something, in this case the woman's own body. This repressed instinct for completion is something Pauline Shilling is unaware of, it 'only made a self-defensive instinct in her'; 'she could not let [anyone who came near her] touch her lest they should push a hole into her' (83). It silently governs the way she acts and is. On the other hand, David Hersland (senior), the 'big man', is described, soon after Pauline, in opposite terms; 'He was all full up inside him, there was not much of any way that anything could enter into him' (85).

The Shillings are representative women, and what Stein writes of them may be instructive; she wonders

whether something had been left out in each one of them in the making of them or whether they had lost something out of them that should have been inside them ... and they had been indolent or fearful or stupid or staring then ... and they had not noticed such a dropping out of them. (84)

¹⁹⁶ op. cit., 21.

¹⁹⁷ For example, Mona Caird in *Daughters of Danaus* implicitly and metaphorically raised the questions explicitly asked by Gilman, concerning the contradictions between these two activities.

¹⁹⁸ Gygax, op. cit., 15.

What is it that these women are missing? There is certainly a case for claiming that Freudian penis envy might be operating. Feeling male, attaining to masculinity, is sometimes only just achieved by men themselves, but it must be achieved, in order to feel 'real'; the father of Cora, Bertha and Anna has 'just enough of a kind of being in him that always could make it certain that he was an object real in being, an object called man not woman the world around him then' (98).

In the second half of the novel, Stein's narrator frequently discusses her realization of her characters as pieces and as wholes (e.g. 520; 'Every one to me just now is in pieces to me'). Her failure of completion is depressing;

now mostly every one is a piece of a one, not all the being as a complete one and yet every one has their own being in them and putting all of each kind of them together to make a whole one can not be to me a satisfaction, cannot give to me any real satisfaction can not be a satisfactory way in my feeling of having completion.... (520-521)

Characters must attain individual completeness before the author can organize them into a complete whole, and thereby achieve her own artistic completeness.

Still it is true that Stein uses a 'metaphor of literary maternity ... in a book about patriarchal family.'¹⁹⁹ The difficult pregnancy has links to the female death/miscarriage of Stein's earlier stories.²⁰⁰ Stein is afraid that this pregnancy will not come to term successfully. When her children are small, Mrs Hersland's children are 'in her then as they had been when she was bearing them, they were part of her as her arms or heart were part of her then, she felt them, she took care of them as she took care of her body out of which she had once made them' (*MA* 113). Later, though, when they are grown, 'the important feeling was dead in her then ... they were not of her any more and she lost her body with them' (*MA* 113). This idea of having something dead inside one is an accurate metaphor for the process of disconnection from one's own words which ends that feeling of importance for Stein.

SERVANT GIRLS

We have already seen that *WE* regards the difference between men and women as a class difference, fating marriage to mean the unrewarding cohabitation of unequal individuals (128). Engels too had seen the class struggle epitomized in the marriage relation: 'The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 15.

²⁰⁰ See also *MA* 211-219 on the story of Mabel Linker, who loses a baby.

antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male.²⁰¹ Following Engels, Gilman believes that as the family declines marriage will evolve towards equality (215), but for the moment she insists that women have developed a servile nature, calling all wives and mothers 'domestic servants by trade' (211).

Perhaps the female type which Stein employs most often in the notebooks for *MA* is what she calls the 'servant girl'.²⁰² There are several reasons for this fascination. First, her knowledge of her own servants, who were a rich source of character observation and of stories which she converted into her own. The subject was also part of her interest in the immigrant population of America. The language of contemporary feminism also emphasized women's service. In addition she was a great admirer of Richardson, whom she had begun to read around this time, and she was playing with sentimental traditions in *MA*.²⁰³ Another reason for the interest in servant girls is that because of their social standing they were connected in her mind with a certain baseness which she linked with loose morality and sexual promiscuity. For example, Lillian Rosenhagen

had a vague stupid bottom being ... She had a physical something that made an impression, that was some attraction. Mostly men did not want her for marrying, no man ever wanted her enough to have her marry him. She just went on living and dress-making. (*MA* 198)²⁰⁴

Stein's sexual scheme benefits from this benchmark. Finally, in the Weiningerian sense which I will look at in detail in chapter 3, slavehood and conformism are linked to female and Jewish types of being. It is important to recognize that the presence of these female servants in the story of *MA*, as well as in the terminology of her types, is connected to early feminist language of freedom and slavery. Stein is tapping a topical debate surrounding 'the servant girl question', as Hodder called it.²⁰⁵

We need only glance at *Three Lives* to appreciate the prominence of the servant girl for Stein, and that she links servant nature to a sordid kind of sexuality and amorality. This is unsurprising; Gilman after all suggests that all these 'private servants' are no better than prostitutes. *MA* purports to depict a middle-class family, but in doing so it

²⁰¹ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, trans. by Alick West (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 96. This seminal work also discussed dependency, slavehood, production, in connection with marriage.

²⁰² See for example #78; #79; #81; #82.

²⁰³ Weinstein, 38.

²⁰⁴ Typically, in her dualistic way Stein would compare this to the spinster nature of Lillian's sister Cecilia.

has somehow to assimilate the dependents who share their lives, and populate the area 'where no other rich people were living' (*MA* 90). Here, as in *Three Lives*, the usefulness to Stein of casting her stories among the servant population rests on the idea of marginality. Patterns of thought and speech are seen to be more open to experimentation in this environment. Women, children, servants, and particularly foreign servants, are all seen to enjoy the same freedom from lexical codes. Many of Stein's servant girls are immigrants, or 'foreign' as she calls them.²⁰⁶ Their influence on mainstream America was a matter of heated debate. Gilman had ascribed servile characteristics to all women, but she also dealt with the problems thrown up by the actual servant girls who cohabited with middle-class families. She expressed a topical objection when she argued against employing servants to rear children. It was letting a stranger into one's house, 'a stranger by birth, almost always an alien in race, and, more hopeless still, a stranger by breeding, one who can never truly understand' (239). In *MA* 'stranger' would become an extremely potent word.²⁰⁷

We might think that Stein is much less anxious than Gilman about the supposed dangers of this sort of infiltration of the American home; indeed, as I will argue in my final chapter, she utilizes some of the features of contemporary immigration novels to scrutinize this very issue. In *MA* Mr Hersland advocates a pure American education, but also occasionally employs foreign-born women as governesses. Stein, however, is apt to apportion scurrilous behaviour to these 'foreign' women: most commonly laziness, deceitfulness and dereliction of duty. Servant girls, generically, have 'much trouble with their loving so that nobody stops them when they go to their loving'; they have 'hands so grimy nothing can clean them' (*MA* 172). 'Rich, right, American living' is something which must be acquired by proper training from a qualified instructor.

A letter to Stein from Mabel Earle displayed the attitude to servant girls which could be countenanced in Stein's circle:

My priceless pearl of a maid has incontinently developed a pregnancy, and I left William with a probable miscarriage on his hands, as she was enlisting the services of a kind lady practitioner to keep her out of trouble. It bores me to death, for she was the most excellent servant. And now I may have to take to niggers, blast them.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ *The New Americans* (New York: Macmillan, 1901), 418.

²⁰⁶ The foreign-born dressmaker, *MA* 99, to give just one example.

²⁰⁷ See chapter 4 below.

²⁰⁸ Mabel Earle to GS, April 14, 1907.

Later she related the story of her maid's self-induced miscarriage taking place in the kitchen, which she objected to because 'repeated attempts at that sort of thing are likely to impair usefulness.'²⁰⁹

We have already seen Stein's contentions about the soaring birth rate among the immigrant population; immigrant women are building up America with a special kind of productivity.²¹⁰ The population of *MA* therefore comprises a considerable number of these women. The Rosenhagen sisters are 'both born American', implying that they are second generation immigrants (*MA* 196). Most of the servants described are first or second generation immigrants. 'There are then every kind of women among foreign women among foreign american women who are servants sometime in their living to some one' (*MA* 187). The Herslands prefer German servants, but sometimes they employ Irish, Italian, or Mexican women instead. Some of these have 'the queerness that comes from being a servant and cooking and sitting alone in a kitchen and having a mistress to direct them and sometimes children to tease them, these had to be sent away all of a sudden' (*MA* 170-171). This 'servant queerness', apparently some form of derangement, is something which Stein devotes considerable time to explaining (e.g. 186). Meanwhile, 'servant girl being' is something different to 'servant being'; it is a female state. 'Servant girl being is a kind of being that many millions of many kinds of women always have in them' (*MA* 172). It is based on a nameless character;

a blond little woman and with no feeling of cooking, or keeping anything clean in her, she always did what anybody told her, she had no sense of responsibility inside her, she had it in her to have lying in her that just came out of her whenever anyone asked her, she had little curls in her blond hair, mostly everyone thought her an ugly blond little servant, really she had a kind of little servant girl beauty in her. This is a history of her. She had not a servant nature in her but a servant girl nature in her that is the little dirty little girl character in her, the little dirty shrinking lying blond hair nature in her, not a woman nature in her. (172-173)

There is the possibility that womanhood might be something more noble, if not held back by demeaning sexuality. This 'servant girl being' is, however, a female characteristic. Women who have it have

²⁰⁹ Mabel Earle to GS, June 6, 1907.

²¹⁰ See Wald, *Constituting Americans* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 245, for other contemporary appraisals of the increased birthrate among the immigrant population which linked it to 'race suicide'. Stein's contentions here are not far from Francis A. Walker's anti-immigrant 'birth-rate hypothesis' of the 1890s; see Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 142-144.

dependent weakness in them with a scared dirty little girl crying and lying in them, mostly with nothing in them but the dependent scared weakness ... it mostly comes out in little tricks they have in them, little or much badness in them. (*MA* 173)

This 'badness' can be manifested as 'stealing', 'lying', and 'loving'. These women are also prolific child-bearers. But in women who have this nature 'there is some one always directing them, sometimes it is a mistress, a master, a mother or a father, a husband, some woman, or an aunt, a sister, or a man who is directing them' (173). Stein is at pains to point out that these women are often pretty and appealing (*MA* 173).

Lillian Rosenhagen, though described as an unpleasant character, seems to be in part a Stein figure, or a figure of anxious female making; although she does repetitive, steady work at her dressmaking, she becomes anxious whenever she is ending or beginning anything (*MA* 196). This leads to one final reason for Stein's deep interest in 'servant girls'; the dressmaker is an emblem of female creativity, slightly sordid in her 'queerness'. Her type have 'their own kind of anxious feeling and their own kind of creating and own kind of nervous being' (*MA* 195).

When Gilman states, in reference to the duties of wife and mother, that "'the vices of the slave" have been forever maintained in this housemaid of the world' (*WE* 333) she automatically ascribes these sorts of prejudices against female servants to the whole of womankind. But woman does not even have to do anything blameworthy to earn Gilman's rhetorical revilement. The average woman in the home is observed with disgust in 'her ceaseless struggles, her conscientious devotion, her pathetic ignorance and inefficiency' (247). From here it is a small step to Otto Weininger's vituperation against the inherent slavishness of the female (and Jewish) mentality. The major difference is simply that Weininger lacks Gilman's faith in woman's ability to redeem herself. Being a servant, as Weininger would intimate, fosters a mental attitude which is primarily self-serving, over-intent on individualism.²¹¹ Slavish means more than downtrodden - it is a term of abuse.

It is curious that Fanny Hersland, although a fully-fledged rich American, cannot get her 'feeling of importance inside her' from her family; the only people who make her feel important are the servants, or as Stein significantly calls them, her 'dependents'. As a wife and mother 'she had her daily living with only dependents around her, she was of them and above them and that gave to her her feeling of herself to herself inside

her, cut off from the equal living that was the natural way of living for her' (*MA* 159-160). Principles of equality are skewed by the feminine hierarchy of the home. Perversely Mrs Hersland attains self-confidence from being looked after, not from achieving anything herself. Stein sums up women's general dependency, and their need to live through networks of family, through the shelter of family life 'making the world small' for themselves in order not to feel scared of how big the real world is;

in more women there is what might be a lonesome feeling as a weakening in them and then some one cares for them or they die away and so escape their lonesome feeling. Many women have it in them to float off into weakening, to lose themselves in religion...(160)

Mrs Hersland's 'dependents' are not just members of the household but of the wider community of seamstresses, governesses and servants. The dependency has a wide social application, and is linked to class by Stein, just as it is by Gilman and by Engels. But by insisting on this word, 'dependent', in connection with Fanny Hersland, Stein questions where the dependence really lies.

Throughout *WE*, Gilman comes back to the central problem of women's economic "dependence" on men. The word is used over and over again, as Gilman reiterates that this is the most important stumbling block in the way of female emancipation - that all women are dependent, are indeed all 'dependents', or servants, of some sort, a lower class of human. The words 'dependence' and 'independence' clearly have tremendous resonance in the context of American history as well as in the women's suffrage debate. Sexual dependence and possession are also obsessions in Stein's notebooks. Gilman and of course other contemporary feminists write about independence for women as an economic goal to be first aimed at within the sexual relation. Most importantly with regard to *MA*, these words become the terms by which Stein tries to define all human character, as either 'independent dependent' or 'dependent independent'. These words have strong sexual and racial connotations; even though sexual and racial characteristics are supposedly eliminated by this new scheme, it is based on indices of wealth, social position, and gender.

While the lower classes are enthralled in domestic service, Gilman complains that 'The daughters and wives of the rich ... are from birth to death absolutely non-productive in goods or labor of economic value, and consumers of such goods and labor

²¹¹ Nietzsche's idea of internalized *ressentiment* represents the same problem. See *On the Genealogy of Morals* (op.cit), e.g. 36.

to an extent limited only by the purchasing power of their male relatives' (*WE* 170). Women like Fanny Hersland exemplify this relation: man as purchaser, woman as pure consumer. Another important sense of economic dependency is that femininity is construed as relational, masculinity as autonomous.

Although Stein herself relied on the money left her by her father and administered by her brother, she takes on some of Gilman's sternness when it comes to the parasitic, pathetic females of *MA*. 'To become a producer, a factor in the economic activities of the world, must perforce interfere with woman's present status as a private servant', writes Gilman (211); we have seen that this process of becoming a producer, a maker, is one of the major interests of Stein's novel. It is about materialism, but there is concern over materialism too.

Woman, says Gilman, is the last purchaser of food; but this small area of economic expertise in no way qualifies woman to call herself a member of a nation of independent adults. To reach maturity women must overcome this retarded, babyish character. When Stein writes of 'flabby' middle-class women with enormous heads like 'puling babies heads' (*MA* 79), we ought to remember the hydrocephalic college girl with the 'very large head'; Stein's narrator states that seeing these women 'gives one a queer uncertain feeling'; this suggests a sickness in both the woman described and the woman writing; to feel 'queer' is after all to feel unwell.

MARTHA

Many of these ideas can be seen in the character of Martha Hersland in *MA* and in the notebooks for the preparation of her character. The depiction of Martha's adolescence (416ff.) is specifically a story of sexual awakening, recorded in the voice of the gossip, which persists throughout the chapter to incorporate the sexual scandal surrounding Martha's future husband. Here the main occupations of a growing female child appear to be marvelling at the marriages of others, and sewing (416). Euphemism is rife: Martha's sexual initiation is referred to as getting into 'trouble' (407); she and a local boy are caught doing 'things they should not be doing' (416); further hints occur in the following pages and most significantly, in view of Stein's equation of sexual and intellectual knowledge (to which I will return in chapter 2), the young Rodman boy 'said things to her to make her be understanding' (417).

We discover through insinuation that Martha has three disastrous or abortive adolescent love affairs (412-413); conventional generational conflicts arise at her father's injunctions against staying out late (423), being 'impatient at the way she was looking' (408), and wanting her to learn housekeeping (418). The incompatibility of female self-fulfillment and social responsibility binds Martha. Stein is laying the foundations for the scenes she is about to incorporate from *Fernhurst* with its backdrop of woman's suffrage:

The Hersland children always had then a governess in the house with them. This made two different kinds of living for them, this was more troublesome to Martha than to the two other children who were boys and so not really in actual relation to the family living and the governess in the house with them (404)

Martha, as a girl, is allowed no such alternative existence. The moment in the novel when university is first mentioned occurs as Martha witnesses a man hitting a woman (424). This scene provokes a sense of detachment and of individualism in Martha, the female observer (426); it causes her to desire to go to university, because she never wants to be asking anything of a man, rather than stirring empathy for the other woman. The move to college also represents the end of resisting and the move into attacking being, but Martha will end abjectly yearning after one man, and returning home to the same old life after the promise of university, before dying in mediocrity. Martha conforms to the typical 'animal innocence' of the sexually forward western girl asserting a new form of courtship in the period's fiction.²¹² Her failure makes her fate comparable to Julia's original incapability of making a sexual choice (*MA* 22); Stein gives her women the power to select against the wrong husbands, but makes them incapable of using it discerningly.

We are forewarned of the stages of Martha's life which Stein wishes to take us through, until she ends up being 'shrunk', a failure (404), an evolutionary pygmy, in Gilman's terminology. 'Sometimes she was older, sometimes she was happier, sometimes she was nervouser, sometimes she was farther from and sometimes nearer failure, always she had the same being in her, always she was of the independent dependent kind of them ...'. The moment when she falls in love is simply 'the moment in her when the movement of the being in her was a little faster, came to be almost violent emotion in her', 'a livelier confusion inside her than just the ordinary confusion in her ...' (414). The repetition of the word 'nervous' and its associated tendencies to

describe Martha, the future college girl, the representative of women's progress, is significant not only for her character but how Stein configures feminine character in the novel; she is pathetic and vacillating, filled with contradictory movement, emotion and confusion, unable to finish things and always beginning them.

If this affliction sounds familiar, it is clearly no coincidence. Stein's presentation of Martha 'in her stupid being, that she was nervous then and not finishing anything' (410) is not just a general piece of anti-feminism - it is an unflattering self-portrait. Having neither completed her medical studies nor discovered a route by which to come to the end of the spiralling family history in front of her, just like Martha, Stein suffers from nervousness and worry about never achieving completion.²¹³

The notebooks, too, corroborate the fact that the character of Martha is based on Stein herself.²¹⁴ Far from the bravado of her male persona, Martha does seem to represent the side of herself which Stein saw as shameful and stupid, the feminine side, the 'bottom', basal part of her character. 'Martha's friends came home late high school experiences father angry hit her', she scribbles hurriedly in a notebook (MA-23). Here again the emphasis is sexual. One of Martha's father's injunctions against her behaviour occurs in the notes, more brashly than in the final version; 'didn't you see that one looking at your breasts you damn fool?' It is the same sense of sexual transgression which was found in the early autobiographical 'themes' written at Radcliffe. This guilty under-nature is the base upon which other aspects of her life, shifting aspirations to intellectualism, for instance, uncertainly rest.

The entire episode, this preamble to the story of Martha's college life and marriage, once more exemplifies *MA*'s interest in society's sexual values. Sex is linked to class, and the notion of propriety as being in one's proper place. Martha skirts the proper boundaries of her class (in the original notebook version, her - Jewish - race). In her daily life, she prefers to associate with the 'poor people' around her. As Martha's anomalous position as an outsider is described (394), the issue of assimilation is quietly raised. Martha is, essentially, one of the book's archetypal outsiders. This strangeness and exclusion from communities is central to the novel. The growth to maturity

²¹² Bender, op. cit., 24.

²¹³ See Lasch, op. cit., chapter 2, on turn of the century American women's restlessness, and Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, op. cit., 194, on the impossibility of finishing books, as a typical symptom of the modern woman.

²¹⁴ See Katz, op. cit., 63-64; Doane, op. cit., 117.

necessarily involves this feeling of not belonging - yet America is supposed to be the essence of belonging for every other nation's outcasts and misfits.

The 'being' of Martha Hersland is described as 'all independent dependent being in possibility of formation' (386), just as the artistic genius should contain all possibility, and comprehend multiplicity. Martha, as a Stein substitute, is an artist figure. Although this makes her 'important', there are many millions like her. She contains such possibility because she is still at an embryonic, 'stupid' stage of development, 'the simplest form of independent dependent being' (387).²¹⁵

In an attempt to overcome the emotional, nervous, or stupid attributes which characterize the novel's women, the masculine posturing of Stein's early days makes its transition to *MA*. This implies, in part, a rejection of that sentimental tradition from which other modernists were also set to recoil, influenced by the common perception that literary maturity entails a disespousal of the sentimental.²¹⁶ Yet although *MA* appears to involve a scientific regulation of emotion, the narrator is 'suffering' and 'saddening', on account of her inability to feel the experience of her characters. Paradoxically, her inability to feel is what rouses her to the trappings of feeling. 'I am in desolation and my eyes are large with needing weeping and I have a flush from feverish feeling ... I tell you I cannot bear it ...' (*MA* 729). In an ironic reversal of the novel of sentiment, which induces the reader to cry, *MA* has its own narrator in tears. In the next two chapters I will discuss Stein's struggle with the idioms of sentiment and science.

²¹⁵ This germinal stage is nothing to do with childhood; childhood is 'deceiving', because it is still subject to change, and may not be clearly understandable (392). It is woman herself who is still at the embryonic stage, as Gilman had argued.

²¹⁶ See Clark, *op. cit.*, 31.

CHAPTER TWO

New Americans

‘He never ceased to struggle and he never ceased to fail’.¹

INTRODUCTION

In the central pages of *The Making of Americans*, Stein chose to reuse a version of her own earlier novella, *Fernhurst* (1904-5), the conventional style of which was entirely at odds with the rest of the novel. She then attempted to retell the story using the method she had developed for *MA*. In this chapter I discuss the implications of this decision, particularly in relation to Alfred Hodder. It will be useful to set out my interpretation of the changes in narrative attitude which take place in the ‘Martha Hersland’ section of *MA* in which this incident occurs.

The narrative tells of Martha’s early life, up to the point when she leaves home and meets Phillip Redfern (429), with relative confidence in its own developing schemes. When Redfern enters the proceedings, Stein decides to reuse *Fernhurst*, with some change in the wording, to tell this part of the story (429-440). The narrative breaks off when Martha discovers a letter proving Redfern’s infidelity, and the subject turns to the narrator’s own dissatisfaction with the idiom of her former work, which she has been trying to convert into the new style; ‘Categories that once to some one had real meaning can later to that same one be all empty...’ (440).

This consciousness of the dissolution of categories leads into the moment when the narrator finds herself within a dramatic situation with similarities to the one which she has been describing. It involves the discovery of a letter from a person she can no longer remember, which is full of emotion she can no longer feel:

one is not very old then and so it is not that they are old then and forgetting, they are not very old then and they come in cleaning something to reading this letter and it is all full of hot feeling and the one, reading the letter then, has not in them any memory of the person who once wrote that letter to them (440-441).

The moment of narrative disjuncture is accompanied by disjunctive phrases. Instead of saying the person has no memory, the person ‘has not in them any memory’. The use of

¹ Judgement of Philip Redfern in *Fernhurst*; *Fernhurst*, *QED* and *Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971) 49.

the pronoun 'one' allows her to swing between the general and the particular, and to be unspecific about gender.²

This whole passage, from Martha's discovery of the letter to the narrator's discovery of another, is what in this chapter I am calling 'the letter episode'. Following it, the narrator turns to her own writing and begins to discover mistakes in it as she copies from one manuscript to another. She finds herself unable to trust the words she is using to convey her proper meaning. She says 'I commence again with words that have meaning. A little perhaps I had forgotten when it came to copying the meaning in some of the words I have just been using' (441), and resumes the Redfern story, trying to stick to the new style. She intersperses it with examples of moral hypocrisies among a host of auxiliary characters (441-448). After an expression of general consternation about the possibility of certainty (449-452), and further faltering attempts to recommence in the new style, she begins to express deep despair about her own writing (459). From here until page 470 the narrator is engaged in a search for the 'power of completion'. A short resumption of the story of Martha's life after her marriage to Redfern, when she returns home and leads an inconsequential life looking after her father, concludes the chapter (470-476).

What seem like conversational digressions about her own experience during this episode, when the narrator turns directly to the reader, are actually a way of expressing loss of meaning. Put most simply, this is Stein's moment of authorial doubt made explicit, with lasting reverberations in the second half of the novel. Not that the authorial voice has been overly self-assured since the slippage of the warped conventionality of the opening hundred pages, but the passage brings these issues to a head, and seems to further impede the possibility of progress in the remaining half of the book.

The pattern of the novel is a movement from certainty to uncertainty, with the letter episode as the turning point. I intend to explain how Stein reaches this stage of bewilderment, and some of the processes by which she seeks to write herself out of it. To explain the sense of loss felt in the letter episode it will be useful to consider the preamble which Stein gives it. This section amounts to a confrontation with the past; not

² The word 'one' in Stein's idiom can be taken as a representative figure, one person, any person, or as a self referential personal pronoun. It can be vague or deliberately pointing out a reference to Stein's own experience. It helps her to express both collective and personal experience.

only Stein's own past as a writer, but with a literary and chivalrous past which no longer seems possible, and her past affiliations with one particular man, Alfred Hodder.

CRITICS

The inclusion of *Fernhurst* within *MA* has been the subject of some critical debate.³ At the time of original publication Katherine Anne Porter was disappointed with what she saw as a perverse intrusion on the style of *MA*, but her summary articulates some of the elements which make the episode so important:

A disconcerting break into narrative, full of phrases that might have come out of any careless sentimental novel, alternates with scraps of the natural style ... later Miss Stein explains she was copying an old piece of writing of which she is now ashamed, the words mean nothing.⁴

Importantly, one of the main objections to the inclusion of the passage is an aversion to the sentimental idiom which is seen to have no place within the difficult, serious, self-consciously important modernist text.⁵ In fact, the idiom of the 'careless sentimental novel' is precisely what Stein is addressing, both her own attraction to it, and the same shameful sense that it is somehow inappropriate for a serious writer. The conflict this gives rise to is the crux of the letter episode.

Many recent criticisms of the episode remain insufficient on account of taking Stein's approach at face value, or being unwilling to explore it deeper. Katz writes that *Fernhurst* is 'incorporated whole', and gains its importance from its position as 'the climactic episode for the story of Martha Hersland.'⁶ Mellow sees the inclusion as a 'makeshift device'.⁷ Doane believes that it is an 'indication of Stein's impatience and boredom'. Although she admits that 'Stein exploits the inappropriateness' of the previous work, she plays down the importance of the 'brief critique' of her earlier writing which Stein embarks on here.⁸ However, Wald has seen the episode as Stein's deliberate interruption of her new-found fragmentation, disrupting her own disruption

³ Katz, 'The First Making of *The Making of Americans*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1963), 60-65; Doane, *Silence and Narrative* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 117-118; Wald, *Constituting Americans* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 286-290, are particularly useful.

⁴ 'Everybody Is a Real One', in *The Days Before* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1953), 39; in *New York Herald Tribune* (January 16, 1927), 2.

⁵ See Clark, *Sentimental Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 31, for modernism's configuration of sentimentality as the new obscenity.

⁶ Katz, op. cit., 59-65.

⁷ *Charmed Circle* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1974), 117.

⁸ Doane, op. cit., 117; 118.

with a stretch of lucidity.⁹ I would like to build on this interpretation; I will argue that the importance of the passage lies not just in what is said, nor simply the contrast with the surrounding style, but the very fact that Stein allows it to remain when she could so easily have discarded it.

If we bear in mind a comment of Doane's that by the time Stein came back to writing *MA* in 1908, 'realism [was] becoming increasingly intolerable to her',¹⁰ we discover richer meanings in this passage, which indeed seeks to demonstrate the emptiness of realism. It also becomes evident that Stein, in an uncharacteristically explicit gesture, is deliberately using courtship and romance as metaphors for writing.¹¹ Here is one of the rare occasions when *MA* moves within ordinary metaphorical bounds. The whole trope is therefore doubly disconcerting; just at the moment when she can not only admit to but prove her own disillusionment with the practices of realism, it is apparent that she is using one of its features, metaphor, to express that very disillusionment.

The original conception of the novel was that it was to be a story about a divorce, a mismatch between two people, with a cast of supporting characters drawn from their respective families, and an account of their struggles, loves, proprieties and improprieties.¹² It had begun from the same premise as many of the realistic novels which Stein had been reading. Moving away from this traditional courtship novel, Stein nevertheless understands the eloquence of the idiom for the expression of concerns about *literary* propriety and the breaking of bonds of literary politeness and correctness. Her loss of faith in and effort to rid herself of the traditional realistic forms ends up in this joint enquiry into the propriety of both the text and its inhabitants, their relation to truth and error, virtue and meaning. Realism, it has been said, contains and represses disorder;¹³ Stein's project is to find out new ways of imposing order. As a first step towards an elucidation of these problems, I am going to examine the work of the man who provided the lingering inspiration for this section of *MA*.

⁹ Wald, op. cit., 286-90.

¹⁰ Doane, op. cit., 51.

¹¹ Fifer has pointed out the sexual preoccupation of the notebooks, *Rescued Readings* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992). See also Marcet on 'le conflit entre les pulsions libidineuses et les impératifs de discrétion', in 'This Must Not Be Put in a Book', *Revue Française d'Études Américaines*, 20 (May 1984), 210.

¹² The original two people are Alfred Hersland and Julia Dehning. The novel of divorce had come to contemporary prominence in, for example, Howells's *A Modern Instance* (1882).

¹³ Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), 63.

ADVERSARIES OF THE SCEPTIC

Alfred Hodder's philosophical treatise, *The Adversaries of the Sceptic* (1901, hereafter AS), preferred thoroughgoing scepticism to the idealism of Royce and his co-religionist F.H. Bradley.¹⁴ It contains some contentious thoughts about Royce's notion of the Absolute and sees the concept of a 'whole nature' as spurious. In Bradley's words, quoted by Hodder, 'the main tendencies of our being ... reach consummation in the Absolute' (AS 12), and Hodder goes on to discuss the relation between complete knowledge and aesthetic completeness. Hodder believes that there should be a distinction between these criteria.

At the end of his first chapter, Hodder writes 'The sceptic cares for processes, not for results: the sceptic distinguishes between postulates, though he distrusts all postulates; the sceptic takes for sole safe starting-point or standing-ground the Specious Present' (35). This notion of the 'specious present', though partly learnt from James, was Hodder's major contribution to the philosophy of the time, as evidenced by contemporary debate about it.¹⁵ Briefly, it means that memory cannot be trusted, and that the world consists of discrete moments which can only be known separately.

Hodder poses the question of whether experience exists, and answers that to prove it we have only 'the tarnished word of memory':

and even that discredited witness bears testimony to the existence in the past not of a world in which the reign of cause and effect was known to be universal, but of a world in which, for every event known as caused, there were a thousand not so known that to all appearance were nothing of the kind; and as for the future, the less said of certainty about that the better.

Both the philosophy of AS and the language it is couched in are suggestive of a doubting and capricious mind, and the new age of uncertainty to which Hodder belongs:

The miserable induction in question proves, if it prove anything (which happily it does not), that in the world in which we live instances of cause and effect exist sporadically for the further confusion of an otherwise uniformly chaotic chaos, and that our vision of an orderly universe is simply an obstinate illusion (28).

¹⁴Bradley was the much admired subject of T.S. Eliot's doctoral dissertation. Hodder occupies the uncertain middle ground, just before the beginnings of modernism.

¹⁵ See Edgar Singer's review in *The Philosophical Review* 11.1 (January 1902), 74-76, and 'New Books', *Mind*, 11.41 (January 1902), 110-129. James mentions the specious present in *Principles of Psychology*, [1890] (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), I:573ff.

There is a moral conclusion to be drawn from a theory of 'a world lived in and for the moment',¹⁶ one which verges on hedonism. Guilt and duty, Hodder states, ought to be felt only towards oneself.¹⁷ To refer again to the rule of completeness, completion of desire is seen as a moral act; completeness in this sense is seen as an essential part of existence, as 'Whatever be the end in view that end may fairly be described as the satisfaction of desire' (269).

The Hodder story provides the stimulus for two major currents of thought in *MA*; the first is a discussion of morality and relational identity. This is partly perhaps because Hodder's own philosophical interests lay in that direction, and partly because he himself made such a fascinating case study. *AS* is also interested in the meaning of duty and in what virtue consists of, how it is measured in terms of unit and collective existence. The second theme is the nature of knowledge, and the admittance of doubt, which is of extraordinary stylistic importance to *MA*.

NEW AMERICANS

The issues of guilt and duty raised in Hodder's philosophical work would surface again in his novel, *The New Americans* (1901, hereafter *NA*), which is in part a fictionalized version of his own romantic life. Alan Windet, the leading male character of *NA*, is the victim of his own sexual etiquette. Realizing that he is by honour bound to propose to a woman he does not love because she has taken fright at his innocent camaraderie while on a walk with him and rushed back home to have unfounded hysterics in front of her father, Alan makes the gallant yet tough observation that 'disappointing expectations, like disputing a bill, was bad form except in cases of patent fraud' (*NA* 167). Unfortunately she accepts his proposal, despite the fact that she does not want to marry him either. This is the beginning of a fatal drift into obscurity for Alan, who had once shown brilliant political promise. The woman he had wanted to marry, on the other hand, had turned him down when he asked her, but only out of a flirtatious whim, in the full expectation that he would continue to pursue her; he took it the wrong way and ended up with the wrong wife. These, Hodder suggests with some bitterness, are the

¹⁶ Wineapple summarizes Hodder's 'specious present' in this way, *Sister Brother* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 190.

¹⁷ See Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (1885), where he discusses the problem of altruism as a disguised form of selfishness, and the defects in an ethical theory founded on sympathy and pity.

kind of mistakes a man can never rectify, the little misunderstandings that get out of hand and shape a life.

The novel is filled with disappointed expectations: the individualistic machinations of men and women vying for dominance in spheres which are still separate but increasingly liable to dangerous collision, and the honourable people, 'gentlemen' and 'gentlewomen', who end up emotionally maimed or killed in the process. The main players are Alan (the Hodder figure), an ambitious and gifted, well-meaning man; Nannie, the virtuous but cumbersome wife who realizes he does not love her; Cecily, the longed-for other woman; and Isabel, a woman who wants him and, unbeknownst to him, has devoted her life to hatching elaborate plots in order to make him need and love her. One of Alan's best friends marries Cecily, and the other falls for Isabel.

At the end of *NA*, the hero and heroine admit that they have 'missed' their lives. This story of American discontents, with a veneer of refinement, echoes contemporary developments by James and Wharton.¹⁸ It contains a civilized, polite and semi-ironic misogyny, expressed in meticulously reconstructed bachelor banter and the sexual dialectics of the drawing room. This misogyny belongs to the male characters, not to the author himself, though one suspects that 'the big trio' (*NA* 363) is based on Hodder and his friends, perhaps the triumvirate which Hutchins Hapgood writes about with such nostalgia in *A Victorian in the Modern World*.¹⁹ The nuances of feminism and anti-feminism are subtle and vary with each character's perspective - they are after all the subject of the book. The speeches for and against the enfranchisement of women form its backdrop.

Importantly, the comment of Alan's which I mentioned above shows a grasp of sexual punctilio which equates it with economic obligation - Gilman's 'sexuo-economic relationship'.²⁰ Alan is thwarted by his own chivalric codes, and the novel is driven by an urge to make sense of those codes, or to develop new ones. Alan is found trying to 'take it like a man', standing up for what is right, standing by his mistakes, leaving certain things unsaid, trying to live decently in public and private, still being a gentleman even if he has all but disinherited himself. Representing, in fact, the stifling

¹⁸ In particular, Wharton's 'Souls Belated', in *The Greater Inclination* (London: John Lane, 1899), interrogates similar themes. The thwarting of ambition is a Jamesian refrain.

¹⁹ Hapgood, *A Victorian in the Modern World* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1939), 150.

²⁰ Compare 'Souls Belated', op. cit., 89: 'She had put herself in a position where Gannett "owed" her something; where, as a gentleman, he was bound to "stand the damage"'.

strictures of a code of masculine decorum. *The New Americans* is a piece of New Woman fiction which nervously agitates on the side of the New Man.

There is a sense of authorial involvement, when Alan, as if he himself is the author, takes stock of the new breed:

they were the generation just coming into power; they were the new world; the man who could divine himself could govern them, for they were his people ... they spoke and could be spoken to in the same language, a language distinct from that of all generations preceding, the power of which was still a mystery to the generation at the moment in possession.

Alan sees himself as the man who will gain power over them, as he is the most self-aware; 'the man who could divine himself' could divine others. This has similarities with Weininger's theory of genius, which I will come to in the next chapter. Cecily's face, like those of all the new Americans, seems to Alan 'a type that would one day be archaic and historical, the face of the American of the first quarter of the twentieth century, which would be a document to be read in connection with the remaining records of the national life of the generation to which it belonged' (339). Nuances of racial typology inflect this idea of the face as document.²¹ The novel here sees itself as documenting a period of immense importance in the formation of the national character, imputing to itself a grand significance which ironically becomes quite commonplace among all the other millenarian notes being struck at the time. The period's prolific use of the word 'new', so prominent in Hodder's title, has been well noted.²² The novel's dual urge to commonality and freedom of expression is part of the same spirit of newness.

NA begins amid traditional family structures, is concerned with the inheritance of temperaments and of estates; Alan is expected to become the same sort of man as all the men of his family always become. But all is not well in the little communities; immediately we learn the disaffection of wives and husbands, and as Alan grows up and

²¹ Compare this with a comment from Wharton's 1925 novel, *The Mother's Recompense* (New York: Scribners, 1925), in which the protagonist returns from Europe to New York to find the younger generation 'merged into a collective American Face' (50).

²² Jackson famously characterized the 1890s as obsessed with newness in *The Eighteen Nineties* (London: Grant Richards, 1913), 22-24. See also Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 146, on the period's use of the word 'new'. See Gibbons, *Rooms in the Darwin Hotel* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1973), vii, for description of 'millennial optimism' in contrast with 'public alarm' over decadence and decline, in both 'social and literary' contexts. Nordau's *Degeneration*, which begins with the contention that 'One epoch of history is unmistakably in its decline, and another is announcing its approach' (Lincoln: University of Nebraska

becomes a newspaper man rather than a member of the tenuous landed gentry, new patterns are established. Hodder characterizes him as a moral hybrid of his mother's and father's constitutions. Stein's characterization of Hodder would draw on this idea of him as a rash experiment in the mixing of masculine and feminine traits.

NA very quickly moves beyond traditional novelistic combat between the generations, and concerns itself with the new platform of freer relations between men and women. Alan finds it easy to break with his father but not so easy to stick to the break with chivalry, despite the early adoption of a healthy, self-protective misogyny. Like his creator he is beset on all sides by the insidious advances of women. The old codes still bind the new Americans, the moral hybrids. *NA* ends with Alan's death, his insistence on the importance of being 'born in a nation rising in power' (468) and his hope that the love of his life will live to witness on his behalf what becomes of the new Americans.

In *NA*, the new era is characterized by the father's certitudes pitted against the children's uncertainties. The novel begins with Alan's father, Cecil Windet, and his conviction that 'The art of crooked thinking and crooked living was infinitely intricate: the art of straight thinking and of straight living was simplicity itself' (1). This simple rule of life from which it is somehow unchivalrous or unmanly to deviate will resurface in the *MA* notebooks where Hodder is presented as possessing 'chivalry to himself', which makes him 'the highest type of gentleman'.²³ In *AS* Hodder believed in progress. The people of the new generation are, on the other hand, in some way 'crooked', degenerate, and unable to make that straight and simple forward movement.

Hodder presents the masculine creed of his protagonist, Alan Windet. There is nothing this 'hard-headed Yankee' cannot 'meet with a tranquil heart of a sort, except dishonour in his own eyes':

A man's rule of honour might be his own, might be unrecognized by any human being save himself; but so long as he lived up to it, without sophistication or quibbling, he might stand erect, and answer defiantly any trumpet-call and any champion that fate might send.

Press, 1993), 5, demonstrates the racial urgency entailed in these concerns. Nordau suggests that people ought to say 'fin de race' instead of 'fin de siècle' (2).

²³ #73.

Here is Hodder's rule of life, his slant on a Kantian individualism which he had nurtured in his own philosophical writing, but with an added dash of Kipling's devil-may-care school of maschismo.

With this brief survey of Hodder's major writing and its preoccupations in mind, we now turn to his connection to Stein. We will see how with her retelling of Hodder's story within her own story, Stein enacts the death of one form of narrative.

STEIN AND HODDER

In *NA* Hodder suggests that America is a nation of exiles (153), an observation which is particularly accurate for the people of *MA*. Hodder's women, in particular, are the New Women who proved such contentious subjects in Stein's own writing. Reading *NA* - and she read and reread it while planning her own long novel - Stein encountered Hodder's representations of misogyny. Interestingly, Stein appears to have sided with the claims of the men, not the women. Even Hodder himself was alarmed at the conclusions she arrived at after reading his novel.

In *NA*, Alan remarks that a man is born with or without a certain 'firmness and fineness of mind.' Women, on the other hand, he continues, believe as a sex that they possess such qualities, but in fact do not; they lack the 'power and precision' of a man. So long as 'the modern woman' remains a spectator of men's achievements she feels a sense of superiority. 'She knows that the car and the railway were made by people whom she finds stupid in talk, and she takes it for granted that she herself could learn rather easily to do anything that stupid people can do'; but 'with her first day's work she would learn that it takes intelligence to do "stupid" things' (414-15).

According to Wineapple, Stein told Hodder in early 1902 that women, though more intelligent than men, lacked the average man's practical sense - 'she preferred to depend on the average man in the event of emergency then on the cleverest woman' - to which Hodder's response was that 'the interesting point is her testimony both deliberate and inadvertent that the girls feel [beaten] and unhappier than if they had not tried, and are resolved with a brutal explicitness to exploit any one they can.'²⁴

Both Stein and Hodder seem willing to accept, in both life and fiction, the idea that women's intelligence is often subverted to immoral aims because of their feeling of oppression, but in any case, much of women's belief in their own intelligence is

deluded, and fostered by paternalism. Stein's words, as Hodder recalled them, were "We hate the courtesy, but when it is not given to us we don't succeed, and then we hate the failure, and hate the men who have treated us as they treat men."²⁵ In *NA* itself another of the contentions with which Stein bombarded Hodder is to be found; that girls just mature earlier than boys, and so are mistakenly believed to be cleverer. The conversations which Stein and Hodder had about relations between the sexes, particularly in the context of his novel, shed direct light on Stein's insecurities about her own creative position, which ties in with her interpretation of *NA* in *Fernhurst*.

STEIN'S USE OF HODDER

The scene of the Hodder/Gwinn affair (discussed in the introduction), a New England women's college, was clearly of interest to Stein; as we saw in chapter 1, she had made several attempts at recording her own experiences at Radcliffe before Hodder provided her with the material for *Fernhurst*. It was three years after *NA* was published, while Hodder was still alive, in 1904, that Stein wrote him into *Fernhurst: The History of Philip Redfern, a Student of the Nature of Women*, or 'the Hodder story', as Alice Toklas called it.²⁶ As well as the obvious use of episodes from Hodder's life, this early, conventional novella contains a deliberate emulation of *NA*.

In 1904 Hodder visited the Steins in Paris. After his death in 1907 Stein added the coda which rounds off the original story. Five years after the first writing, *Fernhurst* was incorporated, with significant changes, into *MA*. The episode of Phillip Redfern (Hodder) and Martha Hersland (Hodder's wronged wife, Jessie Donaldson) occupies a central place in the novel - literally, and in its contribution to arguments about the nature of women and sexual etiquette, as well as in the radical reappraisal of style which its inclusion forces Stein to undertake.

The courtly idiom of *Fernhurst* is very reminiscent of *NA*. It has been said that *Fernhurst* displays 'a quaintness ... that recalls Jane Austen, a convolution of style that recalls Henry James, and a liturgical cadence that recalls the Bible, all of which characterize her later work in more extreme forms.'²⁷ This is only true in that it might be

²⁴ Quoted Wineapple, op. cit., 151-152.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 138.

²⁶ Toklas, quoted by Katz, op. cit., 60, n.2.

²⁷ Loercher, 'Gertrude Stein in the Beginning', *Christian Science Monitor*, 7 October 1971, 6. Hobhouse maintains that 'in her interest in character and the manner of its revelation as well as in the use of

seen as an extremely poor imitation of each. However, this also suggests some of the stylistic similarities with *NA*; the long sentences with their relentless qualifying clauses, the sense of a scrutinizing intelligence moving censoriously from person to person as it tells the tale, the polished dialogue, and that neatly paced narration with its often old-fashioned wording which makes it seem awkward and stiff. It is the same sepia tone which colours the original *MA* text of 1903 which found its way into the opening pages of the finished version.

So 'the Hodder story' is presented in the Hodder manner. In her notebooks, as Stein planned how to reuse these events in *MA*, she commented on the secrecy of the affair 'Nobody knows it like real story of Hodder' (NB 2-20). Indeed this is part of what makes the story so apt for the role it plays in *MA*, as the story of suppressed knowledge and seekers of knowledge on many levels. Clearly the 'story' of the real life events was imbued with dramatic potential; but while there is an element of reportage, there is obviously an element which Stein must invent. Writing in 1904, Stein could not know the final outcome of the 'lovely story'²⁸ she told her friends she was working on. Aiming at some sort of composite truth, she takes several cues from *NA*.

Various attempts have been made to identify Stein, May Bookstaver and Mabel Haynes with the characters of the Hodder story.²⁹ In the *Fernhurst* version there are already multiple ways of mapping out this maze of referents. Katz, for example, maintains that Phillip Redfern is based on Woodrow Wilson, although the comparison does not seem to hold much water.³⁰ In the *MA* version, attempting to identify Stein biographically with any one of the characters is pointless, as by this time the story had undergone important revisions which were more to do with Stein's feelings about herself as a writer than as part of a love triangle, and which placed it at one further remove from reality. It is enough to say that the triangles it delineates bear similarities to Stein's situation, but more directly to the ins and outs of Hodder's complicated affairs,

monotone and nuance Gertrude Stein is a descendent of Henry James'; *Everybody Who Was Anybody* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 70-71. Copeland has tracked how Stein employed scenes from *The Wings of a Dove* in *QED* and subsequently 'Melanctha', *Language and Time and Gertrude Stein* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1975), 10-11. The notebooks also refer to this and to *Roderick Hudson* and *The Tragic Muse*. Stein also mentioned James as a precursor of the method of *MA* in *Lectures in America* (New York: Random House 1935), 225. See Caramello's extensive discussion of the subject in 'Reading Gertrude Stein Reading Henry James', *Henry James Review* 6.3 (1985), 182-203.

²⁸ GS to Mabel Weeks, n.d., YCAL.

²⁹ See Wald, op. cit., 288; Mellow, op. cit., 66; Doane, op. cit., 42-43; Bridgman, *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 45-46.

³⁰ Katz, op. cit., 63.

and his own fictional version of them in *NA*. Stein takes Alan to be an autobiographical representation of Hodder, and sees his early life as well as some of its later stages as psychologically apt for the Hodder character. So, there are literal similarities, as well as both thematic and formal influences. One of the most important of these is the idea of a double moral heritage, and temperamental hybridity.

MORAL MISCEGENATION

In *NA* Alan's father Cecil is of the old world, an aristocrat, of fine features and fine temper; his son Alan however is a more complicated breed. The extracts from *NA* that Stein copied into her notebook appear next to the famous motto of *MA*, 'It is hard living down the tempers we are born with.' *NA* is based around Alan's struggle to do just that. The generations in *NA* are distinguished as old and new worlds, as they are in *MA*. In a world divided between aristocrats and 'vulgarians', Alan harbours a desire to be the first 'vulgarian' Windet (*NA* 44). Redfern faces the same conflict with a father who wanted him, with his 'inherited quality' (*F* 22), to be 'the man all the Redferns had been' (*MA* 430).³¹ It appears that, in the absence of information about Hodder's actual childhood, Stein gave him Alan's. James is the name she gives Redfern's father - James was Hodder's father's name.³² In *MA* she includes the information that Redfern was educated at home, as Hodder had been (*MA* 431).

Alan's childhood is overshadowed by a generational conflict between himself and his father,³³ against whom the seeds of dissent have been sewn by his discontented wife, bringing division in the man's own house. 'No heavier blow could have been struck him than to discover that his natural heir and chosen successor was not with him, but against him' (*NA* 157). In *Fernhurst*, the father 'did not suspect his wife of any set purpose ... It could never seem possible that a man child born in his house could ... be anything but a rational creature' (*F* 22).

His mother resolves to 'do battle' for Alan (*NA* 39), in order to have the satisfaction of beating Cecil. 'There came upon her a sense that she had a chance; that really she should win; not perhaps at the moment, nor even soon, but in the end, in a run which

³¹ See *NA* 43. Hodder's own father was English, so there was some justification for the idea that he wrote himself into Alan's family situation, and for Stein's transposition of Alan's role onto her fictional Hodder.

³² Alfred James Hodder, father of Alfred Leroy Hodder.

³³ Perhaps it is significant that Hodder gives the representative of the younger generation his own son's name, Alan.

should be a long run' (39). The idea of a parental battle for allegiance, a slow onslaught and long struggle for illusory success is present in *Fernhurst* too, in Redfern's mother's 'constant rebellion against the pressure of her husband's steady domination' (*F* 22).

In *NA*, 'the evil of a divided sympathy in the sheltered household was one to which inevitably the boy was subjected, and out of which he made a sentimental profit' (35). In *Fernhurst*, 'this mixture of influences in young Redfern's life resulted in a strange and incalculable nature' (22). Just as in *NA* there were 'a thousand subtle sympathies and refinements of opinion and taste' between mother and son (43), Redfern's 'mother was his dear dear friend and from her he received all his definite thoughts and convictions' (*F* 21).

We have seen what Charlotte Perkins Gilman made of the results of what she called the 'moral miscegenation of two so diverse souls' (*WE* 339) as male and female. Nowhere in *MA* is this idea of a damaging double heritage so elaborately explored as in the Martha Hersland/Phillip Redfern chapter. This idea of mixed parentage was first fully dealt with by Stein in *Fernhurst* as she wrote her analysis of Hodder. This ineffectual man, always falling between two stools (upon which were perched a succession of emotional women and an image of the ideal rational man, respectively), could be explained by such a divided influence in childhood; in the notebooks he is called a 'split idealist' (C-28). It is no feat of imagination to remark that Redfern's childhood carries distinct echoes of the parental arrangement in *NA*. Confronted in youth by 'an armed neutrality' as the model of marriage, it was no wonder he turned out the way he did. In this battle of the sexes, emotion is clearly pitted against knowledge and domination; Stein refers to these two poles as 'unharmonised elements' in Phillip Redfern (*MA* 429). In *MA* the Dean is also subject to such discord. Eventually it is seen as a universal affliction. That early description of Redfern (Hodder) in *Fernhurst*, culled from *NA*, is subsequently transferred to the character of Melanctha, and still later resurrected as a means of describing everyone in *MA*. In the notebooks Hodder exhibits 'double personality lines' (13-2). In *MA* everyone is 'consciously ill-assorted': 'dependent independent' or 'independent dependent'.³⁴

³⁴ Stein's use of these terms emerges at around the same time that Freud was learning to 'consider every sexual act as an occurrence between four individuals'; Freud, letter to Wilhelm Fleiss, August 1, 1899, quoted in Harrowitz and Hyams, eds, *Jews and Gender* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 46. Stein's project, like Freud's, addresses how to bring the mixed, 'unharmonised' elements into harmony, or completion.

One might go so far as to say that the first seeds of Stein's dualistic conception of character are to be found in Hodder's own characterization of himself as Alan Windet, brought up in a house divided between a hardnosed father and a romantic mother:

Mrs. Windet had deliberately set herself the task, with a cynically open self-justification, of opposing [Cecil Windet] ... But the austere uprightness of the man had had its effect in the end: even a boy has a crooked little sense of justice, and chivalry demands chivalry. Cecil exacted on all sides, often with great inconvenience to himself ... an instant fulfilment of any wish of Mrs. Windet's that could be ascertained; and her steady attitude of hostility did her case harm. (*NA* 57)

This is very similar to Stein's original description in *F* (21-23). The chivalry of the father is echoed in Stein's emulation of Redfern senior's 'courtesy and deference to all women' and 'the perfect rectitude of his conduct' (22).

Echoing Hodder's own description of Alan's childhood in *NA*, Stein describes Phillip Redfern as 'the son of a curiously ill assorted pair of parents and his earliest intellectual concept was the realisation of the quality of these two decisive and unharmonised elements in his child life' (*F* 21).³⁵ Stein then describes Redfern's mother and father in terms which intimate her ideas of female and male character as emotion and intellect, respectively:

The strong emotional flavour of his mother's nature easily awoke in him an exaggerated interest and value for the purely emotional life. The instinct for knowledge and domination were in him equally strong and from the beginning he devoted himself to meditation and analysis of the emotions. (*F* 22-23)

He shares with Stein 'an interest in the nature of marriage and the meaning of women' (23). But she is most interested in the mixing of categories in Redfern himself. 'In this life as in all his human relations his instincts gave the lie to his ideals and his ideals to his instincts' (*F* 47). When this passage finds its way into *MA*, there follows a lengthy discussion of ways of speaking lies and truth about sexual practice, mainly among writers, which develops from the words of Redfern in *Fernhurst*, 'Lathrop tells a lie as if it were the truth and I tell the truth as if it were a lie' (47). This grows into a systematic approach to all humanity, divided and undermined, in however inscrutable a way, by the two antagonistic forces of their forbears, and the effect this has on the 'making' of Americans.

The New Woman and, to a lesser extent, the New Man, are often characterized as neither male nor female: 'neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring', as one 'cosmopolite'

³⁵ In *MA* 'curiously' becomes 'consciously' (429).

is called in *NA* (144); ‘neither bird nor beast nor good red herring’ as Stein calls Martha (*MA* 410). In *NA*, Hodder moves towards a notion of a third sex, or perhaps androgyny, in his description of the new generation.

As for Redfern, we are told again, in the last section of *Fernhurst*, that ‘the elements were so mixed in him that his best was no help against his worst and his worst never won the victory over his best - he remained always a hopeless inextricable mess’ (48). Nevertheless he remains fascinating for everyone to watch and interpret, and Stein’s desire to explain Hodder’s character to herself through her new tropes helps to develop them further. One of Hodder’s male characters was said to possess ‘a hard common sense’ (*NA* 383). In *Fernhurst* Stein adopted the same phrase to describe Hodder. In *MA* she changed the wording to ‘a basal common sense’ (435), stressing the need to confront the underside of character. The conversion displays the transition to interest in the ‘basal’, the ‘fundamental’, what a person feels ‘au fond’ (*NA* 274), what Stein would call ‘bottom nature.’³⁶

MEN AND WOMEN

Encouraged by a mother who addresses him as a knight and ironically asks his advice on matters of ‘propriety’ and ‘courtesy’ (*NA* 35), Alan, despite his aversion to his father’s old world ways, develops a masculine code of honour which in later life will be impossible to overcome, even when his life hangs in the balance. In *Fernhurst* Stein wrote of Redfern’s first confused realization of ‘the inherent contradictions in the claims made’ for women:

He often said that he had often puzzled over the fact that he must give up his chair to and be careful of little girls while at the same time he was taught that the little girl was quite as strong as he and quite as able to use liberty and to perfect action. In his later living he said that when he was a very little one this had been so much a puzzle to him, little girls then, to him, had everything, he wished then when he was a little one and this was a puzzle to him, he wished he had been a little girl so and so have everything (*MA* 429).

These are the first intimations in the Hodder story of the hypocrisies of the New Woman.³⁷ *NA*’s Cecily ‘was always offended by a difference in sex; it was as if she thought the Deity had made a blunder in creating them male and female, though she was not averse to accepting the advantages of being a woman’ (204). In *Fernhurst*, Stein expressed her disapproval of this hypocrisy quite savagely.

³⁶ Stein also uses the phrase ‘au fond’ in the notebooks (G-11).

Stein's conversations with Hodder suggest a congruence of the ideas on women to be found in their written work, at least up until the early stages of *MA*, although Stein's observation that 'the only serious business of life in which they [women] cannot be entirely outclassed by the male is that of child bearing'³⁸ might not quite match up to Urrey's opinion of woman as 'an evolutionary makeshift solely for the purposes of reproduction' (*NA*, 72).

The exasperated narrator of *Fernhurst* muses: 'I wonder will the new woman ever relearn the fundamental facts of sex. Will she not see that college standards are of little worth in actual labor' (4-5). This was the crux of Stein's disillusionment with the college system; it generated expectations that most women were still unable to fulfil. It instilled in women a false sense of their capability, roused ambitions that were bound to be thwarted. We can compare this with the male and female dialectics discussed in *NA*. One character in that novel says 'When a girl rivals a boy in his formal lessons, she rivals him in about one tenth of his activities, and that his most neglected tenth' (*NA* 411).³⁹ *Fernhurst* similarly implores:

Will different things never be recognized as different. I am for having women learn what they can but not to mistake learning for action nor to believe that a man's work is suited to them because they have mastered a boy's education (4-5).

This sense of the female's consummate effort being equivalent to the accomplishments of an adolescent male is a common anti-feminist stand. In *NA* there is a discussion of women's attainment 'toward the man's big, grave ambitions' in similar terms: 'They feel their allurements just as a little boy does. A little boy wishes to be a person of importance ... It is fun to play at big ambitions ... though it is rather disheartening in the end (*NA* 205-06).' This is similar to the 'superficial latin and cricket' which, Stein says, have merely replaced the usual accomplishments of a lady's finishing school in women's education - 'much the same as a man's work if you like before he becomes a man but how much different from a man's work when manhood has once been attained', as she writes (*F* 4). But Hodder's passage also has a sense of the futility of the masculine goals, once achieved, of the hollowness of the ambition into which the

³⁷ There is a similar moment in *NA*, 177-178.

³⁸ 'Degeneration in American Women', quoted Wineapple, op. cit., 413.

³⁹ These views were not unheard of from the unequivocally feminist camp; Ellen Key in *The Woman Movement* reminded women that they believed 'their sex capable of possibilities which thus far have been granted rarely and then only to the exceptional in both sexes' (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1912), 105.

women are coaxed. There is already a similar sense of the unworthiness of the goal, as well as the inability of women to achieve the tasks men set themselves, in Stein's work:

In short I would have the few women who must do a piece of the man's work but think that the great mass of the world's women should content themselves with attaining to womanhood. (*F* 4-5)

Stein's misogyny may be seen as a more extreme version of a familiar attitude among the New Women; they feel qualified to point out the general deficiencies of their sex by convincing themselves that they are the exceptions to the rule - the idea of the exceptional woman becomes a commonplace. "Jimmy, your misogyny is disgusting," says Alan to a friend, "I'm not a champion of the female *qua* female, myself; but I can recognize exceptions" (*NA* 350). Hodder was presumably aware of the irony here. In any case his 'exceptions' are beautiful, delicate women, which makes the fact that they have minds far more palatable.

Stein told Hodder that she found his women 'well drawn but superficial.'⁴⁰ It is true that several of them become little more than mouthpieces for one side of the gender debate. Stein omits long bursts of dialogue; most of her characterization is done through straightforward description of the characters' internal reactions, but she makes no other attempt to make the women more life-like. They are templates for a moral fable. Much of Hodder's novel revolves around a race for the senate, and political campaigning which Stein makes absolutely no attempt to replicate in her story. Even in Hodder's novel the details of this race are sketchy, and really only function to emphasize the struggle taking place among the new Americans. In her notebooks, however, Stein had been interested in this aspect of Hodder's career.⁴¹ Some of her characters were the newspapermen she had encountered in New York, Hodder among them (Hodder wrote for the *New York Nation*). As we have seen, in the notebooks, Stein wanted to discuss 'my idea of freedom' (*NB* 6-29), through appraisals of individual and collective identity. But engaging in this task she arrived at such a radical rupture in her own certainty, about this and every other matter of importance to her, that realistic rehearsal of power politics or the suffrage debate became impossible; that is why she removes the polemic against women's colleges. The *Fernhurst* episode demonstrates this confounding of certainty.

⁴⁰ Quoted Wineapple, op. cit., 138.

FAILURE

In the coda to *Fernhurst*, Stein gives a short dramatization of what seems to be a conversation between her beloved William James and his wife Alice. When the James character protests that despite his personal failings, Redfern's (Hodder's) work is brilliant, his wife insists, with typical wifely aplomb, 'Well it ought not to be' (48). Relating this story, Stein is on a level with the gossiping voices at the end of *Fernhurst* - she too clearly found him extremely interesting, partly because of the mixture of 'elements' in him.

The first news Stein had of Hodder's death in 1907 was a letter from Mabel Weeks to her brother Leo:

I fear the last months have been much embittered by the suit brought by his common-law wife supported by Professor Royce and Professor James ... The papers speak of his wonderful grasp of detail and his power for work though he has left so little comparatively in the way of writing behind him. To me it seems as though there had been some monstrous waste, though those that know him better may feel that he has fulfilled himself.⁴²

Leon Solomons, Stein's mentor/collaborator in the psychology labs, had died an early death in 1900, to her great sadness. Smitten with Otto Weininger's book *Sex and Character* in 1908, Stein was distraught when she discovered he had killed himself in 1902.⁴³ Among a host of fabulous but failed men, men who never quite 'made it', Stein had no desire to become an honorary member of their company. She needed the attributes of masculinity to write, but not to the extent that she would share their ending. The ending of her novel lets her continue observing them after they are dead and gone, and leaves the author as survivor. She uses Hodder as Phillip Redfern, and converts his 'specious present' into part of her narrative method; Leon Solomons is one of her models for David Hersland; Weininger's types are a huge influence on the construction of the novel, and his sad end contributes too to Stein's representation of the demise of David Hersland. These schemes and personae are based also on a study of herself, but she transcends them all as author.

Stein could identify with Hodder, a man of capricious desires and many vocations. But she also seems to have been drawn to him as a *failure*. If there could be any such

⁴¹ 11-15; 11-4.

⁴² Mabel Weeks to Leo Stein, March 4 1907, YCAL. Hapgood also wrote to GS on March 20 1907 that Hodder had died of 'heart failure' (YCAL).

⁴³ Katz, op. cit., 281.

thing as an exemplary failure, he was it for Stein and several of her friends.⁴⁴ Katz has claimed, on the evidence of Stein's letters and notebooks, that Stein was severely depressed during the writing of the early texts.⁴⁵ After Hodder's death she added the coda which now completes *Fernhurst*, and it seems that at the time she was fascinated by the idea of failure. In *Fernhurst* (29-30) she actively compares herself to Hodder - it is uncertain whether out of emulation or fear. In her twenty-ninth year, she was writing a story about a man on the cusp of thirty (Hodder was born in 1866 and arrived at Bryn Mawr in 1895), and hoping to avoid the weaknesses of character with which he had scuppered himself. Stein was fascinated by Hodder and his sexual ethics, doomed as he was, in her opinion, by an uneasy coupling of the chivalry of the old world and the liberties of the new.

THE NOTEBOOKS

The sexual preoccupations of Stein's notebooks aside, manners, freedom and success are main themes, and Hodder's name recurs throughout them, usually in connection with these subjects. Although his name is only one among a constellation of entries in her Diagram Book, she writes of him with a certain awe; 'In Edstrom the conviction always remains imperfect, in Hodder it was perfect' (#68). In 1904-5 when she was writing the original *Fernhurst* he was still alive, but by the time Stein returned to his story in the notebooks he was already 'a dead one', and very definitely established as a certain type by Stein. Here she comments on his sexuality as one of a group she calls 'prostitute idealist',

Hodder Greene - Edstrom whose sexual emotion is pathological but whose sexual activity is only nominal ... Then in the concentrated forms probably one would also find the two varieties but this is only perhaps (NB C24).

Hodder's type was 'idealist.' 'Perhaps the correlative to the idealists is the Bazarof earthy.⁴⁶ I don't know' (NB C-26). The 'I don't know' is important, as is the 'only perhaps' above.

Fascinated by Hodder's love life, Stein sets out her intention to use it; 'Characteristic that the three idealists Hodder, Edstrom and Byron all liked the cold

⁴⁴ At Yale there is a letter from Leo in which he expresses his relief at being over the dangerous age of forty which had claimed Hodder and Josiah Flynt Willard; Leo Stein to Hutchins Hapgood, n.d. (YCAL).

⁴⁵ Katz, op. cit., 52.

⁴⁶ Bazarof was the nihilist hero of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*.

women ideally, loved really the softer ones. Make that the theme for Martha';⁴⁷ in other words the Martha Hersland section is to be based around an explanation of sexual preference with reference to sexual types. She calls Hodder, somewhat cryptically, a 'mystic who should enjoy' (J-8). And she uses him as one of her benchmark personalities by which to classify others: '...in both these is a sexual base that is not truly of their group less vigorously male Bruce in direction of Puy and intellectual quality of it in Roché in direction of Hodder, Stern...' (C-32) - here she puts him in a class of men who are in practice womanizers but who also have what she sees as feminine traits:

Marry Selina to Hodder with that scene and then the college business like in the other book, [i.e. *Fernhurst*] and the subsequent trouble. Western family ... Hodder's wife changes afterwards when he leaves her to be like Selina is now. Begin this the other end to from my old book. The most interesting man in her class was Hodder and then describe him as I describe him and then scenes to marriage, then scenes to divorce leaving out student action (NB 6-9).

Stein lays out the future for Hodder's wife (a future which will be continually projected but never arrived at within the narrative) along the lines of development of her other friend, Selina.⁴⁸ Her attraction to feminism is where she differs from the original Mrs Redfern of *Fernhurst*, though perhaps in this respect she more closely resembles Jessie Donaldson Hodder.

Stein sums up the project of *MA* as a 'Series of human struggles' (NB 6-18), one of which is 'Between Selina and Hodder' - she marries off two of her friends to each other - real people who never knew each other - as an experiment in character. She proposes combinations between certain types and how they 'make it', or come together. Stein is sceptical, for instance, about the possibility that Julia Dehning and Alfred Hersland will ever achieve complete union (NB 9-11). Erotic and compositional completeness seem to be two impossible aims, in the making of the new people out of the old.

OLD AND NEW WORLDS

Hodder appears to have been of Stein's nationalistic bent, which was indeed a general one - Higham refers to 'the nationalist nineties'.⁴⁹ The new world these writers were envisaging had to be American, as the titles of both their novels proclaim. One of the

⁴⁷ C-25. Elsewhere she classes Hodder as Byronic and romantic (D-15). In *NA* Alan is somewhat ironically referred to as Byronic (326).

⁴⁸ This model for Martha Hersland Redfern was Selina Solomons, Leon Solomons's sister.

most important moral dilemmas brought to light by the Hodder story is framed in these terms.⁵⁰ The narrator states that in contemplating infidelity, the French always sympathize with the lovers, and not the one who has been betrayed, whereas

the American mind accustomed to waste happiness and be reckless of joy finds morality more important than ecstasy and the lonely extra of more value than the happy two. To our new world feeling the sadness of pain has more dignity than the beauty of joy. It takes time to learn the value of happiness, and in our hasty sandwich variety of intercourse that knowledge is never acquired ... it is only the loss of joy that counts (*MA* 438).

The emphasis on loss and use here, of pleasure, and of time, is very important to Stein's conception of America, so bound up with a portrayal of time and history in *MA*. Her apprehension of the reckless and mobile quality of American time and morality explains why her Americans are literally filled with movement. This is connected to the American condition of nervousness discussed in chapter 1. Both Stein and Hodder acknowledge the American state of continual movement as having a bearing on American character; it is a country 'in which it is still the supreme distinction of things that they do not stand still' (*NA* 128).

Martha Hersland, to take one example, is described in terms of motion, commotion, movement and nervousness. We can compare Stein's definition of what she saw as the purely American narrative arrived at in *MA* as 'a space of time that is filled always filled with moving'⁵¹ to the belief expressed in *NA* that "'We are wistful, we Americans ... whenever we stop to think: but then we keep ourselves busy for the most part; we keep ourselves busy in order that we may not stop to think'" (153). The dilemma facing Stein's as well as Hodder's new generation is a peculiarly American one.

While Stein sets out to allow notions of freedom to be represented by the younger generation, she stands up for an old world morality such as she sees it on more than one occasion. 'It takes time to learn the value of happiness' (*MA* 438); 'time and a certainty of place and means':

Martha Redfern eager, anxious and moral ... understood little now what it was that had come upon her and she tried to arrange and explain it by her western morality and her new world humanity ... But in spite of these standards and convictions she was filled with a vague uneasiness that had a different meaning than the habitual struggle against the hard wall of courtesy that Redfern had erected before her. (*MA* 438)

⁴⁹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 68.

⁵⁰ Hodder had to escape from America to Europe (twice). For Stein he exemplifies this phenomenon of 'strange forms' (*MA* 21), American misfits, flying to the old world which takes them to its bosom.

⁵¹ 'The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans', *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein* (New York: Random House, 1962), 258.

The 'new world humanity' equated with the West is set against the old world chivalry of Stein's hated East. But in this battle between freedom and convention, convention wins out. Moreover, Martha as a representative of 'new world humanity' is firmly characterized as gullible and 'stupid'. In one sense this is a book about the failure of the frontier, then, about *American failure*.⁵² However patriotic she was, Stein herself was compelled to 'fly to the comfort of an older world' (MA 21).

Hodder's new generation attains the status of a new race which supersedes family connections. MA moves from being a family-based history to a generation-based psychology.⁵³ The dissolution of the family leads to another sort of clan loyalty, based on a feeling of natural allegiance, and which transcends sex. 'You are not a woman; you are one of a certain clan, of my clan, to whom I owe a clan loyalty', Alan tells Cecily, and she replies 'I am not a woman. I am not a man either, it seems; worse luck' (NA 347-348). Gilman presented this dissolution as an imperative, a piece of evolutionary adaptation, and therefore in her eyes equating with progress. Hodder is more reluctant to see it as wholly beneficial - nevertheless it seems inevitable.

Importantly Hodder points out that the new America demands a new language to describe itself, 'a language distinct from that of all generations preceding, the power of which was still a mystery to the generation at the moment in possession' (NA 339). Hodder has not learnt it by the end; his narrative and his characters are still confused and still clinging to convention. Alan's death may be seen as an emblem of this. Stein, however, is determined to find new ways to describe a new people. The examination of 'strange forms', 'brother singulars', and the words which might be able to describe them, is very much the project of MA.

SEXUAL DYNAMICS

The notebooks suggest that MA was conceived in inquisitiveness about sexual codes, as do the novel's preoccupations with the marriage market and with ways of loving, and the central position of the Hodder/Gwinn affair. New codes were needed for new relationships, in which chivalry no longer worked, the family was breaking down and, in Stein's case, adulthood had brought a recognition of her own homosexuality. Stein

⁵² As such it echoes other stories of conflicted allegiance to the American dream, as we shall see in chapter 4.

needed to know how far the old dualistic versions of gender could reach; she tests them to their breaking point.

The discrepancies between Hodder's moralisms in *NA* and his own conduct are intriguing. Stein reenacts the same struggles, the same ambiguous proprieties in love in order to demonstrate her unhappiness with literary proprieties, in her movement away from the traditional courtship novel.

'There were three of them then, Miss Charles, Miss Douner, and Mrs. Redfern' (*MA* 462). The ring around Alan formed by Nannie, Cecily and Isabel corresponds in an unspecific way to Phillip Redfern's entrapment by his wife (Nancy/Martha), his lover (Janet Bruce/Cora Douner), and the Dean (Helen Thornton/Miss Charles).⁵⁴ In this complicated arena, the one thing that is sure is that everyone is always the same to him or herself (*MA* 461). In the conception of character that Stein is striving towards, this is her only way of tracking the movements of this 'nomadic people' (*NA*), this Martha Hersland born in a hotel; but everyone seems very different in the estimation of every other person. She must enumerate all the dynamics, as each one is in love with another or bound to another:

Everybody is perfectly right. Everybody has their own being in them. Some say it of themselves in their living, I am as I am and I know I will never be changing ... Miss Douner was as she was and she was not ever changing, Miss Charles was as she was and was not ever changing. Mrs Redfern was as she was and always she wanted to be changing and always she was trying. (*MA* 461)

In *MA* Stein allows us to side with each character in turn, for good or bad. In this passage, individuality is linked to rightness, or avoidance of error. Hodder, in *NA*, gives the following stoical train of thought to Nannie, Alan's wife:

If Alan was at heart brutal, it was fitting he should be so in a brutal world. It was her main complaint against him that he was but half-heartedly brutal. She would have liked him better if his brutality had at least possessed the grace of magnitude. The world is old and will not change, she said in contempt of herself; the battle has always been really to the strong. (*NA* 243-244)

'Always men and women are the same old men, the same old women', Stein had echoed in *Fernhurst*. Later, trying to elucidate the scruples about points of honour between the three women in *MA*, Stein's narrator says:

⁵³ See Moore, *Gertrude Stein's The Making of Americans* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 19.

⁵⁴ According to Wineapple, Hodder stated that Isabel was partly based on M. Carey Thomas herself, just as Stein's Dean is; op. cit., 450.

Every one is a brute in her way or his way to some one, every one has some kind of sensitiveness in them ... I am beginning now a little a description of three women, Miss Douner, Miss Charles and Mrs. Redfern. I am beginning now a little a realisation of the way each one of them is in her way a brute to some one, each one has in her way a kind of sensitiveness in being. (*MA* 455)

There is deliberate ambiguity over whether this 'realisation' is something which she or the text performs. Is it just the author who is realizing, grasping, what each character consists of, or does she mean that the text is now beginning to make them real? 'Realisation' conveys a combination of the two. But amid this jumble of intersecting motives and overlapping time schemes of fact and fiction, and with infinite chance for error, it is far from easy to perceive what is 'real.'⁵⁵ Whether or not the novel will 'realise' events, people, and circumstances is Stein's concern, which widens into a broader difficulty with representational prose.

Planning an attack on Redfern, Miss Douner with her amoral aspirations is reminiscent of the scheming Isabel in *NA* (*MA* 459-461). Miss Charles, too, exhibits 'general unmoral desires and ambitious and special unmoral ways of carrying them into realisation ...' (462). But Stein turns everyone into an interpreter, an author; all her 'characters' are engaged in the quest to discern the kinds or characters of others. The way they do this helps her to place them in her own scheme, 'I am now a little understanding the whole of her' (461), and build a novel about its own meaning, but 'it is so very confusing that I am beginning to have in me despairing melancholy feeling' (459).

The silent, tortuous battle over Phillip Redfern between Mrs. Redfern and Miss Douner is described, more and more after the discovery of the letter, as a 'struggle', and Stein's narrator becomes, more and more, the arbiter of success and failure among the warring parties (458, 464-6).

The marriage of Phillip and Martha, like that of Alan and Nannie, is ruptured by an interested and interfering third party (the Dean/Isabel), as well as by a new love (Miss Douner/Cecily) and by the discovery of letters. The exhilarating⁵⁶ freedom and companionship between the sexes which exists in both stories is punished in each case with a marriage which is like a prison. In each case, the woman is deceived into

⁵⁵ Hodder's own discussion of the 'crude real' was far from elucidative - see *The Adveraries of the Sceptic*, and *NA* 363, where Urrey mentions 'Crude Realism,' and Stein's laughter at the concept of 'naive realism' in *Fernhurst*, 44.

⁵⁶ 'Exhilaration' is the word used in *MA* (129), and Nannie in *NA* is 'exhilarated' (136).

asserting a freedom which does not exist. In each case, the man is disillusioned, having believed his chivalry could be enough to make the marriage work; partners are mismatched as no one knows where they stand. 'That was the way any man would act, of that he was very certain' (136); this is how Stein characterizes Hodder's/Redfern's reasoning in *Fernhurst*. But as she shows in *MA*, being 'very certain' is not a condition to be relied upon. Despite the new openness, there are still things one is not able to say; we remember Alan's 'code of honour' as Stein presents her version of a man's code (*MA* 451).

After a while each man falls for another, more intelligent, even newer woman, but as both Alan and Redfern are deeply entrenched in the past, neither author holds out much hope for their union with newness. We remember Hapgood's words about Hodder's belief in his own newness, and the reality of his poor adaptation to this new world. His own recognition of this perhaps inspired one of his characters to wonder about

making a man fit to find his way amongst a nomadic people, a nation of exiles, like the people of the new world that will not for generations yet to come cease to be new; and he well remembered his sense at college, that Alan was not a creature of the same traditions and blood as his companions, that he was a foreigner ...⁵⁷

Stein enacts this very situation in the lacuna which occurs after the letter episode; neither she nor her characters can consort with old worlds. Their words fail, and they are unable to speak, write, or understand.

The intrigue and interfering follow the same tangled moral paths as *NA*. Phillip and Martha

were man and wife, their minds and natures were separated by great gulfs, it must be again an armed neutrality but this time it was not as with his parents an armed neutrality between equals but with an inferior who could not learn the rules of the game. (*MA* 434)

But these rules, definitions of honour and error, have a broader context than marriage; marriage is only the smallest unit of a much grander disaffection with relations to others, and a preoccupation with what claims other people can morally, justifiably lay upon the individual.

⁵⁷ Compare this to the passage which begins 'Brother singulars...' (*MA* 21), and the wording of 'the new people made out of the old' (*MA* 3).

It is no coincidence that the Hodder story as it occurs in *MA* leads directly into a discussion of morality, virtuousness, and eventually religion.⁵⁸ The counterpoint of each of these stories, after their identification with each player in turn, gives way at their close to a muted moralism. The moral ambiguities of the story had been present in the original story, but recasting them in the style of *MA* allows room for interminable rumination which withholds definite judgement.

Neither Alan nor Phillip Redfern really sees himself as a failure, and nor indeed did Hodder. Redfern, at least, believes himself to be good; 'he was on guard because women and other things were dangerous things' (450-51), but Stein says of Redfern, 'This was a certain thing in his feeling, he gave every one unceasingly everything they could possibly demand of him' (452). We remember Alan, obliged to fulfil debts he never even noticed he was racking up, or Hodder, predestined to be undermined by women. But then Stein points out that to others he is not trustworthy, and in the end was 'never realising his obligation to any one,' which is rather a damning statement considering that 'To the last hour of his living he was faithful to the certainty of having been faithful to every one who ever had come to have any claim upon him.' Sex, and perhaps all relations, are viewed in terms of obligations, debts, what he 'owed' to everyone. He is therefore faithful to an idea, not a person. And this is an important construction; 'faithful to the certainty of having been faithful' - there is, despite appearances, no certainty here. Everything about the Hodder story serves to undermine certainty, belief, truth on all levels. He helps Stein to demonstrate how little there is to be certain of.

STEIN AND *THE ADVERSARIES OF THE SCEPTIC*

AS was written under the influence of, and partly as a rejoinder to, Josiah Royce, whom Stein had cajoled into addressing the Philosophy Club at Radcliffe when she was president.⁵⁹ She had also gently lampooned him in a fake review of her own play, a

⁵⁸ Stein debates whether Redfern can justly be called a 'saint' (e.g. 441). This was another ironic reflection of real life - Gwinn referred to Hodder as 'Saint Alfred'; Ronnick, '*Fernhurst*', *Classical and Modern Literature* 15 (1995), 377.

⁵⁹ In a letter to Stein dated March 27, 1896, Royce asks her whether she would prefer a lecture on "Browning's Theism" or on "The Principle of Individuation". There is no record of which she chose, though the latter would appear more appropriate for the occasion. Royce also seemed keener on this lecture, which later became Part III of 'The Absolute and the Individual,' *The Conception of God* (1897), saying that it would be 'on the problem "What do we mean when we call any object an Individual?" or

'Thrilling Melodrama' called 'Love's Sacrifice or Snatched From Death'. The fake 'Press Comments' contain various in-jokes, and have Royce wittering away: 'The peculiar contradictoriness of apparent existence is most forcibly presented in the interrelations of good and evil in the first acts, as well as in the final harmonies of the absolute in the concluding reconciliations.'⁶⁰ Schoolgirl stuff, but stuff that would stay with her.

When Stein writes about a completed being, and there is enormous emphasis on complete being in *MA*, one wonders if she is not struggling with these same problems of whether aesthetic and moral judgements, as well as character, are based on completeness. *MA* wrestles on the most basic level with just this rationalization of artistic completion and completion of character.

When she wrote *MA*, Stein still believed in Royce's contentious Absolute, and would do so until she tested her belief to breaking point by an accumulation of fact. Hodder, too, makes an appeal to fact. 'His will is best who ... is most bent on knowledge and most submissive to his knowledge, in impulse and deed abiding loyally under the empire of fact' (*AS* 339). When Stein characterizes Hodder as Phillip Redfern she sees him as a man forever in search of knowledge. She says he felt it his duty to obey his will, which is to be in search of knowledge. This equation of moral worth and knowledge is important. It also means that moral and intellectual *uncertainty* are similarly connected. Issues of virtue, wholeness, and completeness are predominant in *AS*. It is no wonder that when Stein writes about Hodder, her own book becomes a discussion of certainty and doubt. In *AS* scepticism itself provided a raft in the sea of modern crises - albeit a flimsy one - for this doubting, difficult treatise is itself perfectly adapted to modernist breaking down of certainties.⁶¹

AS is not only about scepticism, but is itself set forward in the most circumlocutory language; though it is distrustful of all postulates, it is fervently logical in the elaboration of its reservations. All these things might be said of *MA*. The only completeness Hodder espouses depends on his idea of the 'specious present', whereby each moment can be known only of itself, yet reflects every other part of existence. For

"What constitutes Individuality?" See *The Letters of Josiah Royce* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 340.

⁶⁰ 'Love's Sacrifice or Snatched From Death', n.d. (Box 35, folder 724, YCAL).

this reason *AS* has also been seen by Wineapple as having an impact on Stein's notion of time, since 'The specious present, a world lived in and for the moment, implicitly assaulted the conventions of a narrative line.'⁶² Stein's multiple beginnings are her attempt to present time in the only way that it can be known, moment by moment, to emulate this uncertainty.

Stein's scheme in *MA* relies on the idea of the unreliability of memory (particularly in relation to the written word); the wrenching repercussions of this are felt particularly in the letter episode. How interesting then that Hodder too chooses to illustrate his point in a passage which refers to a letter, to the impossibility of knowing that it is one's own. (I will return to this in my discussion of *MA*'s letter episode). The connection between Stein's and Hodder's ideas of repetition has already been recognized.⁶³ Although Stein had made gentle fun of the specious present in *Fernhurst*, renaming it the 'crude real', it sounds almost like a blueprint for the narrative of *MA*. Processes, not results, propel the narrative. When Stein repeats, as she so often does, 'This is now a history' (e.g. 421) she draws on much of what is implied by the specious present. Stein wants to include everything 'and things mental and things non-mental, past, present, future and conditional, are cognised within the outer limits of the "Specious Present."' (*AS* 247)

It is worth citing Hodder's words exactly:

the sole permanence which the evidence warrants ... anybody in attributing to the objects of perception is a permanent possibility of being perceived, a possibility of being permanently or rather repeatedly perceived, and that too only on an interpretation of "permanence" and of "repetition" which deprives those words of all suggestion of hidden identity or unbroken continuity in the objects to which they are applied (*AS* 210-211).

Stein attempts to replicate a permanence or repetition of perception in *MA*. But when faced with the thought of 'as many universes as there are intelligences' (*AS* 13) the very notion of a universe becomes fragmented, unknowable, impossible, making all the more desperate Stein's attempt to piece it together. Rather than truth, there must be a variety of subjective truths.

As I have implied, there are moral as well as stylistic implications of the specious present. In particular Hodder addresses questions of duty, especially in relation to masculinity. Manliness consists in coping with freedom of choice:

⁶¹ Leo wrote to Gertrude in 1900 that it 'suggested the only path in which I can walk in comfort. If I find that it breaks down I think I shall be able to drop metaphysics for good' (Leo Stein to GS, November 1900, YCAL). In 1902 he also wrote on the subject to Hodder. See Wineapple, op. cit., 191.

⁶² *ibid.*, 190.

It is something, he [any man] may feel, upon the side of dignity and energy ... that he is free to do as he likes because he likes it - and to take the consequences ... he may well take refuge in the not unmanly stoicism of Sarpedon, and reply simply - "Onward!" (AS 298)

In common with the creed of *NA*, *AS* seems already to be concerned with living up to masculinity in a world which doubts even whether error is possible.

Hodder is concerned with whether it is possible to know someone by their actions; Stein rehearses the same question:

It is very hard to know of any one the being in them from one or two things they have been doing that some one is telling about them, from many things even that they have been doing and that one knows of them. Knowing real being in men and women is a very slow proceeding and always more and more this is very certain (*MA* 392-93).

At this point, which is before the upheaval of the *Fernhurst* episode, that willingness to trust in her own certainty is an important part of the narrative attitude. Here, a person's actions are all there is to go on; the narrator is quietly confident that, while being conscious of that fragmented universe, the only way to achieve certainty is by enumeration:

It is hard to know the kind of being in any one from just a description of some thoughts, some feelings, some actions in them for it is in their feeling of themselves inside them that the kind of being in them shows in them and that comes out of them slowly in their living, that comes out of them always as repeating, this is very very difficult to make any one understand from a description of them ... I am never very certain but always there is again and again for me a beginning of this trying (*MA* 399).

There is already doubt here, but Stein calls attention to her valiant 'trying', and makes an effort to show that everyone may be classed as an interpreter; the whole scheme is a collective effort. Yet it is the impossibility of collectiveness, of communication of subjective impressions of reality which will eventually undermine her faith in the novel.

As Hodder puts it,

there is no object, the psychological realist observes, ... that is not perceived to be of such and such a description by one person, and of such and such a somewhat different description by a different person; ... there is no detail even of any object in regard to which any two persons, or even any two moments of perception of the "same" person, agree exactly ... it is not impossible that no object is in any case or in any detail what it is perceived to be; or rather, it is certain that no object laid bare in the act of perception is in the case of any two moments of consciousness the same (*AS* 209-210).

In *MA* complete knowledge is equivalent to aesthetic completion and moral completion. Despite Hodder's cavils, Stein's idea of 'being a whole one' is still connected to the

⁶³ *ibid.*, 190-191.

aesthetic idea that beauty, or truth, may be in some way equated with or defined by completeness, some sort of absolute. Here, at the beginning of the novel's middle section, Stein relates this completion of character to completion of her own artistic product (both 'being' and 'description' must be 'completed', *MA* 399), representing the author as the one knowing, understanding, being interested. If, as Hodder suggests, 'my self is a collective simply of the variety of things I love' (*AS* 300-301), it is possible for each person to consist of different 'whole ones' during a single lifetime; different sorts of completeness may be attained at different stages (*MA* 382). It follows, at least at this hopeful stage of *MA*, that the self can be exhaustively described by simple enumeration of the variety of its loves, which is part of the project of *MA*. It is said of Miss Douner that 'her deepest interest was in the varieties of human experience and her constant desire was to partake of all human relations' (*MA* 435). Hannah Charles's aunt is described (on the same page) with the character trait that she 'sought for truth in all varieties of ecstatic experience.'⁶⁴ Stein is interested in 'varieties of loving,' as Hodder is in *AS* (267). Both Stein and Hodder advocate the possibility that one can 'resolve the individual into moments' (*AS* 301). This involves describing sexual mores and enumerating emotional types, as laid out in Stein's 'Diagram Book'.

THE DISRUPTIVE FORCE

It is important to understand the circumstances within *MA* leading up to the 'break into narrative',⁶⁵ the Hodder story. At the beginning of this section of the Martha Hersland chapter, some fifty or so pages before we are confronted with the Hodder affair, comes the small piece of knowledge arrived at via the ruminations of the previous 381 pages: 'This coming together to be a whole one is a strange thing in men and women.' A relatively modest assertion, but one which underpins not only the section which it introduces but the phase of 'completed' humanity which struggles for expression in different ways throughout the rest of the book. The quasi-biblical statement that Martha's father and mother 'came together to make her' (*MA* 427) is implied, but 'coming together to be a whole one' also means the coalescing of these two forces of dependence and independence, within Martha's own person, and asks whether that inner

⁶⁴ Stein seems to have William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* in mind here.

⁶⁵ Porter, op. cit.

division can be overcome. We have seen one of the sources for this internal fragmentation in the Hodder character.

The Martha Hersland section maps a transition from relative certainty to bewilderment. The gradual realization in this chapter, initially expressed as a hopeful thought, that no one sees the world the way you do (430) becomes a cause of despair by the end of the chapter. Stein does not simply copy *Fernhurst* into *MA*; she makes alterations, as I shall explain, and adds an internal commentary within the conventional text, and when she does, this is one idea which resurfaces. 'The things that have no meaning as existing are to every one very many, and that is always more and more important in understanding the being in men and women' (*MA* 430). When she returns once more to this idea in the 'categories that once had meaning' section, its significance has become thoroughly distressing.

At the stage of the preamble to the *Fernhurst* episode, Stein's narrator has reached a comfortable sense of security about her own schemes. Smugly, she explains that she knows her way around perfectly; 'Knowing a map and then seeing the place and knowing then that the roads actually existing are like the map, to some is always astonishing and then very gratifying.' Reporting people's behaviour and characteristics makes for a narrative which is as real, scientific, and straightforward as map-making. But she does not cast herself as the cartographer; she has learnt what she knows of human nature from 'hearing others talking, and reading what others have written' (389). A couple of pages later, she makes an important connection between life and literature which seem to have an equal share in enabling someone to recognize types. These allusions to other writers indicate an increasing self-consciousness about her own role as writer which suggests an underlying doubt, and which will come to fruition in the *Fernhurst* episode, doubt about the possibility of categorical knowledge, and about literary decorum.

Nevertheless, at this point she is confident enough to assert that 'Always there are many millions of every kind of men and women ... It makes it realer than when in a story there are twelve women, all alike, and one hundred men, all alike, and a man and a woman completely resembling the one to the other one of them' (385). The emphasis on realness of resemblance here suggests that Stein is still aiming to emulate realism at this stage. She revels in her own ability to draw genealogical links between every person she encounters or dreams up. But after the early certainty, as the chapter progresses, it

becomes more and more difficult to perceive which nature her characters are exhibiting. The doubts which begin to be voiced seem connected to an unwillingness to rely on experience of a person's actions as the gauge of his character. Like Hodder in *AS*, she is wary of the process by which this so-called empirical knowledge is attained. Hodder rehearses the reasons for believing that experience exists, and decides that to prove it there is only 'the tarnished word of memory' (*AS* 28). Stein seems to be creating a continuum whereby memory is not forced to make such a leap of faith. Otherwise the result is comic in its uselessness; 'slowly now there will come to be a complete description of the nature in her that this I have been just describing does not now help very much to be understanding' (394). Through such unexpectedly negative constructions she arrives at the conclusion that she finds description impossible. Character cannot be elaborated by the usual fictional strategy of bestowing on the reader examples from a person's behaviour. 'I am never very certain but always there is again and again for me a beginning of this trying' (*MA* 399). Here she seems to conclude that it must in some way be possible to do so by individual example, by somehow conveying the individual in his own method of repeating; the collective scheme must somehow be subverted.

The struggle in Martha's mind is presented as between giving and receiving, connected to talking and listening, a social casting of the plot within her:

She would sit conscientiously bending her mind to her self-imposed task of understanding and development, when in the immediate circle of talkers that included her husband and Miss Douner she gave anxious and impartial attention to the words of one and the other occasionally joining in the talk by an earnest inquiry and receiving always from Redfern the courteous deference that he extended to every one, to everything, to all women (*MA* 439).

The action is described in terms of the movements of Martha's attention. Despite her 'nervous misery' she 'showed the burden of her feeling only in the anxious care with which she listened and talked.' As we saw in chapter 1, her poor attention, nervousness and anxiety are typically feminine attributes for Stein. Stupid Martha, in fact, is often little more than a receptacle, as here in relation to her husband, 'receiving always from Redfern the courteous deference that he extended to every one, to everything, to all women.' His courtesy is another form of the same indifference which has been extended to her all her life. Martha's stupidity is an important facet of Stein's self-projection in

the text. The *Fernhurst* episode upsets the narrator, makes her anxious and unable, like Martha.

ALTERATIONS

In the transposition of *Fernhurst* into *MA* we will see lots of these thematic issues informing the novel's stylistic changes. At first Stein seems to have completed the conversion job quite clumsily. But in respect of the final artefact, *MA*, such deficiencies are beside the point, as her next step is to admit her own shortcomings. The question is why she keeps them in at all. Perhaps we should simply refer to the rebukes expressed by Stein's friend, H.P. Roché, in a letter which offended her. It is clear that Roché is having a few problems with Stein's work when he admits 'I start reading your style only when I feel very strong and want in a way to suffer.' His main problem is the bulk of the repetition: 'Why don't you finish, correct rewrite ten times the same chaotic material till it has its very shape worthy of its fullness? A condensation of 60 to 90% would often do? ... Quantity! Quantity! Is thy name woman?'⁶⁶ But the issues of authorial control raised by this palimpsest are more interesting than simple bad editing. Baffled by the strange behaviours of her own words she may be at times, but Stein is a lot more sentient to the question of authorship than many of her exasperated readers have given her credit for, and the *Fernhurst* episode goes some way towards proving it. In a gesture quite as radical as any other of her techniques, she allows this palimpsest to remain, and in so doing raises fundamental questions about what sort of choices are made in the creation of any piece of writing.

Hodder is a failure; this is what he and his work had amounted to. This is in Stein's mind when problems arise with her relation to her own words. If *MA* is a failure, and it almost professes itself to be from the outset, it is also about failure. 'He never ceased to struggle, and he never ceased to fail.'⁶⁷ The horrible circularity of this observation might well be applied to many of Stein's other characters, and even to her own position as author. This story of struggle towards an intended 'progress' is morbidly preoccupied with human failures. Very probably anxious and scared herself in this respect, Stein bases her studies on figuring out what failure consists of, and whether it necessarily has any relation to the opinions of others.

⁶⁶ H.P. Roché to GS, 6 February 1912 (YCAL).

⁶⁷ *MA* contains an elongated adaptation of this sentence (441).

When Stein adapts *Fernhurst* for inclusion in *MA*, the process of incorporating the old work into the new is emphatically not a simple copying out into the long novel. Rather it is a deliberate, planned moment of disorientation, included for its consequences for style and authorial intent. The language itself is simplified, while the effect of the chosen words is to specify, and locate the movement of feelings. One of her notes to herself reads 'Often now go back to the college life. He had been called to take the chair of philosophy and then adapt.'⁶⁸ At this point she clearly sees it as a very simple process. Yet it must have come to seem strange that it was possible to write the new way simply by giving the old manner a face lift; this is not the way she wrote the rest of the book, which either remained old (the opening passages) or really was brand new. But evidently she realized that the palimpsest could only be sustained for a moment, as an interlude of lucidity or conventionality, before being engulfed by the new way of writing. She demonstrates this actively, deliberately. This conversion job is a failure, she realizes; this is not the way to write. The importance of the *Fernhurst* episode is in developing a self-consciousness about style which feeds into the revelry in self-doubt countenanced by *MA* as a whole. *MA* becomes a search for completeness, of love, of character, and of the book itself, hurrying towards each moment of completion, and its own completion, but continually delaying itself.

Transparent attempts to encode the old words are discernible when she tacks on to the end of a sentence such phrases as: 'so in his later life he was always saying as I will soon be telling' (429). The effect is odd as she lurches between the two styles, almost as if making a forgery of her own style. This addition also helps to establish the early years as something told again and again, even before Stein comes to rehearse them; indeed *NA* had included one telling of this upbringing. This could also be seen as rather a simplistic attempt to cope with authorial hindsight and foresight. Her continual resort to the phrase 'as I will soon be telling' is a play on this idea of authorial precognition; the facts of the story's development will be swept aside in the ruminations on virtue, error and meaning which it prompts. In a similar piece of self-imitation, she qualifies the phrase 'from her [his mother] he learnt all his thoughts and convictions', so that she gives him 'all the thoughts and convictions that were definite and conscious then and for a long time after in him.' This process of tempering, readjusting, and spatializing her old words with the new ones, adding such phrases as 'in him,' 'in her being,' 'to him,' changing 'thought'

⁶⁸ NB 6-9.

to 'thinking,' insists on the events as subjective processes. Precedence is given to the present participle in place of the noun. The too ready-made 'poetic justice' becomes 'justice of all poetry of living'; 'so she thought' becomes 'so she was always thinking.' Each thought or action is part of a perpetual process.

In *Fernhurst*, Redfern's mother is 'prejudiced and inconsequential and apt to accept sensations and impressions as carefully as thought out theories and principles' (22). In *MA* this emotional intelligence is described with something like abandon; the mother is 'excitably prejudiced and inconsequent in sensitive enthusiasm and given to accepting and giving and living sensations and impressions under the conviction that she had them as carefully thought out theories and principles that were complete for reasoning' (429). While in *Fernhurst* Redfern must simply 'devote his life' to women (22), in *MA* he brings the male principle to bear on the problem; he must 'devote the strength of the father that was soon to be in the son of him' (429). In *MA*, Redfern is no longer the 'champion of the rights of women' (*F* 22), he is simply the 'champion of women' (429), which makes the impulse less political, more personal. In a tell-tale comment on Redfern's character, 'liberty, equality and opportunity for all women' (22) becomes 'liberty, equality, opportunity, beauty, feeling for all women.' (429)

The vocabulary is in general pared down and denuded of anything pre-phrased or suggestive of figurative usage. When the narrator comments of Redfern's father's blindness to his wife's intentions, 'it would not have any meaning excepting as words if she had ever said it to him' (*MA* 429), she comments also on the feminine use of words as pitted against masculine meaning, the impossibility of interpretation of one sex by another. Eventually, in the letter episode, this will be restated as the impossibility of interpretation of any person by another, and finally even by oneself, and the inevitable dissociation of any writer from his own meaning. Here, directly after the description of Redfern's childhood, comes an important precursor of this discussion of meaning. Describing an impasse between genders, Stein compares the situation to discovering that a friend with whom you had seen things has something wrong with his eyesight which means he cannot have seen what you saw. The metaphor is extended to include writerly loneliness, 'and you know then that you are seeing, you are writing completely only for one and that is yourself then and to every other one it is a different thing' (430). The narrator finds this astonishing, as part of the writing process, and difficult to transcend. Even though everyone knows it, many people never realize the discrepancies

between their thought selves and the perception of them by others. These observations are applicable to both author and character. As such they are extremely disruptive to the entire narrative intent of the novel. Rationality itself is under fire as Stein works these observations back into the place at which she left off the original *Fernhurst* story, at which point she happens to be discussing the conflict between emotional and rational in terms of instinct and heredity. She enters into a sort of fugue on the subject.

Instead of simply saying that at the western college no one cared who your grandfather was, she elaborates: 'Mostly no one there was conscious of a grand-father unless as remembering one as an old man living in the house with them or as living in another place and being written to sometimes by them and then having died and that was the end of grand-fathers to them' (431).⁶⁹ At this point the sequence of *Fernhurst* is thrown aside, as we return to chapter one, then after one summarizing paragraph quickly jump to the original beginning of chapter two, the entrance to the party, then forward again to the beginning of the third chapter, then back to the party, and on to the fifth chapter. These shuffled episodes are all given in summary, even though elements of them are grossly elaborated, blown out of proportion to the story from which they come. There is a stretch of around twenty pages where the original novella resurfaces untampered with, where the lure of the old, easy words seems to overtake the impulse to break with gentility, where there is no impolite intrusion on delicate sensations such as those of Cora Douner, the ideals which she worships incarnate in Redfern, who, like many a courtly heroine, 'longed for the real world while wrapped away from it by the perverse reserve of her mind and the awkward shyness of her body' (437). The overall effect is of simultaneous expansion and compression, in line with this apprehensiveness about error and longing for release.

WRITING WOMEN

We have seen that masculinity for Stein means both creativity and a certain hardened moral uprightness. It is a condition which had been vividly and seductively exemplified by the dazzling public persona of Alfred Hodder. Stein had seen something of herself in him, particularly in the mixture of the romantic and the hard-headed, which indeed he seems to have seen in himself.

⁶⁹ In *NA*, Urrey is the son of 'no one in particular' (58).

But the worldly wise chivalry of *NA* does not work - not in the novel, where the hero dies a failure through love, not in life, for practically the same reason, and certainly not in the version of Hodder's life manufactured by Stein. Nevertheless this brand of idealistic masculinity espoused by Hodder, Alan, and Redfern, must at some point have seemed attractive to Stein. Hodder himself had observed that Stein was full of a desire 'to be like a man',⁷⁰ and so far as decency and maturity were equated with masculinity, this masculine ideal is perhaps the mature, complete state towards which all the characters of *MA* are striving. It is important then that fault is found with such an enterprise in the aftermath of the *Fernhurst* episode.

Hodder recognizes the inadequacy of male idioms for the expression of the emotions. Stein herself had adopted a male idiom in her notebooks, but in *MA* she would have cause at least to question this role playing. *MA* is deeply concerned with injunctions and distinctions which prove gentility or servility. This is part of Stein's attempt to crack the code which will allow her to understand people completely. The rules which Alan lays out for himself are echoed in Stein's characterization of Hodder. Later his convictions will be broadened out as part of a warning against this sort of individualist code; 'Some out of their own virtue make a god who sometimes later is a terror to them' (*MA* 443).

Slowly and sadly in *NA* the part of 'the abstract chivalrous male in the presence of the abstract female' (129) had come across as a form of hypocrisy. After one of their first meetings, Hodder reported that Stein 'hated me at sight ... because I showed her a politeness and a deference that she knew I could not feel, and did not feel.'⁷¹ Isabel shrewdly observes of Alan that his chivalry amounts to indifference, since he treats all women in the same way (130).

Cecily's husband is afflicted with the same redundant codes of conduct - 'his gallantries were in effect ironical' (*NA* 392-93) and the same trait is to be found in Phillip Redfern, who, with 'impartial attention' shows 'the same degree of courteous deference' to his wife and his future lover (*MA* 436). Stein renders this as a 'hard wall of courtesy' (438) built between Redfern and everyone he meets, against which Martha throws herself. After the disintegration of their marriage, an 'elaborate chivalry' (*MA* 434) is still extended from Phillip to Martha just as it is from Alan to Nannie. His

⁷⁰ Quoted Wineapple, op. cit., 154.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 138.

‘extreme chivalry’ makes him ‘bound to more than fulfill the expectations he gave rise to in the mind of his companion’ (*MA* 438). We remember Alan’s chivalrous objection to ‘disappointing expectations’, which obliges him to marry Nannie.

At the end of the novel Cecily, writing her own novel, is the one left to chronicle the period; she possesses ‘an instinctive, special knowledge’ of her own generation that past or future generations could not share. ‘She was an original authority on the people of her own time’ (369). Perhaps Stein recognizes the same opportunity. It is as if Hodder is leaving the way open for a new, female interpretation of the world, but the outlook is not propitious; although she has rewritten all her husband’s speeches and reports, Cecily finds it impossible to write a novel. Reading a contemporary sentimental novel, she reflects ‘There were a thousand things in the book ... that a girl could not have known, or dared to guess’, and when she realizes she is failing in her task, ‘the one thing that consoled her was that making a book, a book that counts, is a man’s work’ (316-17). After the failure of her marriage she discovers ‘a new and strange blankness’ in the unfilled hours:

She had been thrown back into her girl’s world, and she was no longer outwardly a girl, and had no longer anything to hope for from her girlhood coming to an end, and her girl’s world was without the warmth and shelter that had once existed for her there, and she herself was without the illusions about the world beyond, and her own self, that had given her an escape for hours together from her girl’s world (401-402).

Cecily cannot even seem to write. Her dilemma is that of the New Woman; like Martha Hersland and Julia Dehning in Stein’s novel she is trapped in a world where she does not have the power to create, which is also the new dilemma of the generation reaching maturity in America.

Most of the women of *NA* are unthinkingly bound up in the same sort of marriage racket which is seen as the feminine domain in *MA*. Like Julia in *MA*, Cecily dreams of other, cultured worlds. But Julia also shares Cecily’s dilemma that the only way to escape the father’s world is to leave it on the arm of a husband. After failed attempts to break free, the movement from parents to husband back to parents again is humiliating, for Cecily and for Martha.

In *MA* there is a strong sense of female destiny as sexual. Imagining loss, in the letter episode, of both sexual and intellectual fulfilment, Stein creates a metaphor for that entrapment which beckons if one is not exceptional. To adopt the role of author is

very challenging, in the light of her own beliefs. It seems she is only able to express this trepidation through euphemism.

EROTIC KNOWLEDGE

The subtitle of *AS* was 'A New Inquiry into Human Knowledge'. Bearing in mind Hodder's chequered love life, he lends himself interestingly for Stein to a correlation of finding knowledge and finding erotic fulfilment. A passage in *Fernhurst* wryly alludes to the rumours about where Hodder's priorities lay: Redfern, on arrival at the women's college, 'was prepared to make and find an experience with 500 intelligent women interesting and instructive' (9). His susceptibility to women is the fatal flaw which Stein focused on. He is a useful figure not just because, as both teacher and pupil, he exhibits all the wisdom and naivety⁷² which foreshadow Melanctha, but because in telling his story Stein gets at her fundamental idea that she herself, and all people, are seekers of knowledge. Conversely, Martha Hersland's inability to know, to understand, becomes a signal of her sexual incapacity or impotency. She is consistently presented in this stupid state. 'After two years of marriage Redfern's realisation of her was almost complete ... and when once he was certain that this woman had no message for him there was no way in which she could make to him an appeal. Her narrow eager mind was helpless' (*MA* 433). (Miss Douner, on the other hand, with her own intelligence, and her own desire for 'sordid' knowledge, represents completeness to Redfern.) Stein presents a picture of marriage as two minds struggling apart from each other. The only source of completeness here is in Redfern's 'realisation' of Martha, a purely academic satisfaction, akin to that of the author of *MA*, achieving a composite 'realisation' of her subjects. Like Stein, Redfern attempts to assert control over reality by achieving this completeness of realization. Redfern is an image of the discriminating, compiling author, looking for composite truth (*MA* 458-9). Repeatedly, the emphasis is on knowledge, or its lack. Just as Jessie continued to cherish Hodder's memory, and Isabel insisted on believing Alan would one day be hers, so Martha pathetically expects to be with Redfern again, until he dies (*MA* 457).

At the most melodramatic moment of *Fernhurst*, when she is confronted by the Dean with her husband's infidelity, Mrs Redfern simply stammers 'I ... I don't

⁷² Despite all Hodder's experience, his friend Willard said of him 'he wouldn't know a dramatic experience if it was stripped naked and put into bed with him.' (Hapgood, op. cit., 222.)

understand.’ Even before the climax comes, Stein’s summary of Martha is that ‘Mrs Redfern never understood what had happened to her’ (*MA* 434):

Redfern felt in his chivalrous way that all desire that he roused in her mind it was his duty to fulfill and that no price could be too great to pay for the knowledge that she so freely gave him and to the last hour of his life he paid this debt for though in after years he yielded many times with many women to his desire to seek and know he never forgot her rights and was ready always at any cost to give her what she wished. (*F* 34)⁷³

In speaking of the desire to seek and know Stein is using the same euphemism as she had in ‘Melanctha’. But the euphemism turns back on itself - Stein’s subject here is knowledge itself, and not purely the sexual life. This passage was written before Stein knew this was not the real outcome of the Hodder affair, that he was to end up with Mamie Gwinn (Miss Douner); at the end of the original *Fernhurst* the Redferns are back together but he continues to be unfaithful. By this token, marital improprieties can be explained away with the same logic as the original duty to Mrs Redfern: ‘all desire that he roused in her mind it was his duty to fulfill.’ In *AS* Hodder had argued that if anything fulfils the will it is moral.

Stein pits an individualist code against one which takes others into account. The shifting perspective allows glimpses of the difference between failure in your own eyes and failure in someone else’s, particularly concerning completion, ‘realisation’, which may be taken as the aim of the artist. Realization, for Martha, is a sudden moment of truth. In Redfern’s case it is a steadier approach to the realization of the characters of others. Each method of sexual/artistic conduct is equally marred by the eventual outcome of these characters’ lives. Stein’s equation of sexual and intellectual mastery leads to the eventual dissolution of both masculine and feminine codes of conduct.

Stein uses a volatile, sexualized language to enumerate these loves, be they erotic or otherwise; ‘there are very many that lose it with losing a certain kind of stimulation, there are many that have a covering of passion, of emotion, of quick or slow reaction to everything, that covers them...’ (382). The narrator’s scrutiny itself has a sexual nuance to it, she herself is emotionally involved; ‘such a one then may be very disappointing, such a one is a dry whole one ... some of such of them keep on being tantalising because they come so nearly again and again to be whole ones inside them’ (383). Artistic completeness here begins to sound like sexual fulfilment.

⁷³ Here Stein employs the same language of economic obligation which was so prevalent in *NA*’s discussion of sexual relations.

The description, the complete knowing of a character in one's work, is like a love affair; the narrator can rid herself of the object of her obsession once she feels them to be completely written about. 'Coming together' to make a whole may not necessarily be the conjunction of two partners; the completion is achieved from within. But more fundamentally, *MA* strives for a way of finding completeness without the sexual emotion; completeness is what life itself is about. Katz has played down the sexual element of *MA*;⁷⁴ he is not entirely right to do so, because Stein does grapple with sexual forces in *MA*, but that is certainly not to say that sex is the be all and end all of her schemes.

After the *Fernhurst* episode, Stein presents a medley of sexual case studies, and different ways of explaining their sexual behaviour (*MA* 441-442 and 445-452). Several of these characters are writers, and here again there is a link between sexual and literary indiscretion. In this section Stein embarks on a discussion of various forms of sexual hypocrisy.

In *MA* secrecy lends an erotic nuance to the nature of writing itself; Stein uses mention of the act of writing as an erotic gesture, while stories of transgression and seeking after carnal knowledge fit themselves easily to the story of her own transgressive literary practices. The sense of shame which she discusses is viscerally linked to her feelings about both sexuality and creativity, bearing in mind the earlier distinction of the narrator herself as seeker of knowledge, trying to study and to understand. Marcet refers to the dissolution of narrative structures through repetitive euphemism in Stein's other early work; the letter episode belongs to the same set of strategies.⁷⁵

In the aftermath of this episode all these issues coalesce. These passages deal with the origins and justification of emotion, but they connect importantly with techniques of writing. The letter episode is an important model for the rest of the work, which eventually founders on the belief that artistic creation can follow any form of absolute completion, of character, action, or explanation.

Phillip Redfern, then, is a 'seeker after knowledge' of the brand of his successor, Melanctha.⁷⁶ After the *Fernhurst* episode in *MA*, the character of Melanctha herself

⁷⁴ Katz says the sexual schemes are 'supplanted', as Stein is 'free to dispense with "sexuality" as the basis for dividing personalities into types', op. cit., 289.

⁷⁵ Marcet, op. cit., 217.

⁷⁶ See Doane, op. cit., 51.

makes a cameo appearance as Stein groups the two together among the other sexual hypocrites. It is perfectly sensible to suggest that in Stein's work 'knowing' or 'knowledge' is normally used in the Biblical sense; Marcet argues that this is one of Stein's 'erotic strategies' of encodement in her other works. Once we allow that Stein is still using the 'erotic strategies' of *QED* and *Three Lives* (particularly 'Melanctha') which have also been seen in the college themes and identified more obviously in later works like *Tender Buttons* (in other words, in the works immediately preceding and following the composition of *MA*), we become far more open to the nuances of *MA*. Melanctha was Stein's most famous seeker of carnal knowledge. After she has learned the things she needs to know, she becomes Jeff Campbell's teacher. That teacher/student relationship has its beginning in *Fernhurst*, a story which is explicitly about 'the deepening knowledge of life and love and sex' (34).

THE LETTER EPISODE

In this section I will look at the final, formal implications of Hodder's life and work for Stein's attitude to realism. We have seen how he informs her notions of gender, knowledge, impropriety and identity. Now it is possible to return to the point at which I started, where all these ideas are summed up, the letter episode.

Hodder's love letters to and from Mamie Gwinn fill forty-eight boxes at Princeton. During the years of secrecy before their marriage, to keep the affair from Carey Thomas, the pair had adopted pseudonyms for their private letters: FW and VW - Francis and Valentine Walton.⁷⁷ Stein, in her early years in Paris, was involved in lengthy correspondence with many old friends in America, and was pursuing a long and painfully drawn out love affair to its bitter end by means of carefully drafted supplications addressed to May Bookstaver.

Phillip and Martha's actions during the letter episode represent the story's main moral dilemma. The major act of shame, of dishonor, and impropriety which occurs in *Fernhurst* is connected to reading, the reading of a letter. Mrs. Redfern (Martha Hersland as she became in *MA*) has been warned by the Dean to keep her husband under control and, racked with suspicion and doubt, she secretly enters his study, discovering

⁷⁷ The brilliant Gwinn retired from academic life after Hodder's death, still corresponding, in a way, with her life's love, through spirit communication. She herself was presumed to have died in the 1940s. One wonders what she made of Stein's subsequent career, most of which she would have lived to witness, and whether she was ever informed of her starring role in *MA*.

there an unfinished letter to another woman, which she reads. In *Fernhurst* Redfern returns to the room and finding his wife there confronts her with the dishonour of her action, then torments himself over his own lack of gentility in reproaching her. However, in the *MA* version, the story breaks off at the point where Martha 'had her evidence.'

In *NA*, husband and wife are forced to a similar confrontation by the discovery of a letter between the husband and another woman, which has been supplied by another interfering third party. Here the situation is brought to a very different outcome because the wife, Nannie, decides she does not want to know, and refuses to read; her decision is contrasted with the actions of the woman who has supplied the letter, Isabel, who does read it, and is herself subjected to reproach for her act of dishonour.⁷⁸

Stein could of course surmise that a scene of this sort might have taken place in Hodder's life as well as his fiction, and so incorporated it into her story of his fall. It is entirely possible that the letter episode was initially based on *NA*. It seems that Stein inadvertently recreated the real life secret correspondence between Hodder and Gwinn on the evidence of *NA*. Of Isabel, Hodder writes 'she would have preferred not to have been obliged to take the letter; but she saw no other way by which she could have possessed herself of its contents; and she intended to know its contents' (*NA* 425). The theme of duplicity and honour in connection with letters resurfaces a few times in *NA*,⁷⁹ Nannie makes the right choice by not reading, Isabel makes the wrong choice by reading. The scenario is used as a test of character. The comparable scene in *MA*, the one which makes Martha Hersland morally culpable, is the last moment before Stein's new style resurfaces: 'She walked up to his desk and opening his portfolio saw a letter in his writing. She scarcely hesitated so eager was she to read it. She read it to the end, she had her evidence' (440).

Should Martha have read the letter? Should Redfern have let her know that he knew she had read it? These are the points of honour which *NA* rests on too, these quiet acts of courtesy which indicate a more refined or genuine nature. Furthermore in *MA* Stein redefines how one's sexual character can be an indication of one's social standing, whether or not one is a true gentleman or lady. The distinction, in her bourgeois America, has nothing to do with rank. She is making a comment on the modern

⁷⁸ *NA* 425-40.

⁷⁹ For example, Isabel intercepts a letter about Alan's engagement, *NA* 425.

situation, reacting, as she puts it, 'to contemporary ideals, tradition, education and need of having' (*MA* 464).

As the digression on virtue which follows these events suggests, both *NA* and this section of *MA* are like nineteenth-century 'problem' novels, in which the reader must decide where to place his allegiance, where the moral blame should lie.⁸⁰ But in the end *MA* is in search of a broader truth. What is worthwhile within its scheme is, once again, completeness.

After Mrs Redfern's discovery of the letter, Stein interrupts her retelling of *Fernhurst* with a moment of authorial anguish, but then proceeds in the retelling, backtracking rather than sticking to its original chronology. Already this demonstrates an attempt to disconcert her own past attempt at realism, extremely successful though it was, and her romantic plot. After this a plot-based narrative becomes less and less possible as she casts the emotional movements of her characters in her new reiterative method. Moving ever further from a resumption of the 'history', the plot, even as she professes to explore it, she is moving into a mutable definition of what history is; as Marianne Moore describes the technique, creating a 'living genealogy.'⁸¹

Stein's pervading sense of knowing, and particularly knowing through language, or writing, as analogous to sexuality informs her deliberations over the limits of knowledge, error and its consequences. We have seen Hodder's interest in abstract error and moral error. Stein manipulates her own material so that she is at once discussing both logical and sexual error within the metaphor of a simple error made while copying out her text from one piece of paper to another. Error in the letter episode comes to mean meaninglessness only, but with morality so bound up with meaning, meaninglessness is immoral.

In the letter episode she writes about truth and error in terms of reading and misreading. It is not too much of a metaphorical leap for her to move from the meaning of words to the meaning of people, from a slip of the pen to human error, and back again, taking Hodder's own sceptical approach one step further and applying it directly to human situations, just as he himself had done in *NA*. There is no blame attached to

⁸⁰ See Robert Herrick, *Together* (1908), for one such novel, dealing with difficult, individualistic wives. Lasch illuminates a common problem in his discussion of the confusion among contemporary readers over whether to class Herrick's novel as sympathetic or antagonistic to the cause of sexual freedom; *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 41.

this error, only the impossibility of knowing even one's own former self, let alone anyone else. It is a loss of faith which inspires this outburst, as Stein confronts her own role as categorizer. 'Categories that once to some one had real meaning can later to that same one be all empty' (440). This applies to the narrator, her character and her reader, in the act of disorientation of which each has just been a part. Stein plays on the similarity of 'some one' and 'same one' here, making vaguer the distinctions between the narrator and Martha as readers, interpreters. Everyone and every one are implied. 'Every one' is used to mean all and each individual, separate and collective bodies.

It is my contention that Stein was deliberately reworking the entanglements of *NA* when she wrote the letter episode which forms the denouement of the *Fernhurst* manuscript, but whether or not she had this particular novel in mind, such a scenario was the stuff of ordinary romances.⁸² Stein's use of the convention is made self-consciously modern both by its reiteration in her new style and its role in what becomes an enactment of a debate about the creative process, and an anxious discussion of the newness and truthfulness of her style which amounts to an epistemological crisis. In fact, the status of the letter episode itself as a convention to be found in the most run-of-the-mill romantic fiction makes it the perfect tool with which to carry out this iconoclastic job.

Of the moment when Martha is confronted with Miss Charles' (the interfering Dean's) innuendo, Stein writes:

She sat there long and long thinking over again and again the same weary round of thoughts and terrors. She knew she was powerless to change him, she could only try to get the evidence to condemn him ... she dreaded to obtain it and could no longer exist without it. She must watch him and find it all out without questioning, must learn it by seeing and hearing and she felt dimly a terror of the things she might be caught doing to obtain it, she dreaded the condemnation of Redfern's chivalrous honour. She did not doubt his disloyalty she was convinced of that and she still feared to lose his respect for her sense of honour. "He is dishonourable, all his action is deceit," she said to herself again and again but she found no comfort in this thought ...

...In the long weary days that followed she was torn by these desires, she must watch him always and secretly, she must gain the knowledge she dreaded to possess and she must be deeply ashamed of the ways she must pursue. She was no longer able to listen to others when her husband and Miss Douner were in her presence, she dared not keep an open watch but her observation was unceasing. (MA 440-441)

⁸¹ 'The Spare American Emotion', *Critical Essays on Gertrude Stein*, ed. Hoffman (Boston, Massachusetts: Hall, 1986), 47.

⁸² She herself was steeped in epistolary novels, being a particular fan of Richardson and Walpole; Weinstein, *Gertrude Stein and the Literature of the Modern Consciousness* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1970), 38; *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 93.

Martha suffers in a maddening welter of dread, doubt, disloyalty, dishonour, and deceit. This confusion in Martha's mind is linked to what the narrator says about her own state of mind after this passage, that she is doubting and despairing (454; 458). This is accentuated by the repetitious nature of the feelings presented, the elongation of time felt, and the same secretive, shameful quest for knowledge undergone by narrator and character, a knowledge without which one can 'no longer exist'. The old story becomes the perfect vehicle for a rehearsal of this guilt and confusion. The accumulation of evidence by 'watching', the dread of condemnation by an external code of propriety, the dishonour and shame linking erotic secrecy and the gathering of knowledge all confirm that Martha Redfern has become a Stein substitute here. Neither character nor author can find comfort from her unceasing observation, and the need to possess knowledge only gives way to an inner conflict of desires, and powerlessness in the face of antinomy. The need for evidence, for accumulation of fact, and the fear even of ceasing to exist without it, as well as the illicit nature of this quest, as 'She felt dimly a terror of the things she might be caught doing to attain' the special knowledge, bring them into closer company.

A few pages later Stein will bring these issues to the fore in her 'Categories that once had meaning' passage. Here Stein asks herself and her reader what existence or truth any piece of writing can have on its own, denuded of context. Paradoxically, this works by a building up and then stripping away of contexts. Although Stein makes much of the relation between reading and remembering here, in fact at this point the involvement of the reader may be incidental, as she struggles with her own way of presenting the past, and the many pasts of her characters.

Before writing *NA*, Hodder had already displayed a novelistic bent in *AS*. Here he had also used the reading of letters to illustrate a crucial point about perception and meaning. From his description of the processes of identification involved in memory, we can see some of the same problems which assault Stein when she comes to confront a letter, or any piece of writing, as an object, an artefact, and to wonder what existence or truth it may have on its own:

We remember, for example, burning yesterday a bundle of letters. We find charred fragments of them this morning in the grate - our memory has not been proven, perhaps, but at least substantiated. Or we find the bundle intact on the mantle-piece - our memory has been disproved. And this is, no doubt, a true account of the matter as far as it goes; but note in what the doubt - or disproof consists ... The letters we saw yesterday, and see in ashes or unharmed today, are not demonstrably the same letters; speaking strictly, the

fact that we remember is certain sensations and perceptions, and the fact that we experience today is certain other sensations and perceptions in themselves distinct and separate from any we were ever subject to before ... The case is, that from our memory of having burned the letters we inferred that we should never have again sensations and perceptions of just the kind, that constitute our consciousness of taking the bundle off the mantle and examining the handwriting ... The principle seems to be that the memory which leads to true inferences is an accurate transcript of the past, and that the memory which leads to inferences of the opposite kind is false. (AS 129-30)

For Stein in *MA*, past and present knowledge refuse to comport well together. She struggles with ways of providing this 'accurate transcript of the past.' This scenario of proving something, anything, by inference is what gives rise to all the doubts of *MA*. That both Hodder and Stein are drawn to the example of the circumstantial proof provided by letters is unsurprising. Documents contain their own form of truth for Hodder as a lawyer, and for Stein as an aspiring law-deviser. The assumption is that proof resides in that crucial moment of checking the hand writing (because the letter which Mrs Redfern finds is in Redfern's handwriting, 'she had her proof'). The idea that the document must therefore belong to some particular person is blown to smithereens by Stein's anxious inability to copy correctly from her own manuscript.

One may think of an occasion in Goethe's *Elective Affinities* as an earlier instance of this consternation about identity, particularly a woman's identity in relation to her lover, in terms of handwriting. In that novel, Ottilie's handwriting actually begins to look the same as her lover, Eduard's.⁸³ Her personality is elided with his. What if one cannot be identified by a work in one's own hand? Stein's narrator is in an analogous position, as she discovers that she can neither remember the emotion with which her words were once invested, nor recognize a manuscript in her own handwriting. This quickly spirals into a discovery of the obsolescence of all categories of meaning, so significant is the act of writing in relation to personality. There is a Saussurean realization of the randomness of the linguistic sign, which becomes linked to the randomness, the slipping, of all categories, including gender and race.

After this Stein's disillusionment is expressed in terms of physical and temporal disorientation, and associational discrepancies. She wonders how we can be sure that anything, even our own thoughts, are our own. Passing her manuscript into other hands causes uneasiness. Among these anxieties stemming from the connection between

⁸³ Weininger draws attention to this particular passage in *Sex and Character* (London: Heinemann, 1906), 69.

reading and remembering, Hodder's conclusion is that the only thing we can trust, the only gauge of truth, or completeness as Stein would have it, is something which itself is erroneous by definition; the present. 'The sceptic cares for processes, not for results: the sceptic distinguishes between postulates, though he distrusts all postulates; the sceptic takes for sole safe starting-point or standing-ground the Specious present.' (AS 35)

When Stein talks about the distress and embarrassment brought about by rereading an old piece of one's own writing, she is doing more than making apologies for herself, shirking off the dead weight of her past literary indiscretions. Symbolically, it is *Fernhurst*, the Hodder story, which she is unable to recognize as her own. The sense of shame is important - one of the succeeding passages deals again with this sense of shame coming for her own writing, which is obliquely linked to a sense of sexual shame and misdemeanor for character and for author. Roché made the following comment about Stein's writing: 'More and more your style gets solitary - the vision remains great, and the glory of some occasional pages. - Rhythm? Oh yes. But that sort of rhythm is intoxicating for you - it is something like.....', by which he presumably meant masturbation.⁸⁴ It is the old observation about substandard writing being a form of onanism, a charge to which Stein's work is perhaps more open than most because of its highly repetitious nature. She *is* embarrassed, but after all, she could remove this if she wanted. Rather she is writing about embarrassment; this is one of the points where the narrator becomes a character. She is discussing the very process of assimilating past and present involved in reading itself. The fact that she does this at the point in the novella where the character, Martha, herself has been engaged, absorbed, in the act of reading, the 'second act curtain' of the melodrama,⁸⁵ creates a novel within the novel scenario. Stein then turns directly to her own reader, destroying the fallacy of her character's reality. We readers are watching her watching her own character reading a love letter from her husband to another woman. In the same catastrophic couple of sentences, each of us, each reader, loses faith.

During this central section of the novel Stein comes to a turning point in her writing of *MA* and of her entire writing career as she confronts the significance of seeing a piece of one's own writing as an artefact, divorced from sensation, no longer

⁸⁴ H.P. Roché to GS, 6 February 1912 (YCAL). Michael Gold similarly stated that Stein's 'art became a personal pleasure, a private hobby, a vice', 'Gertrude Stein: A Literary Idiot', *Change the World!* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937), 25.

⁸⁵ Katz, op. cit., 64.

belonging to oneself after the passage of time. The passage of time necessary for this realization to take place becomes shorter and shorter as eventually she achieves a distance from her own writing even as she writes it. The consciousness of her own performance, and the authorial distraction from the act of narration, are quite clearly connected to the notion of distracted writing which Armstrong explores, and indeed the theoretical procedures which come to the fore here may have been suggested by Stein's laboratory work.⁸⁶ That is not to say that she is unaware of what she is doing. Brought to crisis point by her unhappiness with the necessary distance which exists between a writer and his own composition, the only way to reconcile herself with the fact that her words exist outside herself is to insist on the notion of writing as pure behaviour. This is the occasion which more than any other in the writing of *MA* aids her transition to a new style which discards realism and its romantic accoutrements. Further, the letter itself in this section becomes a sign of this disillusionment.

The repetition of the word 'letter' in the passage (440) makes the reader aware of its two senses - an epistle filled with emotion and an arbitrary character on a page. Following 'the letter of the text' does not automatically access the reader to the meaning which lies beyond it. The importance of the concept of inscription here is emphasized by the prominence of the word 'writing', also, which is used as both verb and noun, process and product. How, Stein wonders, does the fluidity of character and meaning, once transformed into words on paper, mere artefacts, become an artistic achievement? During this disturbance around the very letter of the text it is as if the word itself has become deceitful, or is implicated in the deceitfulness of the meaning it conveys.

Temporality and permanence are scrutinized: 'It is queer that words that meant something in our thinking and our feeling can later come to have in them in us not at all any meaning;' 'our thinking and feeling' (note the distinction) here becomes universal, referring to Stein writing, her character reading, and her reader reading. The genderless 'them', 'their' and 'they' also facilitate this universalizing process. Again, the passage of time is crucial, as she wonders how meaning can be dependent on circumstance. In demonstration of this state of mind she reiterates an idea until she becomes less and less sure of it:

⁸⁶ *Modernism, Technology, and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 199.

This is happening always to every one really feeling meaning in words they are saying. This is happening very often to almost every one having any realisation in them in their feeling, in their thinking, in their imagining of the words they are always using (440).

This pattern is typical of the degeneration of confidence, gradual qualification and lessening of constancy and certainty about any statement she feels able to make. In this case she ends up with the much less extravagant claim that 'This is common then to many having in them any real realization of the meaning of the words they are using.' She is toning down her truths until they become so mundane as to be worthy of the title of absolute certainties. Also they are so mundane that they can only have meaning as part of the whole, as words in a book. In a particular way they are empty of meaning, yet because they are deliberately made to be so, they stand to represent just that emptiness of meaning, that failure of realization, that crisis that the writer experiences in relation to her own language. Having hedged herself in in this way, she returns to the refrain; 'As I was saying categories that once to some one had real meaning come later to that same one not to have any meaning at all then for that one.' Categorical thought no longer seems possible. At this point comes the anecdote which links these reveries with what has gone before, with the use of the letter as documentary evidence of oneself. This is not the same situation that Martha Hersland finds herself in, but it is similar enough for the point of the analogy to be clear:

Sometimes one reads a letter that they have been keeping with other letters, and one is not very old then so it is not that they are old then and forgetting, they are not very old then and they come in cleaning something to reading this letter and it is all full of hot feeling and the one, reading the letter then, has not in them any memory of the person who once wrote that letter to them. (*MA* 440)

Stein shows herself a master of indifference, expressing the peculiar emotional reticence which permeates *MA* and characterizes many of her descriptions of 'having a great many times not continued to be friends'.⁸⁷ The fullness or emptiness ascribed to words signals that the only thing which remains sensuous is knowledge itself. That feeling of completion of knowledge is what is being striven for, as if it is a bodily hunger, while all bodily functions are themselves repressed in favour of the description of this need.

Each draft, each reiteration of the story, or even of a sentence, offers a different slant on the truth. Among the collection of Stein's manuscripts collected at Yale there are three drafts of a love letter to May Bookstaver, in Stein's hand. Each draft contains

things which were never written in the version which she finally sent. It is drafted on the back of a letter from May. Part of this drafted letter was later extracted from life into fiction and became part of *QED*:

My dear

Write to you yes that sounds simple but what the hell is it that I am to write. I did write you a long letter but with more than my customary discretion I suppressed it. I can't write you what I think because I am afraid you might find that an impertinence and I am afraid my mood toward you is a little too bitter to indulge in descriptions of Paris boulevards in a letter of descriptions. What is it I want oh damn it all you know well enough I don't want you ever again to deny that you care for me ... Oh you are wrong a thousand times wrong you and your silences and your [illegible] ... Do you know a phrase of Hodder's concerning Isabel that is very illuminating. He says of her she had indomitable pluck that is she was incapable of changing her plan of life she hadn't imagination enough. It seems to me it is something on that principle that you object to conclusions and the recognition of your motives. You hate conclusions because you may have to change them. You will stultify yourself to any extent rather than admit that you have been in the wrong. I hate to send you this because you will insult me as usual by assuming that I am meaning something that I do not mean. I don't want to interfere with any one's claim on you but I do want you to realise that you ought to be strong enough to come somewhere nearer being honest.⁸⁸

Stein clearly expected that May might be familiar with the 'phrase of Hodder's'.⁸⁹ It is clear here that Stein herself was embroiled in these briefly rapturous and infinitely tortuous erotic proceedings, yet she decided to neutralize them by depicting them as she does in *MA*. Including the *Fernhurst* episode in *MA* may be something of a paean to her faded romantic youth. The distress is personal as well as artistic. This may in fact be the very letter which the narrator of *MA* reports stumbling across during her perturbation about her relation to her own writing. When she finds the letter she cannot remember the emotion expressed in it:

You are writing completely only for one and that is yourself then and to every other one it is a different thing and then you remember every one has said that sometime and you know it then and it is astonishing. You know it then yes but you do not really know it as a continuous knowing in you. (430)

The stiltedness of pointless love letters leads to the impossibility of all writing, and the urge to suppress one's own emotions in the interests of a code of literary correctness which demands that certain things are not told, or written. 'Write to you yes that sounds

⁸⁷ The title of a 1924 composition; Volume 4 of the Yale Edition of the Unpublished Writings of Gertrude Stein.

⁸⁸ Collection of notes and quotations, in GS's hand, ca. 1890s, YCAL. See Wineapple, op. cit., 450 for more detail on this letter.

⁸⁹ The phrase occurs on Isabel's receipt of a letter carrying the first news of Alan's engagement, and goes, exactly: 'She possessed indomitable pluck; which is to say, she was incapable of changing her plan of life; she did not possess imagination enough. She wanted what she wanted, simply' (NA 252).

simple but what the hell is it that I am to write. I did write you a long letter but with more than my customary discretion I suppressed it.'

The Martha Hersland chapter brings Stein to the conclusion that writing demonstrates that you can never really know or be with anyone, and also that there may be no final version of the text. It may never say the thing which its author desires it to say. In *NA* Alan's mother had confronted a similar inability to use words; 'Language seemed to her the most amazingly defective instrument in the world; the instant she described accurately what she cared for, the description was hateful' (*NA* 252). The impotency and silence of her love life are transferred to her own attempts at self-expression.

The letter episode deals with the processes of memory and inscription, of how to record and remain true. The present participle clings to the present as the only possibility for certainty. Stein is trying to get to the root of meaning, of how people come to 'the real realisation of the meaning of words when they are using them' when there is 'so complete a changing of experiencing in feeling and thinking, or in time or in something, some one once alive to some one is then completely a stranger to that one' (441). The word 'stranger' is extremely resonant in *MA*, often having connotations of foreignness. Used here, it is an unobtrusive figure of distance, displacement, and dissociation; 'the meaning in a word to that one the meaning in a way of feeling and thinking that is a category to some one, some one whom some one was knowing, these then come to be all lost to that one sometime later in the living of that one.' The sense of loss here, of knowledge and of emotion, stems from the dissociation of being and telling; again, Stein's experiments in automatic writing probably have a bearing on the difficulties which she encounters here. This slipping or obsolescence of categories involves both freedom and terrible loneliness.

Stein's comment that 'some then have a little shame in them when they are copying an old piece of writing where they were using words that sometime had real meaning for them' is deliberately disarming, an admission of guilt, of feeling; 'Often then this is in me in my feeling, often then I have to lose words I have once been using'. The need to really use words is paramount. Her disingenuous, formal proposal 'now I commence again with words that have meaning, a little perhaps I had forgotten when it came to copying the meaning in some of the words I have just been writing,' despite the attempt at a consoling voice, fails to put these concerns to rest, particularly as she suffers a

relapse within a few pages. Control has slipped from her grasp. She tries to start again, to make another beginning, and makes the solemn promise that 'always now I will be using words having in my feeling, thinking, imagining very real meaning.' Yet the way this sentence is constructed leaves it open to the suggestion that she will be imagining the meaning which she projects. She is still rehearsing her own old words here, and therefore bound to fail under her own terms. She is finding no breakthrough after the breakdown, despite the hiatus of the *Fernhurst* episode. The episode is presented as a struggle without an outcome, a patch of blue sky which clouds over again; the gap closes up.

She is able to begin the next paragraph with the words 'This is very true then' as if moving between scientific or rhetorical postulates which she has somehow proven, as if a scientific function has been somehow enabled, and as if there were degrees of truth to which her argument can attain.

Her upsetting of the fictional applecart may be taken as the ultimate act of bad faith on the part of the author herself. The passage is almost uncanny in its enactment of Barthes' definitions of *jouissance* and *plaisir du texte*, the 'state of loss' imposed as the writer confronts the breakdown, which 'brings to a crisis [the reader's] relation with language.'⁹⁰ The metaphor for this process, like the comfort and its interruption in Barthes' terms, is the courtship and marriage itself, and its abrupt termination. The second or auxiliary metaphor is that of the reader encountering these facts, and being involved in an analogous process. Stein turns the novel inside out and becomes author and critic/interpreter at once.

As she does so, she enacts what happens when one encounters literary, written evidence of oneself, scattering her present comfortableness, even complacency with her new-found idiom. She addresses the possibility that it too could one day lose all meaning for her. She realizes that even after swearing that she will only use real words from now on, she has a relapse. In these circumstances she wonders what she herself, her own character, and her own identity as a writer, let alone the characters in her novel, may actually mean. She brings herself to this crisis point by forcing an encounter between old and new. Moral dilemmas are deliberately posed by both Stein and Hodder as contentions between old and new world moralities; here these become stretched to mean the proprieties of writing.

By illuminating the clash so harshly Stein is also depriving her reader of pleasure, and making an elaborate point of doing so. After forcing the traditional mode onto the ears of her listeners to the point where she begins to lull them back into traditional expectations of a traditional romantic plot, she lurches back into what she sees as her more honest style.

Early Stein criticism was laden with medical and gynaecological terminology as the easiest way of explaining her work.⁹¹ Appreciation of what she was attempting to do was hampered by the ridicule attached to such observations, so it is perhaps right that those critics who have hinted that Stein's compositions bordered on the hysterical have been vilified by their feminist successors. But there may be more inadvertent truth in their comments than suspected; if we can steel ourselves against the charge of a misogynist reading, we may notice that much of this apparent mudslinging provides a fairly useful analogy. Indeed, at this point, Stein's writerly pose is pure hysteric, as she lures and then deters in an atmosphere of heightened nervousness. Both forms of courtship, that between the characters and that between writer and reader, are curtailed prematurely. As the love affair is abruptly and wrenchingly terminated, the past is swept away. The disillusionment is mutual. Yet despite the seeming desperateness of the situation, we must remember the sovereignty of the author's concerns here; she is undermining her own characters in favour of the broader configurations of 'character.'

Even poor beleaguered Nannie in Hodder's novel 'had at least her delight in the visible world, and her power to record it' (NA 431). When Stein realizes that even this faculty is defective in her, realism is no longer her goal. In the very middle of this critical episode, on page 449, Stein wrote 'I want to know sometime all about sentimental feeling.' *MA* retains a nostalgic attachment to the sentimental, but this connection with the past is no longer of use in a text which has explicitly realized what happens when words become foreign and strange, when cultural positions lose their meaning, when one is left not knowing, not understanding, and erotic, cultural and artistic losses are combined.

⁹⁰ *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 14.

⁹¹ For example, B.L. Reid's comments cited in my previous chapter, footnote 190.

CHAPTER THREE

Sex and Character

‘I began to clarify all the possible varieties of human types on the basis of sex and character this work was embodied in the long book *Making of Americans*.’¹

INTRODUCTION

As early as 1894 Stein had shown an interest in male and female character formation in her college theme ‘The Great Enigma’, where couples are seen as ‘antipodes.’² Although a text like *Two*, written during the composition of *MA*, revolves around a gender-based dualism, terms like ‘independent dependent’ which come to dominate the latter novel are, in Doane’s phrase, ‘radically ambiguous’.³

As Lasch argues, feminist debate in America centred around the question of what masculinity and femininity were, in essence: ‘The whole “woman question” ... turned on the issue not simply of what roles women and men ought respectively to play, but of the respective *nature* of the sexes. What did it mean to be masculine or feminine?’⁴ The ‘woman question’ was a scientific as much as a social question.⁵

In *MA* Stein would adopt these concerns and their scientific bases, under the influence of Otto Weininger’s anti-feminist and anti-Semitic tirades in *Sex and Character* (hereafter *SC*). ‘Racial science’ such as Weininger’s filters out of medical literature into fiction with particular ease in the case of a writer such as Stein, who shared, as we have seen, the urge to write scientifically. Nevertheless Weininger’s thesis does seem an odd choice of model for a Jewish woman writer.

Commentators have most commonly seen the allure of Weininger for Stein as based on his objection to heterosexual sex, his so-called ‘liberal’ attitude to homosexuality laws, his notion of the misunderstood genius and his suggestion that of all women, the most masculine are the most likely to be capable of an act of originality

¹ Draft of letter to Lennard Gandolac, 1932, n.d. (YCAL).

² Radcliffe themes, YCAL. See Miller, *Gertrude Stein* (New York: The Exposition Press, 1949), 128.

³ *Silence and Narrative* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 108.

⁴ Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 56-57.

⁵ Gilman had been unspecific about the actual differences between the sexes, and her theory of the origin of sex distinction is extremely vague (*WE* 31). We should not, she says, see people as permanent sexual types.

and creativity. This seems plausible until one actually reads *SC*, when all sorts of other concerns float to the surface.

One of the most important pieces of anterior knowledge which we can apply to a reading of *SC* is that Weininger himself was a Jew. He had converted to Protestantism in 1900. It has also been said that he was latently gay. There is strong evidence for the view that *SC* is riddled with self-hatred. Weininger himself said of his greatest work: 'What I have found here will hurt nobody so much as myself'.⁶ There is a poignancy to the enigmatic personal asides which infringe on and disrupt his argument. The bleak and bitter world-view he tries to convey is acknowledged in a publisher's note to the first edition, bemoaning his suicide: 'A tragic and most unhappy mind reveals itself here, and no thoughtful man will lay down this book without deep emotion and admiration; many, indeed, will close it with almost religious reverence'.⁷ This is undoubtedly going too far for the modern reader, though not perhaps for its first audience. Admittedly Weininger had his less enthusiastic readers. Freud considered him to be insane, although Weininger's theory of universal bisexuality coincides with his own. Leaving aside Hitler and Gertrude Stein, Weininger had plenty of eminent readers, not the least enthusiastic of whom was Joyce.⁸ A more reserved appraisal came from Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The first part of Weininger's thesis corroborates her own sense of the fluidity of sexual forms, and 'the unwisdom' of educating all girls and boys in the same way.⁹ Gilman stated that Weininger's 'intense moral earnestness ... his evident depth of conviction, and the lofty scope of his aspirations command respect'. But ultimately his 'ultra-masculine' book was important because 'Those who have unconsciously held any part of these views may now see to what extreme they lead if fairly faced'.¹⁰

One signal of Weininger's honorary status as a modernist can be found in the company he keeps, or commandeers, in the title of a book published in 1929: *The Impuritans. A Glimpse of that new world whose pilgrim fathers are Otto Weininger, Havelock Ellis, James Branch Cabell, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, H.L. Mencken,*

⁶ *Über Die Letzten Dinge* (Wien und Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1904), xviii.

⁷ Weininger, *Sex and Character* (London: Heinemann, 1906), viii.

⁸ See Harrowitz and Hyams, eds, *Jews and Gender* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 207-237.

⁹ Like Weininger, Gilman traces secondary sexual characteristics all the way into behaviour.

¹⁰ 'Dr. Weininger's "Sex and Character"', *The Critic*, 48 (May 1906), 414, 417.

*D.H. Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson, et id genus omne.*¹¹ Weininger and company have a certain dangerous modern cachet which is specifically masculine, which may have added to his appeal for Stein.¹² *SC* has since taken on the status of an experimental novel and has been used to decode some of the most daring works of modernist fiction.¹³ However, not much attention has been paid to Weininger's infiltration of American literature.

In *Martin Eden*, which could be called the archetypal American Künstlerroman of the period, a book deeply concerned with conformity and nonconformity, Jack London makes pertinent use of Weininger. Weininger is the means by which Martin bewilders his well-bred fiancée and causes affront to her bourgeois family and the implied effeminacy of its arid intellectualism. He berates them for the enforced conformity they represent:

It is their ignorance, of course, that makes them believe such rot - their ignorance, which is nothing more nor less than the henidical mental process described by Weininger. They think they think, and such thinkless creatures are the arbiters of the lives of the few who really think.

His fiancée responds 'I'm sure I don't know who this Weininger is' (and this is partly an anti-feminist joke at the expense of this superficially accomplished college woman), 'and you are so dreadfully general that I fail to follow you'.¹⁴ This is a remark unconscious of its own irony, part of the joke being her inability to follow an argument, but which also hints at the inadequacy of Martin Eden's own, and perhaps Weininger's, mental processes; 'dreadfully general' is just how one might describe a 'henid', the imperfect form of thought experienced by women.¹⁵

¹¹ This is a collection of literary/philosophical sketches by Harvey Wickham (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1929).

¹² On the other hand, Ford Madox Ford was among those who were not taken in by Weininger's 'singular and whimsically nonsensical work'; see Ford, *Women and Men* (Paris: Three Mountains Press, 1923), 30-46.

¹³ See *Jews and Gender*, op. cit., for Weininger's influence on Joyce and Kafka, as well as an overview of his place in psychoanalytical debates, and Wittgenstein's relation with him. On Weininger and Lawrence, see Delavenay, 'D.H. Lawrence, Otto Weininger and a Rather Raw Philosophy,' *D.H. Lawrence*, ed. Heywood (London: Macmillan, 1969). See also Toews, 'Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity* 4.1 (January 1997), 31-67, on Weininger's influence on Austrian modernists such as Schnitzler and Musil. As an indication of the volatility of turn of the century feminisms, see Radford's appraisal of Weininger's influence on Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, 'The Woman and the Jew', *Modernity, Culture, and 'the Jew'*, ed. Cheyette and Marcus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 91-104.

¹⁴ Jack London, *Martin Eden* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 322.

¹⁵ Weininger's belief in 'women's suitability as hypnotic subjects and their tendencies to psychic automatism', an example of feminine lack of will, may have influenced Stein's claims that she was not a useful participant in automatic experiments (Weininger 'despised' the idea of a subconscious); see

Martin Eden has its own melancholic autobiographical urge tugging at the edges of its universalist Spencerian ethic. It is a book whose argument interrogates and finds lacking the notion of creative individualism, yet it does this within a Nietzschean superstructure which its own plot would seem to repudiate. Its appeals to Carlyle's heroic man on a horse are presented as convincingly as its protagonist's loss of faith in ambition and individual endeavour. Interestingly, Weininger is the spirit summoned up at the moment when these terms begin to be confused and overturned. London's use of Weininger is just one example of Weininger's currency in American literature, and highlights his status in 1909, the year after Stein came to him. He has become not only the totemic figure of the doomed, suicidal, misunderstood genius, but, along with this, part of a meltdown and reappraisal of philosophical and ethical terms. The final meaning of the role of Weininger in *Martin Eden* is uncertain; London allows his hero his Weiningerian tirade, but not necessarily with authorial endorsement. He stands for what the hero, Martin, believes in, yet Martin's beliefs constitute his failure, culminating in suicide. The raising of Weininger from the dead in the context of these difficulties is suggestive but inconclusive. Weininger reflects a similar indecision between intent and accomplishment for Stein, and over similar issues, particularly in *MA*. Stein also challenges the idea of progress, and this is an important part of her wavering relationship with Weininger.

CRITICS

Most critical accounts of the composition of *MA* are reluctant to delve any further into Stein's inconsistencies than a baffled acknowledgement of the debt to Weininger. Mellow mentions some moments from *SC* concerning the impossibility of a Jew attaining the status of a gentleman. This opinion is exceptionally important to a study of *MA* as a generational narrative concerned with breeding and descent, especially considering Stein's desire to examine 'the fever to be an Anglo Saxon and a gentleman', which has 'broken over the land';¹⁶ but Mellow dismisses these nuances with the strange assumption that Stein, despite her avid reading of *SC*, must have 'overlooked'

Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 67. As Stein put it in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, she 'never had subconscious reactions'; (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 87.

¹⁶ 'The Making of Americans', *Fernhurst, QED and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), 137.

Weininger's 'rabid philosophising' on this issue.¹⁷ It seems thoroughly unlikely that after filling notebooks with schemes adapted from Weininger's book she would simply overlook its content, especially considering the ferocity of his approach. DeKoven refers to Weininger's 'crackpot gender theories', linking his disparagement of women to his own self-hatred, but resists the possibility of any serious influence other than Stein's appropriation of his idea of the self-taught genius creating his own language outside history. This is an indulgent explanation of the infatuation which results in a reductive coercion of Stein's politics.

However, strong claims have been made elsewhere for the influence of Weininger on Stein.¹⁸ Wineapple, although she dismisses *SC* as 'bigoted, self-hating, and largely contemptible', also suggests that the book 'helped release [Stein] from the experimental psychology that had previously given form to her observations and provided the rationale for the experiments she had conducted by herself at Radcliffe.' Wineapple sees Stein as experiencing a broad philosophical confirmation as a result of the chiming of her thoughts with Weininger's. 'This book was the positivistic and simultaneously intuitive model she had been seeking.'¹⁹

Several commentators have seen Martha Hersland as a personification of Weininger's mother figure.²⁰ Katz gives the fullest and most emphatic account of Stein's use of Weininger. He was the first to show how Stein was obliged to Weininger for the 'psychological schematising' of *MA*, and its desire to create a characterology of universal applicability. Katz maintains that the Weiningerian desire 'to achieve a synoptic vision of the ego of each character', to discover the 'bottom nature' of each individual, led to the suppression of every other impulse in her writing:

There was no further writing done of any other kind; all of *The Making of Americans* written after 1908, and all of the portraits and short works written through 1911, are "characterological" and nothing else, either diagramming relations among many or setting down synoptic visions of one ... The concept of the completed individual, "outside of time", became in fact the unifying locus of her thought from the beginning to the end of her writing.²¹

¹⁷ *Charmed Circle* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1974), 121.

¹⁸ See Maria Damon, 'Gertrude Stein's Jewishness', *Modern Fiction Studies* 42.3 (Fall 1996), 489-506; Moore, *Gertrude Stein's The Making of Americans* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 10-21; Will, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of 'Genius'* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 62-6.

¹⁹ *Sister Brother* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 262.

²⁰ Walker, *The Making of a Modernist* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 48; Moore, *op. cit.*, 247.

²¹ Katz, 'The First Making of *The Making of Americans*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1963), 272-3; 279.

Katz encapsulates Stein's use of Weininger as the resolution of her struggle with conflicting ideas of the individual and the universal, what he calls the 'twin problem' of her 'nineteenth century dilemmas concerning loss of uniqueness and "everlasting"', dilemmas which accompany the increase of scientific knowledge. Understanding of the universe brings a fearful sense of isolation through loss of faith, while sociological/psychological advances tend to fragment the sense of the individual soul. We have seen the consequences of this loss of faith; in this chapter we will examine Stein's attempt to rebuild a sense of autonomous individuality as author.

Katz makes strong claims for Weininger's effect on Stein, but has an unsurprising distaste for Weininger and his 'absurd' book. His investigation, like Wineapple's, breaks down at the point where he stresses the importance of Weininger for Stein's movement away from James and pragmatism. But there are suggestions, even in Katz's denial of a continuation of Weininger's ideas in Stein's work, which hint at unexplored territory:

Except for a noticeable change in Stein's tone in analyzing men and women after reading Weininger - *she adopted his vocabulary and his animus against women freely during the early months of his influence on her writing* - and her tentative *borrowing of Weininger's basic distinction between male and female for the basic distinction used for her own system*, this part of Weininger's animadversions had little permanent interest for her.²²

Katz's thesis is typical of a general reluctance to develop such ideas, even on the verge of admitting their importance.

Moore states that Stein's eventual belief that identity is based on expression sets her in opposition to Weininger, but that Weininger also influences Stein by going beyond relativism in deciphering character, working with ideals and metaphysical concepts so that character is no longer fixed in sensation.²³ Stein and Weininger both struggle with ways of interpreting and representing character without using sensation. Moore suggests that Stein adapts Weininger throughout the composition of her novel, and uses his concepts *without* the ideologies behind them. This leads him to observe that what he construes as the failure of her appropriation of Weininger's schemes leads to a seminal change in her thinking. From this point of view, the extreme nature of the 'systematic approach' makes her realize the failure of representation. Wittgenstein offered a similar negative reading of Weininger: 'the greatness lies in that with which

²² *ibid.*, 268, my italics.

we disagree. It is his enormous mistake which is great. i.e., roughly speaking if you just add a '-' to the whole book it says an important truth.'²⁴

Moore also contends that Stein's Weiningerian schemes for representing character mutate into the notion of 'kinds', then 'bottom nature', then 'being', as she becomes progressively disillusioned with Weininger.²⁵ I am suggesting that there is a Weiningerian connection between all these theories which persists beyond the supposed span of his influence.

Weininger has been seen as an emblem of the way in which early twentieth-century writers used scientific theories not, ultimately, to gain an answer to the problems of 'constructing gendered and communal identities',²⁶ but to help them represent the processes involved in such problems. Weininger's double dream of a fully realized Kantian masculine identity inhabiting a world cleansed of all subjective demands, although extreme, had sources in many of the same anxieties which the most celebrated modernists were facing, and it was fraught with the impossibilities of overcoming the eternally sensually contingent concepts of gender and ethnicity. Many writers used his ideas to represent the difficult story of becoming a man in the modern world.

This view, I believe, ought to be taken as a model for a reading of Stein's use of Weininger. In the notebooks Stein wilfully rejected a simplistic narrative form: 'Sometimes I refuse to tell a story' (1-19). Her own 'fear of feminisation' (6-11) and adoption of a male identity means she is in line with the description of these, usually masculine, conflicts.

I will also examine her initial more straightforward adoption of his types; nowhere is Stein's technique of building up and then stripping away contexts (in line with so much else in modernism) more paradoxical than in the use of Weininger's types, since Weininger's philosophy itself involves a Kantian removal of context and contingency. In the notebooks Stein copied out verbatim Weininger's own quotations from Kant's *Anthropology*, which deal with the individual's relation to the world and his recognition of the moral law within himself.²⁷

²³ Moore, op. cit., 48.

²⁴ Wittgenstein to G.E. Moore, August 23 1931, quoted in *Jews and Gender*, op. cit., 279 n.25.

²⁵ Moore, op. cit., 83.

²⁶ Toews, op. cit., 34.

²⁷ See Katz, 270; Weininger, op. cit., 161.

CHARACTEROLOGY

Using 'characterological' schemes and taxonomical types, both Stein and Weininger implicitly address the Darwinian question of whether the individual is the 'product of biological inheritance' or of 'environmental influences'. Broadly, this is the motive of characterology,²⁸ but it also seeks the meaning of character as opposed to mere individuation.²⁹ Weininger's 'unlimited science of character' is to be something more than 'the psychology of individual differences' (*SC* 81). While the Ego is more important than 'the changing field of sensations' (83), Weininger insists that character 'is not something seated behind the thoughts and feelings of the individual, but something revealing itself in every thought and feeling' (83). Difference and methods of measuring it, how to separate the individual from the mass, are the central thematic concepts uniting *MA* with *SC*. Implanted here is a problematic Jewish identity for both writers.

For Stein, as a woman and a Jew, an allegiance with the terms of *SC* was doubly significant. Darwin's view of the relative achievements of man and woman - 'the two ... would not bear comparison'³⁰ - was directly adopted by Weininger and turned to his own ends. Other contemporaries had presented more liberal interpretations of Darwin - Ellis, for example, in his widely read *Man and Woman* (1894). But among a proliferation of justifications for differential psychology, Weininger's was the one to which Stein was drawn.³¹

Weininger's views on sexuality were ground-breaking. He rejects sexual dimorphism, and asks whether it is plausible to go beyond sex in determining character, since sex seems to be the only 'permanent, existing something through the fleeting changes' of consciousness (*SC* 83); he wonders how character or sexual types can be represented or even isolated without reliance on sensation.³² Sex and character broadly

²⁸ Arens, 'Characterology', *Jews and Gender* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 121.

²⁹ As Bauer notes, the science of character became the consuming interest of the period; *Edith Wharton's Brave New Politics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), xv.

³⁰ *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1877), 564.

³¹ For further examples see Russett, *Sexual Science* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 42.

³² Weininger's dilemmas should be placed in the context of contemporary debates about the possible changeability of character, and whether it relied on external phenomena. For example, William James argued that 'in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again'; *The Principles of Psychology* [1890], 3 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), I.126.

correlate with body and mind, in a reformulation of old character divisions which deliberately equated woman with emotion, and man with intellect and will.³³

SEX AND CHARACTER

Chapter headings which include 'Why women must be regarded as human' and 'Man as something, woman as nothing' suggest something of Weininger's compact, aphoristic, charismatic and often bizarre style. Towards the beginning of his thesis Weininger attempts to acquaint the reader with his theory of gradations of sexual difference constituting complementary individuals; 'the law might be caricatured', he blurts out, 'so as to require that the sum of the hairs of any two perfect lovers should always be the same'. As if regretting having mentioned this, he then turns back on himself: 'But, as I have already shown in chapter ii, this result is not to be expected, because all the organs of the same body do not necessarily possess the same degree of maleness or femaleness', which seems an elaborate way of contradicting such a palpably silly idea. Weininger then moves into a mood of self-reproach. 'Such heuristic rules would soon multiply and bring the whole subject into ridicule, and I shall therefore abstain from further suggestions of the kind' (32). For the reader there is a baffled sense of having been quite incidental to the processes at work here, as if these are thoughts we did not need to share. Such moments abound, and are similar to the narrator's self-reproach in *MA* surrounding the attempts to organize the characters within a system.

In order to answer 'the woman question' Weininger sanctions his own predisposition to ignore the findings of 'social science', or indeed any other context, almost making a virtue of his convenient conviction that his argument does not require him to adduce facts (27). The proofs supplied come either from his own observation or from the stock misogynies of centuries. His basic tenet is that 'the absolute woman has no ego' (186), women are 'non-moral' and men must fight the infection spread by them. The absolute male and female do not exist except as Platonic ideals. Everyone is endowed with varying degrees of maleness and femaleness; Weininger goes so far as to reduce this, at one point, to a set of formulae, so that a pair of perfect lovers (A and B) can be described by an equation. For ease of reference and 'without any malicious intention', he refers to masculinity as '+' and femininity as '-'.

³³ See Russett, op. cit., 42.

To attain the highest possible human form, pure masculinity, man must rid himself of his feminine characteristics. Women are composed only of, or consumed by, their sexuality: 'Man possesses sexual organs, her sexual organs possess woman.' Women think vague, unspecific thoughts ('henids'), and are unable to form concepts, which is what exempts them from genius. While the male genius experiences a transcendent form of self-awareness, scattered, mainly sexual recollections form the basis of a woman's memory (124). He chooses to ignore the glaring implication of his argument, that women's sexual preoccupation, if it exists, is the result of a limited sphere of experience and influence leading to an absence of other sources of value. Whether he deliberately disregards such issues or is genuinely oblivious to them, the oversight results in a fugue of anti-feminine animosity. For Stein to bear witness to the perfection of Weininger's world-view means to take this anti-feminism on board.

He enumerates the innate mendacity of women, as well as some slightly more specific points, such as his views that 'the very idea of a female architect excites compassion' (119), that women have no modesty, because they get changed in front of each other, and that 'self-pity is eminently a female characteristic.' Female individuality comes under attack as 'a woman lives only in the thoughts of others about her.' She is obsessed by status symbols and even the most unattractive women, afflicted with the vanity of their sex, never think of themselves as ugly. Weininger's accusations spiral into ever more random terms. Women are renowned for their kleptomania and their use of circulating libraries (206). An integral part of his argument is that women have a complete absence of moral sense, and are therefore incapable of evil. Women's moral duty is to overcome their femininity.³⁴

Although the bulk of *SC* deals, to his own professed distaste, with the implications of the sexual life, within an apocalyptic overall scheme, this does not prevent Weininger's flamboyant prose from taking side swipes at other targets. When he says men can 'father' children simply by looking at a woman, or that 'white women who have borne a child to a black man, are said if they bear children afterwards to white men, to have retained enough impression from the first mate to show an effect on the subsequent children' (233) he is making an important contention about the relative

³⁴ 'In Weininger's universe, the realm of high culture was a product of higher beings who incarnated the highest in everyone, who educated their fellows in the moral task of repudiating their sensual being (femininity and Jewishness)', Toews, op. cit., 33.

influence of heredity and racial preeminence, but he has clearly based his argument on gossip.

In Weininger's observations about Jews the indissoluble link between 'the Jewish question' and 'the woman question' becomes evident. 'Judaism is saturated with femininity' (306), by which he means that the Jew lacks personality, or ego. He caricatures the Jew as curly haired, yellow skinned, lacking in manners, acquisitive, materialistic and avaricious. He is cowardly, arrogant, incapable of true emotion, itinerant, 'an inborn communist' and obsessed by sex although less sexually potent than the Aryan male. Weininger relies, in other words, on stock anti-Semitic features, and refuses to seek any other explanation than that these are 'innate' to the Jewish character. Even those areas in which he believes Jews to excel are made to bow to derogatory explanations. Jews are good at science because 'they cling naturally to matter, and expect to find the solution of everything in its properties' (315). Interspersed among observations of this sort is the recurrent theme that 'The Jew is really nothing, because he believes in nothing' (321).

Weininger's Jews love to classify and make laws, but the nature of Judaism is essentially irreligious and lacking in 'reverence'. They are inherently slavish, are always determinists and easily become materialists and freethinkers when they lose their faith, which they do readily. They lack real individuality, being constituted instead of a threatening multiplicity.

Ultimately whatever redeeming features of Judaism may be thrown up, the besetting sin of Jewish culture as he sees it is this lack of individualism. 'Like women, Jews tend to adhere together, but they do not associate as free individuals mutually respecting each other's individuality.' Instead 'they are a mere collection of similar individuals cast in the same mould, the whole forming as it were a continuous plasmodium' (308). It is the perceived contingency of their existence which is so hateful. They assimilate anything and are assimilated into anything. They are beneath the universal laws of morality, but in order to combat the immoral effects of Judaism and solve the 'Jewish problem', Weininger advocates that each Jew inspect himself and root out his own evil. In this their example is to be Christ, the only Jew to have so far succeeded in killing the Jew in himself.

Weininger's chapter on Judaism and the barbed deductions which it launches into the rest of his thesis are essentially a digression from the central business of *SC*, a

characterology based on gradations of sexual difference. The theoretical justification is the 'effeminacy' of Jews, reinforced by formulations of the Jew as oriental in early twentieth-century racial science.³⁵ In practice this enables Weininger to tar Jews and women with the same brush. Just as his ideas on gender rely on his Platonic concept of an ideal which is never fully attained, everything Weininger posits about Jewish characteristics depends on the following statement of what he intends by the term Judaism:

I mean neither a race nor a people nor a recognised creed. I think of it as a tendency of the mind, as a psychological constitution which is a possibility for all mankind, but which has become actual in the most conspicuous fashion amongst the Jews (303).³⁶

'Judaism' is observable to a greater or lesser extent in everyone.

As for marital and class relations, like the woman, the Jew is an advocate of pairing, or matchmaking, which seeks to remove the limits between individuals. The Jew is seen as a social climber, with his 'careless manners in society and his want of social tact', and as the 'breaker down of limits' between social categories. Furthermore

what is meant by the word 'gentleman' does not exist among the Jews. The genuine Jew fails in this innate good breeding by which alone individuals honour their own individuality and respect that of others. There is no Jewish nobility, and this is the more surprising as Jewish pedigrees can be traced back for thousands of years (308).

There is an interest in class, in shifting categories, and social mobility, which goes beyond the polemic here. Weininger writes of the impossibility of Jewish citizenship in very sophisticated terms which reverberate beyond the narrowing contentions of his thesis. 'The true conception of the state is foreign to the Jew', he writes (307), skewing the traditional notion of the Jew as foreigner within the state. He argues against Zionism both on these theoretical grounds and on the grounds that it cannot solve the 'Jewish problem' because it serves to isolate and confirm the Jew in his Jewishness.

In the next section I would like to take further these general points about what Stein came across and perhaps adopted in Weininger's habits of thought and writing; I will look at some exact echoes of Weininger in her work.

³⁵ Weininger's comments on Chinese 'effeminacy' add grist to this mill (SC 301).

WEININGER AND *THE MAKING OF AMERICANS*

Both *MA* and *SC* were initially conceived in reaction to female emancipation. In Stein's case 'the woman question' is bound up, in the first version of *MA*, with the divorce of her cousin Bird Sternberger, and divorce is also part of the argument of *SC* - Weininger's project is partly inspired by the 'law of love' propounded in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. Weininger proudly announces that he is the first to follow up that novel's convictions scientifically. Stein's scheme is also intrinsically sexual, whatever the political slant.

It is important to note that Stein was not just blindly attaching herself to a mad scheme, but selectively making use of Weininger, even though aspects of his argument might now appear politically unconscionable. This involves both an echoing of Weininger's concepts and categories, and specific verbal echoes. First I will look at some areas in which a misogyny very similar to Weininger's is most apparent, in the notebooks and in *MA* itself.

As well as mention of Weininger by name, reference to him as a genius, and direct quotation from *SC*, Weiningerian nuances can be found in several notebook entries, which show correlations between Stein's concept of 'the pure female' (J-12), 'the prostitute type of pure W' (DB-56) (a characteristic found in men and women) and Weininger's of 'the absolute female' (a Platonic form found to varying degrees in men and women, which he also refers to as 'W'). I have listed some of Stein's Weiningerian phrases below:

That thing of mine of sexual nature and correlative mind I think works absolutely (B-25).

Various types, in relation to femininity and religiousness (J-8).

Note the way two depths in most people ... When it comes together through mind and emotion, what you will it makes a personality ((in)) many people it never comes together (DB-37).

All spinsters are ugly (J-3).

[she is] the true devil[,] the spirit that denies[,] the essential lack of morality, the coward fear[,] the tenacity, the brilliancy. There is no evil. Soul of goodness in things[,] evil does not apply. Evil implies its converse good as in posse. The spirit that denies cannot affirm (C-29).

³⁶ In her Radcliffe forensic on 'The Modern Jew', Stein defined Judaism as 'no longer a creed but a religion of endeavour'; Third Forensic, March 7, 1896, YCAL.

Masculine quality of Mabel Haynes - the sexual quality there is not a concentrated one but an aggressive one and so it makes for masculinity. ... It is as far as I know the only really masculine type. In all the other concentrated sexually are concentrated to attract. This is concentrated to attack, they are therefore rarely favorite with men (C-30).

Discussing sexual natures, Stein refers to the 'penetrating malicious unstable soulless feminine quality' (C-11). One of Weininger's complaints against women is their love of mirrors (SC 210). In the notebooks Stein writes :

Annette's group are superior because of their intense self absorption and vanity and they do not need the world as a mirror, the vanity of the concentrated female group need the world as a mirror, as an admirer or as slaves or as objects of adoration.³⁷

This is part of the Weiningerian view of feminine life as despicably contingent, relational, and subjective. Stein's types would address this problem by examining the different ways women are in relation to everything around them, also found in the following passage from the notebooks:

all the fashions of allying oneself to eternity by various ways Sally and the being buried alive, May etc. and finally created work, family, pride, intellect, materialism go and show how they all do it. With any experience a sort of connecting thread routine work another way of grasping eternity, ethics, beauty, love, philanthropy money (# 34).

Weininger's conception of the 'absolute female' as weak, stupid and vain, as lacking in compassion, real imagination or a genuine sense of beauty, and above all as a liar who is too low in the moral scale to be capable of evil, throws light on another observation, this time about Alice, from the notebooks:

The whole of her ... is made up of every conceivable kind of weakness, crookedness, laziness, stupidity, everything induce[s] crookedness, the concentrated ... evasive female, the charlatanism, the practical sense, the melodramatic imagination, the passion for vulgar beauty, and then finally the pride [and sensitiveness] of her finest quality and so she is undoubtedly a creature made to be crooked but never evil (NB DB).

Stein is also capable of self-examination: 'I have the material instinct which becomes sensible only in its tenacity to negation' (B-10), she writes, and her summary points to Weininger's idea of woman as both materialist and, simultaneously, the supreme negative force; the only perceptible force is her 'negation'.

Weininger's threatening conception of women's all-consuming sexuality is reflected in milder terms in the patterns of loving or passion in *MA* itself, in the

³⁷ B-24. See also #1, 2-3, DB-52 and DB-63 on female pride; DB-46 on women's false sacrifice and DB-48 on women's sentimentality.

struggles inherent in coupledness, in their 'attacking' and 'resisting'. Loving seems more important to the female character than to the male:

The kind of loving then women have in them and the ways it comes out from them makes for them the bottom nature in them, gives to them their kind of thinking, makes the character they have all their living in them, makes them their kind of women and there are always many millions made of each kind of them (*MA* 248).

Elsewhere in *MA* Weiningerian observations are woven into the text. Weininger contends that women are content to live through men, and that all distinguished women have only achieved their accomplishments in order to impress men (*SC* 70). In *MA*,

Some ... care enough about the man they are loving being interesting to need to love one having genius ... Some want to do the thing itself as if they themselves could do the thing that makes the distinguished one a distinguished one even if they know they cannot do this thing to make of themselves in it a distinguished one (575).

Women are not really components of any social structure in Weininger's system. As Moore and others suggest, Stein explores ways in which women adapt to patriarchy in *MA*; what is less often registered is that this may be done in ways reminiscent of Weininger's anti-feminism. Several women 'adapt their loving to any one who is interesting.' They get their feeling of power from being loved, by 'owning' their husbands (575); they feel they know things because their husbands know them. For example, Mabel Linker is characterized as 'unsuccessful' until she 'had a husband then to make her important and to urge her inside her ... with a husband to urge her to be inside her her important being, she could have such a feeling' (231). This might be a way of examining patriarchal bonds, but it could equally be seen as typically Weiningerian. There is no authorial comment to guide us toward a judgement of the situation.

In many cases Stein describes women, instead of having some particular quality, as 'having not' its opposite quality. This emphasizes the negative aspect of female character, the emptiness or nothingness, in congruence with Weininger; 'Woman can appear everything and deny everything, but in reality she is never anything' (*SC* 294). It is possible that Stein uses this tactic to illuminate that inequality of status, as in 'haves and have nots'. Women also more often possess the quality of 'negative egotism' than men (*MA* 231). This occurs when they are 'self-sacrificing' yet 'unpleasant or lazy' or 'vague or empty':

Negative egotism then is when one has enough egotism ... always to have the best reason why every condition in living is the wrong place for them and not to have enough

egotism to live their own life, to do their own choosing, to be really resisting. These then never have any real choice in them, they have not resisting in them ... they worry so much inside them (*MA* 231).

The 'choosing' in the above passage in this case refers to marriage, as well as being firmly connected with living itself. Stein is castigating women for not taking upon themselves an active role, and here again she echoes Weininger. The worrying women here who seem full of motion are in fact distinguished by laziness. The emphasis on choosing and resisting - and Stein's belief that there are 'many many millions always being made' of these women - suggests Darwinian selection; egotism and negative egotism have a Darwinian connection just as the qualities of laziness and motion do; one is reminded of Weininger's lazy eggs and energetic sperms (*SC* 263).³⁸ The creative stimulus of the true genius may be seen as the male impulse in its most extreme form. Weininger states that 'the self-assertion of the mind over the world' which accompanies the act of writing is also to be seen in Darwinian terms (see *SC* 1-2).

Conformism and stagnation are at the forefront of Stein's passage on 'negative egotism' and applied mainly to the feminine character, whereas masculinity is defined as individualism and forward motion. Conformism is also Weininger's main charge against the Jews, and in opposition to the effeminacy of Jewishness, forward 'motion' for Stein is not only a masculine but an American condition.

Stein's women are often 'lazy or vague or empty' as they are here. Nagging, irritating women also abound (e.g. *MA*, 230). Stein's equation of self-sacrifice with laziness and unpleasantness is reminiscent of Weininger's explanation of female altruism as rooted in hardness. Like Weininger Stein rejects traditional ways of elevating women, and ultimately to the same purpose, that is the creation of new categories for them, the freeing of women from themselves, as Weininger might put it. As Weininger points out, criticizing women can be motivated by something other than sheer misogyny; it can be a way of treating women as fully human.

Stein's approach to Jewishness in the notebooks echoes Weininger's way of admitting Jewish preeminence in certain intellectual areas in order to use it disparagingly. Stein writes: 'Jews mostly run themselves by their minds, now they have good minds but not great minds ... That is the secret of the inevitable mediocrity' (*A*-3).

³⁸ Weininger uses the terms 'liberating' and 'periodical' for the male principle, and 'uniting' and 'continuous' for the female principle. The classic formulation of the lazy egg and the energetic sperm was in Geddes and Thompson, *The Evolution of Sex*.

She agrees, too, with their natural affiliation with political movements such as communism, and their fondness for allying themselves with different philosophies when they lose their faith.³⁹ Most important is her linking of femininity (effeminacy), Jewishness and degeneracy.

The misogyny of *MA* may simply be what comes of incorporating Weininger's biased schemes into her novel, but in connecting Jews and women Weininger had surely made obvious for Stein an important conceptual leap. All relations become power relations:

Real intellectual freedom cannot be attained by an agitated mass; it must be fought for by the individual. Who is the enemy? What are the retarding influences?

The greatest, the one enemy of the emancipation of women is woman herself. (*SC* 75).

We have seen this point made in feminist discussions of women's independence. But we have also seen an uneasiness to Stein's attitude towards women in general and motherhood in particular which found some corroboration in Weininger. Motherhood and matrilineality are applied by both authors as individual and collective versions of the same impulse towards the propagation of the race, which is the most obvious of the links between femininity and Judaism, or conformism as Beller terms it.⁴⁰ Both groups are reviled by Weininger for both stifling atavism and hedonistic modernism and accused of spreading either or both of these diseases among the wider public. We have seen that Stein's idea of femininity is that it is bound to the race.

One of Weininger's charges against women is that they have never bothered to write their own psychology, that women have not written intelligently about other women;⁴¹ Stein steps into the breach by at least attempting to attribute various sorts of 'active agency'⁴² to women in *MA*. She is anyway following Weininger's principles in suggesting that the motherly presence is the source of organization in communities of all sorts, a stifling influence in Weininger's terms.

Weininger recognizes conflict between fathers and sons as the source of creativity, and therefore associates it with the Aryan rather than the Jewish type (310). Aryans are endowed with the virility of the father/son struggle while Jews, like women, group together, are obsessed by the matchmaking instinct, and believe in continuation of the

³⁹ See 'The Modern Jew', op. cit..

⁴⁰ 'Otto Weininger as Liberal?' *Jews and Gender*, op. cit., 91-102.

⁴¹ Helen Bradford Thompson's *Psychological Norms in Men and Women* (1903) was 'the first serious attempt to study the psychology of sex differences', Russett, op. cit., 45.

clan. Creativity is equated with masculinity. Fighting and attacking are still linked to creativity in *MA*.⁴³ In the introduction I have suggested Stein's use of father/son aggression, as a demonstration of the 'boundaries which define the ego in relation to the world'.⁴⁴

Weininger's characterology is a 'sister of morphology' (*SC* 59). The correlation between body and mind, sex and character, allows Weininger to examine the whole organism through both metaphorical connections between, for example, mental and physical secretions (95), and supposedly exact scientific phenomena, like the congruity between body and mind when looking for sexual forms (54). These congruences facilitate numerous physical analogies for mental processes and vice versa.⁴⁵ This is one aspect of Weininger's (and Stein's) deliberate attempt at the fusing of artistic and scientific approaches. At the same time, the new science must not rest on sensation; Weininger struggles with ways of deciphering character through physical phenomena without relying on sensation, placing himself in a strange connection to empiricism. This is connected to the uneasiness of his generic status; his psychology is between literatures in its attempt to treat the whole being.

Weininger's struggle, then, is to prove or describe his contentions without resort to external phenomena, particularly difficult with such a poetic streak to his outlook. Stein also deliberates over the relation of perception to sensation, offering various ways of coming to terms with describing being without sensation, for example 'sensitive being'. She too concerns herself with the whole being:

how quickly and how slowly, how completely, how gradually, how intermittently, how noisily, how silently, how happily, how drearily, how difficultly, how gaily, how complicatedly, how simply, how joyously, how boisterously, how despondingly, how fragmentarily, how delicately, how roughly, how excitedly, how energetically, how persistently, how repeatedly, how repeatingly, how drily, how startlingly, how funnily, how certainly, how hesitatingly, anything is coming out of that one, what is being in each one and how anything comes into that one and comes out of that one makes of each one one meaning something and feeling, telling, thinking, being certain and being living (783).

Those persistent 'how's both question and seem to suggest that they have been or will be in some way answered. Stein offers a range of answers to the problem of what

⁴² Moore, op. cit., 88.

⁴³ See *MA* 226.

⁴⁴ Toews, op. cit., 40.

character is, or of what exactly it is constituted, but the most essential basis of each of these methods is the notion of character as fixed, and approached through *sexual* types.

The fixity of character is a point of some contention and disturbance to both Stein and Weininger, and its permanent essence cannot be regarded as a soul by either of them, but it was from Weininger that Stein got the conviction that it is, instead, sex (*SC* 83). Though she may move beyond unequivocal types in favour of sexual 'bottom', she remains attached to the Weiningerian world-view.

KINDS/TYPES

Weininger's notion of sexual types was the greatest single stylistic influence on Stein's design for *MA*, and became possibly the most obvious element of that design. Stein devoted several notebooks to laying out schemes and diagrams of types and their connections to one another. In *MA* she poses as the scientific, egalitarian observer of character formation through habit as she watches people 'copying their own kind of repeating' (*MA* 192):

Always then everybody is always repeating the whole nature and to any one who looks always at each one always the whole of that one one is then seeing keeps coming out of such a one. So any one can know about any one the nature of that one from the repeating that is the whole of each one (*MA* 186).

As Moore suggests, categorizing gives the novel scope, like a social document, and is inclusive, like a history.⁴⁶ Stein's types, however, are an ambivalent force. They are rigidly applicable while being sweeping in scope, and complex and polymorphous in intent, at the same time as appearing reductive and dehumanizing.

We know that Weininger's types form the basis of Stein's overarching scheme;⁴⁷ it is also worth considering her mediation in their transposition to *MA*, particularly whether the antipathy to women which is intrinsic to them simply goes with the territory, or is given a new meaning by Stein.

With some lack of originality, in his attempt at defining the essence of femininity Weininger permits only the two basic categories of Mother and Prostitute as true female types; all femininity consists of one or other of these variants of sexual preoccupation,

⁴⁵ Rosenberg comments on the emphasis on an in-between status in much of the language used by and about New Men and New Women, reflecting bodily and social confusion; *Disorderly Conduct* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 286.

⁴⁶ Moore, op. cit., 19-20, 50-51, 55.

⁴⁷ See Katz, op. cit., 276-78; Wineapple, op. cit., 264-65.

and he delineates the archetypal behaviours associated with them at some length. Among his digressions on the female characteristics that occur in actual women, however, there is acknowledgement of religious mysticism which gives rise to the figure of the saintly female but which Weininger associates with hysteria, rather than an intellectually sustainable attachment to religious belief. At various points in *SC* Weininger also alludes to masculine women and to women of a servile nature, but in his scheme none of these propensities has the status of an immutable type.

In her notebooks Stein unquestioningly adopts the categories of 'prostitute' and 'mother of all' as two of her types; she then promotes the lesser categories which Weininger mentions to the same footing, 'genuine masculine' for his masculine women, and 'servant girl' for his women of a slavish disposition. The 'lady' type is interesting in light of Weininger's observation that women have no dignity, 'and the word "lady" was invented to supply this defect' (*SC*, 201), along with the rather innocuous 'sister'. Stein also adds two more types; the sexually associated 'spinster' and 'mistress'. (The category of 'saint' in the notebooks refers only to Alice Toklas and so does not constitute a fully fledged type.) The types can all be seen as conforming to sets of relational definitions, in terms of family, sexual relations and social dependency - all, that is, except the 'genuine masculine' which is obviously predicated on resemblance to a pure form of masculinity, in Weininger's terms the highest form of being, and which is the one of these initial types which most closely approximates how Stein sees herself.⁴⁸

Having established these main types, Stein creates further 'subcategories' by combining them, often in pairs. Supposedly there exist compounds such as 'mistress prostitute' and 'lady masculine' more often than the pure elements from which they are derived. These notebook entries make up the first level of classification within a much more complex scheme, and in *MA* itself they become much less categorical as a result of the next round of conditions she imposes on the definition of human types. But we have seen examples of the novel's many saintly, self-sacrificing, and nagging women.

Katz points out that it is easier to glean definitions of kinds of femininity from *SC* than definitions of kinds of masculinity, simply because the former are related to

⁴⁸Later in the notebooks Stein expanded: 'often men mistake in women like myself because my temperament and point of view intellect and consciousness is masculine and the erotic emotion is masculine that the sexual nature is, my actual sexual nature is pure servant female. I like insolence I find it difficult to work up energy enough to dominate' (C-30).

pejorative name-calling.⁴⁹ While this may have momentarily stumped her, Stein in fact ends up with more male than female types.

It is telling that, like Weininger's, her schemes originate in aspects of femininity; unlike Weininger she actually derives several of her male types from that female precedent. 'Consider if the division into sex and mind and character does not explain those sentimental women cases that are so puzzling', she writes (C-21). 'The adolescent type whether mistress or servant idealistic, sexual emotion pathological rather than sexual action. *Same with men*' (C-10, my italics).

Weininger discerns sexual complements, like the male politician and the female prostitute, but Stein resorts to the guidelines of her female groups, weirdly elevating their misogynist narrowness to a blueprint for humanity as a whole. It might simply be due to lack of inventiveness that Stein enumerates the 'masculine prostitute' and the 'man-of-the-world' in line with her 'prostitute' and 'mistress' types as well as the 'fanatic', a possible counterpart of the female 'saint'. It is evidence of a shift in emphasis which is very likely at this stage unconscious on her part, considering that she adheres to the constrictions of those insults in her representation of women. Later she notices that she finds women easier to write about and puts it down to a quality in them of clarity (225). While this is tantamount to saying that women are more simplistic than men, it might also be an expression of unwilling solidarity on her part. However, it is also ominously reminiscent of Weininger's acknowledgement, contrary, he seems to imagine, to popular opinion, that there are differences between women. Qualifying this he claims that

the differences and possibilities are not so great as amongst those on the male side; the greater variability of males is true not only for the human race but for the living world, and is related to principles established by Darwin. (58)

Stein wrote 'All women are alike. I know it, I always say it everybody always says it and yet in some ways there is nothing in it' (DB-10). In *SC* it is the men who present the real problem, and in whom Weininger is really interested. While he claims to be laying the blame for the objectification of women at men's door, he is actually dignifying them with responsibility to themselves, and to all humanity. While claiming to be writing a book all about women, the men are his ultimate concern. To an extent this corresponds

⁴⁹ Katz, op. cit., 276.

to Stein's outlook in *MA*. She retains her area of concern as the female world, but cultivates a masculine hero.

Stein's other male types make an eclectic list. They are 'Bazarofian', 'Anglo-Saxon', 'adolescent', 'old tabby', 'primitive soul', 'successful', 'lurid', and 'idealist', which subdivides into four sorts of idealism, 'intellect', 'beauty', 'romance' and 'power'; so she allows men the gamut of interests.⁵⁰ Her female categories are much more restrictive.

The male categories also sound more affectionate, less disparaging, (although both idealism and success are morally ambiguous concepts) and are less relational, more autonomous; while she dualizes the women, and defines them relationally, her male categories are less obviously connected with subservience and dominance. Obviously these are governed by the misogynistic guidelines Stein is following, but she seems happy to take them on board. Her feminine terms, in consequence perhaps of their trite familiarity or the clarity and forcefulness derived from their misogynist origins, have much more of the ring of truth about them than the quaint masculine ones.

Interestingly the only racial epithet, the 'Anglo-Saxon', is a masculine type. This is linked to Weininger's idea that foreignness is equated with effeminacy, and draws more force from Katz's belief that in *MA* the Americans are separated into two camps, 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'middle class', which, as he shows, is a euphemism for Jewish.⁵¹ We have already seen how closely linked Jewishness and femininity are for Weininger, and that one of Stein's complaints about Jews is that they 'run themselves by their minds' (A-3); she proceeds to uncover the same trait in many women, and sees it as a disorder in them, because they do not have the mental capacity to do so. It is difficult, for reasons such as these, to say that her types deliberately cancel out the usual racial classifications, as Moore suggests.⁵² The final category which belongs with these basic types was the only one which could be applied to both men and women, the 'earthy', which is at least suggestive of a feeling of place, of whatever sort. Stein sees herself as an 'earthy boy' (DB-22), and elsewhere 'I am masculine type' (D-B 26).

In addition to these gender-specific categories, Stein's notebooks adumbrate a few overarching propositions which are to be universally applied. There are 'two depths' to

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 278.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 206-207.

⁵² Moore, *op. cit.*, 16-17.

everyone, above and below. We might want to identify traces of Weininger's combinations, his sexual complements, in the way these are applied - an 'opposites attract' scenario which leads to one partner supplying the defects of the other.

At various stages Stein's individuals also possess a 'temperament' and a 'sexual nature' on top of this. She also claims that people have 'flavours'. In her *Diagram Book*, she draws a diagram of 'Top', 'Middle', and, somewhat perversely, 'What it comes from', rather than 'bottom' - but this is the rudimentary version of her notion of 'bottom nature' or 'bottom being'. In the notebooks these levels are equated sometimes with 'mind' or 'intellect' (top) and 'temperament' or 'character' (middle), but the 'What it comes from' is uniformly sex, although Katz claims that sex in *MA* is no longer the sole component of bottom nature. The Weininger influence is obvious, however. The top level would only be reached by men, in his view; Stein claims to apply it to everyone. In practice she is capable of saying that women shouldn't even try to use their minds, and this filters into *MA*. These very Weiningerian schemes are to an extent superseded by further stipulations for recording character (which are not, however, divorced from his concepts) in *MA*; sexual 'substances', attacking and resisting, dependence and independence, 'bottom nature', 'self growing activity' and 'reactive activity', various forms of what she calls simply 'being', and the concept of unit existence, for example.

IDIOPLASMS

Linked to the necessity for finding physical descriptions for non-physical attributes, and in order to explain both the grades of sexual difference and the mystery of sexual attraction, Weininger employs a theory of 'idioplasms', mysterious substances present in every cell of the human body.⁵³ On one level these are actual secretions, perhaps akin to the contemporary discovery of hormones, which hold the secrets of character in the proportion of male and female properties which they contain. On another, they are metaphorical; 'the coming into consciousness of the elements is accompanied by a kind of secretion of characterisation' (96).⁵⁴ These plasmas are also linked to Goethe's 'Elective Affinities', as they define the sexual compatibility of two individuals. Weininger argues that these concentrations cannot be changed (349), which means it is

⁵³ Weininger was not the only proponent of idioplasms; see Hall, *Adolescence*, 2 vols (New York: Appleton, 1904), II.63.

⁵⁴ This principle is another example of 'the parallelism between characterology and morphology' (59).

ridiculous to take a moral position on such subjects as divorce, or any form of sexual predilection or attraction, including bestiality. Plasmas then are the basis of that 'permanent thing' beneath the 'fleeting' which seems to elude definition (SC 83).

Stein joins Weininger in allocating physical properties to mental characteristics. When she writes, at other moments in *MA*, of how character 'comes out of' people as if it is an essence, or an impulse,⁵⁵ we are reminded of Weininger's mental 'secretions'. But it is just after saying 'I am all unhappy in this writing' (348), as if herself worn out with looking for that permanent core of character, that Stein lights on the 'substance' which corresponds to Weininger's idioplasm (he too refers to sexual plasmas, in that somehow illicit and unspecific term, as 'substances' (SC, 8)). In one passage, having described the ways 'resisting being', which is 'sensitive all through it to stimulation', 'can be stimulated or hurried or slowed but never really changed' in men and women, she moves on to 'attacking being', an aspect of character which can be described as

not ... an earthy kind of substance but as a pulpy not dust not dirt but a more mixed up substance, it can be slimy, gelatinous, gluey, white opaquy kind of thing and it can be white and vibrant, and clear and heated (*MA* 348-49)

There is a mixture of certainty and uncertainty in the language surrounding this description, the testing ground for her latest scheme. 'I know it', she asserts, and again 'I know this distinction, it has real meaning' yet she seems to be trying to convince herself ('This then is very certain') in order to motivate her writing; 'I will now tell more about it.' She admits that these are subjective distinctions. There is also a sense of approximation in much of her wording: 'like ... almost ... in some parts ... more or less ... can be ... never really ... to my knowing ... kind of thing.' She tries to control her impressions by organizing them into pairs 'stupid, wise, active, lazy, continuous, disjointed' which correspond with Weininger's male and female principles and perhaps with her own attacking and resisting, dependent and independent, but does not associate them with either masculinity or femininity. Her claim that 'this is all not very clear to me' may be coyness or it may be genuine confusion as to how to separate the impulses of attacking and resisting, how to make sense of the polymorphous sexuality she is describing. (Elsewhere she writes 'sometimes it is an uncomfortable feeling to know it so well from this one ... sometimes it makes one turn away' (*MA* 384).) This is also part

⁵⁵ e.g. *MA*, 225.

of an ongoing sexual metaphor in the novel. 'Attacking being' in her experience apparently

when it got moving went on repeating action, never could get going any faster ... Its sensitiveness is different in kind from that of the resisting kind of being, its sensitiveness is quivering into action not a sensitive just existing, but this is all too much to be now explaining, wait and I can tell it, clearer (350).

These passages also show that neither of the two types can be construed as an unequivocal character pattern. Stein's 'independent dependent' and 'dependent independent' types are based on a notion of dependent and independent being as literal substances, which can arise in different forms as well as different concentrations in different people (*MA* 384-5), and move through organic channels.⁵⁶

Stein's substances and fluids could be either male or female; 'being penetrated' is linked to both resisting and attacking (*MA* 349). Evolutionary theory holds that men and women are as different inside as they are outside; the theory of sexual plasmas helps to break down such biological distinctions. In Weininger's work, idioplasms illuminate his confusion of emphasis on mind and body, and are evidence of his attachment to physical phenomena as much as are his comparisons of romantic love with the behaviour of chemical reagents in the laboratory (*SC* 42); in Stein's words, 'emotion can be as quick, as poignant, as profound as a sensation' (348). They are also used in Weininger's scheme to corroborate his connection of race and gender properties, as they originate in the genital organs:

The theory of an idioplasm, the presence of which gives the specific race characters to those tissues and cells which have lost the reproductive faculty, is by no means generally accepted. But at the least all must admit that the race characters are collected in the genital glands (*SC*, 21).

Propagation links race and gender; Weininger's ideal man must avoid coitus, rise above race, transcend time, prove autonomous. If Weininger uses these plasmas, in a subsidiary way, as fuel to the racial fire, for Stein they may also be informing her racial as well as sexual types. Stein queries to what extent these binary codes are possible - just as Weininger himself does. Like him, she shows signs of being attracted to and yet meaning to dispel these codes. There is for both writers an indecision between classification and free-play, between science and art. Weininger's types had a literary origin in Goethe's novel, and their ultimate literary expression in Stein's. Each scheme

stresses its own newness, hankers after immortality, appeals perhaps to the baser element of its author's desire to be feted as a genius, above all equivocates and experiments over and over again.

Weininger's schemes attempt to go beyond sex, but despite his professed distaste, sex is where they all start. Like Stein he sees all relations as dependent on struggle, or attacking and resisting. Weininger also wants woman to overcome what he still sees as her biological imperative. At moments he sounds like a feminist:

As a rule, the woman adapts herself to the man ... woman does not perceive that this influence which man has on her causes her to deviate from the line of her own development ... She rejoices in being dependent, and her expectations from man resolve themselves into the moment when she may be perfectly passive (262).

The issues of receptivity, dependence and passivity are linked to Stein's schemes. These are not always used in a sexual context but are unavoidably reminiscent of traditional or Aristotelian codes for masculinity and femininity, the supposed biological bases for which were soundly dispelled by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. Weininger's sexually defined 'liberating' and 'uniting' principles (SC 87) are also connected to this idea of struggle.

Stein's categories of resisting and attacking, and of 'dependent' and 'independent' are usually seen as transcending gender. Like later categories such as 'passive aggressive', they do not reinforce traditional Judaeo-Christian roles in sex. However, in some instances Stein presents 'attacking' and 'resisting' as clearly sexualized actions. If one of her characters 'found her exaltation in resisting', resisting is at least in part a sexual term, but ways of knowing people, not just sexual, revolve around how they give or receive, in forming their habits of whatever kind (see MA 391). At the same time as proliferating differences she is cramming dualities into her characters, allowing this to happen in order to see, through repetition, whether character is anything at all, aside from racial or sexual imperatives.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Of all characteristics, Stein states, those relating to sexual etiquette are perhaps the most contentious. 'Some could let anything pass excepting the kind of way some one has of loving. That gives them an angry feeling, that is all there is about it to them' (453). In

⁵⁶ This may be linked to the use of bodily metaphors for neurological processes identified by Marcus, op.

the notebooks she had written of her intention to address 'the whole ethical problem of a development like mine' (14-11) - it is likely that she is referring to her own sexuality here.

Stein's sense of her own individuality is linked to her 'queerness', but there are passages in *MA* where queerness seems to become a universal propensity:

She had come to have some queerness in her ... It is hard to tell it in one when no one comes close to that one whether it is queerness in that one from the character, or from the life that that one is leading, from conditions or to earn a living. There are many then who have queerness in them ... Perhaps it was the queerness in her. Perhaps it was the not having real queerness in her, just enough to keep herself together. (237-38)

Queerness here does not mean specifically homosexuality, but the choice of word is certainly provocative.⁵⁷ It is linked to another of Stein's terms, 'singularity', used to describe behaviour that sets people apart, creates of them a single unit, yet which allies them with people of a similar mould, and is to be striven for by as many people as possible. Both words have multiple meanings, often related to units and groups, one and every one; the 'singular' people for example are also the immigrants in America, yet since immigration may be seen as the quintessential American experience, their singularity is what binds them to the community. Weininger's universal bisexuality has an effect on collective life, the psychology of crowds, for instance. Queerness in many people is what serves to 'hold together the whole of them', the whole being (*MA* 239). Queerness, again provocatively, may be what forms character itself: 'There was enough queerness in her to make character for her' (239). This might be taken as a highly condensed version of Weininger's theory of personalities determined by levels of sexual intermediacy. Stein's own 'queerness' is also where the possibility of her genius lies, if she is to believe Weininger: 'homo-sexuality in a woman is the outcome of her masculinity and presupposes a higher degree of development' (*SC*, 66). For Stein this is a double edged observation, inhibiting her as a woman and liberating her as a homosexual, and there is something sad about her attraction to this distinction. Weininger seems repelled by the epicene creatures he describes, yet almost seems to call for a third sex which will move beyond the battle of the sexes at the end of *SC*.⁵⁸

cit., 75. She is discussing Wells's *Experiment in Autobiography*.

⁵⁷ See also Stein's use of the word 'gay' in, for example, 'Miss Furr and Miss Skeene' (1911).

⁵⁸ Weininger was of course not the only writer to suggest that 'new' sexual forms were offending the 'natural' complementarity of male and female (see Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), 194); Ellis in *The Psychology of Sex* stated that 'there are many stages between a complete male and a complete female' (London: Heinemann, 1933), 194.

Stein, unlike Weininger, uses sexually defined terms for men. She calls men sexual, while he tries to remove from them the stigma of sex. She seems unconcerned at the discrepancy, which may not be in wilful opposition to Weininger. Both Weininger and Stein set out to investigate the boundaries of gender through types 'but such perfect types never occur as actual individuals, simply because, in the mind, as in the body, all sorts of sexually intermediate conditions exist' (*SC* 53); in practice they are willing to make concessions to new possibilities, new mixtures.

Weininger ultimately sees homosexuality as natural (although his terminology makes it impossible for him to call it 'normal'). He sees that there are many more graduations of sexuality than has previously been admitted. Stein's couples include not just heterosexual marriages but female couples as she explores the different ways in which people mix.⁵⁹ So she also goes some way to naturalizing the idea of gay couples, although she never approaches the subject without some amount of mystification. This is true of her comments on any form of sexuality, though; she cultivates a mystified approach. Combinations of personality are what receives the most direct treatment in her examination of couples. Every one has their own way of doing everything; the numerous variables create different mixtures:

Every one then every man and every woman have then their own feeling in loving, their own way of feeling in religion, their own way of laughing, of eating, of drinking, of going on living, of taking what comes to them, of looking for things to irritate them or content them, their own way of beginning and of ending (*MA*, 245).

Nevertheless they can still be classified by types. Every one is individual, but has a resemblance to someone else in the eyes of each other person, and particularly to the all-seeing eye of the author, who observes their beginning and ending.⁶⁰

For Stein, 'biological bisexuality' leads to the possibility that feminization does not, after all, mean emasculation. By the end there is at least 'ambivalence' about the adoption of a masculine role, as the scientific voice becomes constrictive.

STEIN AND JEWISHNESS

The appeal of *SC* is far from obvious unless we are inclined to examine what lies behind Stein's reticence about her own Jewishness.⁶¹ For Stein to claim Weininger above all

⁵⁹ e.g. *MA* 224-228.

⁶⁰ See *MA* 290.

⁶¹ See Katz, op. cit., 203-08, and see chapter 4 below.

other philosophical inheritance, to make him the backbone of her most momentous artistic endeavour, the result of years of work and the book with which she hoped to settle her claim to artistic integrity, to do this in all earnestness, even in the face of ridicule from her friends, cannot be construed as perverseness or absent-mindedness. It seems more than likely that she recognized in *SC* a double consciousness which chimed with her own social status. She was attracted to the complexity of Weininger's Jewish/anti-Semitic persona because she herself did not fall neatly on one side or the other of the assimilationist debate. At a time when so much was being done to develop a national identity and to find a place for ethnicity within it, Weininger offered a 'solution' which was bold, uncompromising, but which was nevertheless at one level conscious of the frailty of its own grand schemes. There is still a double appeal for the reader of *SC* in being carried along by its brisk polemic and beguiled by the whisper of equivocation in its halting personal asides. For in common with *MA*, *SC* includes tentative moments of authorial self-censure and uncertainty. This is not to say that Stein deliberately imitates Weininger, only that this is a habit springing from a common discomposure.

Stein, who happily uses the word 'yid' in the notebooks (#54), was not a practising Jew, but she showed no signs of the literal conversion which Alice Toklas, for example, underwent.⁶² She did make extensive use of saints in her later works, but she was equally willing to make heroes of secular figures, even attributing unexpected Jewishness to figures such as Abraham Lincoln.⁶³ Weininger's book, though he himself was baptised the year he completed it, does not insist on the literal conversion of Jews to Protestantism, leaving it to the individual conscience. Nevertheless *SC* does imply a story of progress and conversion.

The role of the modern Jew, as Weininger quite accurately points out, is split between the assimilator and the assimilated. Stein had shown awareness of this in her college essay on the subject (see chapter 4). Stein's position was that Jews should retain a sense of their origins and should not intermarry with gentiles.⁶⁴

Stein appears to go along with Weininger's objection to Zionism in her poem 'The Reverie of the Zionist' (1920), which contains the lines:

⁶² In youth Stein attended Reform services in California; see Wagner-Martin, 'Gertrude Stein', *Jewish American Women Writers*, ed. Shapiro (London: Greenday Press, 1994).

⁶³ Wineapple, op. cit., 57.

Don't talk about race. Race is disgusting if you don't love your
country.
I don't want to go to Zion.⁶⁵

While, as Damon points out, this poem juggles with several confluent ideas about Judaism, stirring and meditating rather than reaching a final conclusion,⁶⁶ it would appear to contradict Weininger's initial premise of Jewish lack of citizenship. Family, home and nation are intertwined in Stein's notion of geography. The political stances which are available from this may sometimes seem miscellaneous, which is why it often appears easier to dismiss them with a fuzzy idea that, having expatriated herself, Stein somehow adopts language as her only home.⁶⁷ Long into her expatriation, she continues to make the patriotic statements for which she is famous.

For Stein, the paradoxical attachments to past and future are partly instigated instead by a sense of the Jewish home as unstable, mimicked in the instability of the language used to describe home and family. Weininger sums up this connection in anti-Semitic terms: 'The Jew believes in nothing, within him or without him. His want of desire for permanent landed property and his attachment to movable goods are more than symbolical' (321). Meanwhile the Jewish family is the ideal forum for the modern novel, as it is also often cited as a source of continuity and fusion; a fact pointed out by both Stein and Weininger. In *SC* we are told that 'The family, in this biological sense, [i.e. not in the legal sense] is feminine and maternal in its origin, and has no relation to the state or to society. The fusion, the continuity of the members of the family, reaches its highest point among the Jews' (310). Here is the endpoint, for Stein, of novelistic ideas of inheritance, integral to which is the synthesis of femininity and Jewishness.

These perceptions of Jewishness, seemingly illogical and conflicting but equally capable of substantiation, present it as the source of both extreme orthodoxy and of radicalism (in both style and politics). Here is the central conflict between the two paradigms of the wandering Jew and the walled garden of the Jewish faith, freethinker and slave; an attempt to reconcile the two leads to a dilemma between differentiation and incorporation, pluralism and assimilation.

⁶⁴ See her college forensic, discussed in chapter 4.

⁶⁵ *Painted Lace and Other Pieces: 1914-1937* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1955), 94.

⁶⁶ Damon, op. cit., 503.

Stein's use of marriage as a focus suggests what Weininger would call an unhealthy interest in pairing, or matchmaking. Pairing is also important in many ways to Weininger, however, in his subdivisions of psychical phenomena, for example. At one stage in mental activity 'elements' cannot be distinguished from the character to which they belong. Elements are ideas like

"green", "blue", "cold", "warm", "soft", "hard", "sweet", "bitter", and the "character" is the particular kind of quality with which they appear, not merely their pleasantness or unpleasantness, but also such modes of presentation as "surprising", "expected", "novel", "indifferent", "recognised", "known", "actual", "doubtful"... (SC 95).

These sorts of 'subdivisions' are useful for Stein, too: 'This then this bottom nature in them, the way it is made in them makes the bottom history of them, makes their way of being stupid, wise, active, lazy, continuous, disjointed, is always there in them...' (MA 349).⁶⁸ There is a difference between the conceptual pairs which Stein and Weininger employ - even if they are used to determine sexual complements - and the reprehensible pairing or coupling off which Stein seems immersed in, the 'matchmaking' which Weininger claims is the obsession of Jews and women.

Institutional behaviour of a particularly Jewish nature, then, is frowned on. But neither Stein nor Weininger is beyond confirming 'tribal' stereotypes. Weininger identifies the impulse to classify as a particular Jewish trait, the tendency in religion and science to 'refer everything to a system of deductions' (314). This stems, he claims, from the slavish, determinist Jewish character. 'From his slavish disposition springs his heteronomous code of ethics, the "Decalogue", the most immoral book of laws in the universe' (312), immoral because it involves fearful deference to Jehovah, rather than advocating the divine within the individual. This is linked to stereotypical ideas of Jews as lawmakers, possessing minds with a tendency to catalogue and categorize. It is also a recognized Jewish literary trait.⁶⁹

Stein advocated the 'Old Testament' style as the preferred medium of the 'Great American Novel', a concept which calls for individual genius yet which has a drive toward the collective.⁷⁰ Weininger's scheme rejects the Old Testament as a model for

⁶⁷ *ibid.* Gomperz contended that Jews, having no native soil, no longer had creativity (*Jews and Gender*, op. cit., 96), suggesting the need to overcome racial heritage in order to lay claim to the land and to artistic identity.

⁶⁸ Stein also refers to 'elements' in the notebooks.

⁶⁹ Bermant, *What's the Joke?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 147.

⁷⁰ See Stein, 'Lecture II - Narration', Allen and Tallman, eds, *The Poetics of the New American Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1973), 106-113. Stein identifies Old Testament composition as without

the work of genius; he uses this reliance on heteronomous systems as proof of the defective reasoning, and accompanying defective existence, of Jews. Yet Weininger cannot resist the pull of determinism in defining the Jews; though he tries to dissociate himself from his own Jewishness, his book is a confirmation of the impulse to categorize. Stein, too, ignores any warnings on this score; both Stein and Weininger overclassify.⁷¹

Weininger's belief, based on a Kantian individualism, that Judaism is irreligious because it makes the Jew subject to an external law-giving entity is undermined when Weininger himself becomes swamped by the proliferation of his own laws, and his text becomes fraught with the language of enslavement. The idea of being in thrall to a system, a pattern, a relationship, runs through *MA*, too, for its narrator as well as its characters. While the Jew is characterized as a slave by Weininger, America is, in a couple of brief allusions, equated with the possibility of freedom. On reading this, Stein must have reflected on the consequences for the assimilation of the Jew into American culture. It would seem to make pluralism appealing but unattainable. The 'intolerant liberalism' which Beller finds in *SC* depends on an emphasis on assimilation of the Jew into European society, giving no countenance to a 'tolerant' pluralism.⁷² It is even more evident that if the Jew embodies enslavement, and America represents freedom, he must shed his Jewishness in order to enter the 'freedom' of American society. Indeed, Weininger paradoxically argues that Jews have a special liability to become freethinkers. Mary Antin, for example, in *The Promised Land*, advocates just such a complete immersion in American culture, a metaphorical if not literal baptism the egalitarian end of which justifies its homogenizing and even oppressive means.⁷³ Realistically, the necessity of this conformity reconfigures the meaning of American freedom.

In *MA* the religion is supplanted, or perhaps supplied, by schemes lifted directly from Weininger. But the danger is that, as Stein puts it, 'Some out of their own virtue make a god who sometimes later is a terror to them'(443). Curiously it is by following

sentences and paragraphs, and therefore confusing the boundaries of prose and poetry. She claims that there is no 'succession' in its depiction of events, which also makes it an apposite approach for the modern writer. She links this to her use of the present participle in *MA*.

⁷¹ In this they also comply, of course, with a typical Victorian urge to fit their facts to 'some larger theoretical framework' (Russett, op. cit., 49).

⁷² Beller, 'Otto Weininger as Liberal?', *Jews and Gender*, op. cit., 91-102.

⁷³ See chapter 4 for further discussion.

Weininger's method that Stein both confirms his principles and undermines or subverts them to her own ends. It is unclear how self-conscious this is. At times the descriptions of character in *MA* come across as a 'continuous plasmodium', yet she seems to revel in it. This is the shaky ground of Weininger's Jewish adaptability and mobility of mind, which comes ever so close to his definition of genius. Only by sleight of hand can he convince the reader of the difference between the supposedly despicable Jew and the exalted Genius. It depends largely on the distinction between the words 'individual' and 'individuality'.

Weininger's attempt to make Judaism a universal quality, as a common trait among Jewish social scientists, is an example of his coincidence with progressive debates of the time, which queried the definition of Jewishness as race, religion or creed. Stein herself regarded religious ceremony as symbolic and agreed that Judaism was indicative of certain states of mind (for which she was partly influenced by Weininger but also happy to generalize from her own observation and from traditional Jewish roles).⁷⁴ In her Radcliffe forensic, she proudly isolates the 'brain-power' of the modern Jew which means 'they naturally have a strong tendency to embrace resolute many ideas and skepticism in all its forms'; accompanied by the implicit criticism of the 'extreme formalism' of religious belief, there are shades here of Weininger's opinions.⁷⁵ She adduces Marx as an example of the intellectual capacity for leadership which she says Jews have always shown.

'It might be urged that the Jewish double-mindedness is modern, and is the result of new knowledge struggling with the old orthodoxy' (*SC* 324); 'As in the Jew there are the greatest possibilities, so also in him are the meanest actualities; he is adapted to the most things and realises fewest' (*SC* 329). As Weininger's language of 'possibility' suggests, much of what he attributes to Jews could be construed as positive. He emphasizes a preeminent alertness, intelligence and adaptability, just as other prominent Jewish social scientists had done, and an openness to contradiction which Stein and Weininger share. 'Internal multiplicity is the essence of Judaism', while the Aryan mind is simplistic. For Weininger the former condition is threatening and immoral, but it is easy to see how his insistence confers on it the brilliance and possibility of modernity.

⁷⁴ See discussion of her forensic in chapter 4 below.

⁷⁵ 'The Modern Jew', op. cit..

The description of the Jew begins to resonate with the same qualities which form the criteria for genius, if we remove the perfunctory terms of insult: 'he adapts himself to every circumstance and every race ... although remaining essentially the same. He assimilates himself to everything, and assimilates everything; he is not dominated by others, but submits himself to them' (320). He is gifted, but his problem is that his persistence, or continuance, another essential component of the genius, is that of the race, not the individual.

Nevertheless there is a sense in Stein's work, as there is in Weininger's, albeit fearfully and disapprovingly, of modern Jewish life as the crucible of possibility. 'The Jew is nothing, because he believes in nothing', says Weininger. The converse of this, which Weininger admits, is that his nothingness also qualifies him to become anything. While 'Nothing is easier than to be Jewish' (328), Weininger appears to admit the inelegance of his schemes where this matter is concerned; 'It has been seen how difficult it is to define the Jew'. Jewishness becomes a state of openness, of indeterminacy and suggestiveness, a vessel to be filled, to borrow Mendele Mocher Seforim's image for the Yiddish language.⁷⁶ This has a bearing on Stein's conception of her own creativity in *MA*.

ASSERTIVE APPROPRIATION ?

While it is possible to argue that Weininger's prejudices were less striking, even normal terms of discussion in 1908, and that many female and Jewish writers were themselves under their spell, the challenge for those writers was then to participate in these discussions in a 'positive' way; whether and why Stein did this is interesting in itself. It would involve affirming her own specialness and difference, wanting or needing to define herself.

The best attempt to place Stein as a Jew, and the most aware of its own drawbacks, is Damon's 'Gertrude Stein's Jewishness, Jewish Social Scientists, and the "Jewish Question"'.⁷⁷ Damon does not adduce instances of Weininger's influence on *MA*, concentrating instead on the later works collected in *Painted Lace*. Nor does she allow the possibility of Stein being unhappy with her Jewishness. Instead, she sees Stein's use of Weininger as an 'assertive appropriation' of his anti-Semitic and anti-feminist terms.

⁷⁶ Bermant, op. cit., 106.

⁷⁷ op. cit.

There is, I would agree, an element of control and subversion to how Stein uses Weininger, but not without an initial and prolonged response which is much less 'assertive', which at times falls in with these terms or hesitates to acknowledge something to be overcome.

I am not arguing that Stein is a 'self-hating Jew' (a phenomenon dealt with by Weininger). The moments of self-hatred in the notebooks are not directly connected to specific unease over this issue. Nonetheless a concern about her origins has to be one explanation for what critics have puzzled over as her inordinate fascination with a book, a philosophy, which is ultimately a powerful expression of its author's deliberation with and attempt to overcome his own Jewish identity.

In *SC*, Weininger states that among Jews an individual sense of ancestry is lacking (308), that Jews are swallowed up in their racial ancestry. Coinciding with this is Stein's conception of the importance of Jewish history as a model for the rise of a people, not of particular people.⁷⁸ This does not necessarily prohibit Stein's pride in her own past.

Weininger refers to Jewish society as a 'continuous plasmodium'. Fascinated by this theory of an undifferentiated mass Stein undertakes to elucidate the differences with the schemes of *MA*, only to reinforce the image of a morass of people hardly separable, capable of being described by universal laws. Individuality suffers. At the same time she repudiates the 'morass' mentality, which is perhaps what she is attempting to escape in her move to Europe. Weininger's paradoxical construction of the Jew as both inherently slavish and an innate freethinker suggests the slipperiness of the ethnic bonds. We know that for Leo, too, the Jewish community was a source of both attraction and disgust.⁷⁹ This wanting to be part of and wanting to be different, wanting to be like and not wanting to or not being able to, suggests a confusion between the drive towards individualism and the notion that identity is reliant on others. Sources of or needs for differentiation, ideas about artistic isolation and genius are, therefore, informed or imposed by a recognition of the status of ethnic outsider.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ See 'The Modern Jew'.

⁷⁹ Wineapple, op. cit., 132.

⁸⁰ A peculiarly Jewish relation to the notion of the collective, bound up with social conditions, may be responsible for Jewish affiliation with radical politics which Stein refers to in 'Forensic'. Weininger's recognition of this connection is obscured by his offensive language (306).

That Stein lays claim to stereotypical Jewish traits is not unusual. In contemporary social science, the 'stock indices of Jewish difference'⁸¹ become normal for Jewish social scientists as they attempt to understand the origins of their own difference. The 'modern' Jew is non-religious, convinced of intellectual superiority, and does not dispute the stereotype but takes pride in it, whether the forum be cartoon or scientific study.

Jewish social scientists frequently used aspects of a racial scientific idiom including that of hereditarianism and eugenics; 'the cultural forms of scientific texts were imitated' in order to counter their claims, and to use 'science as a language of self-assertion'.⁸² In their joint publication on 'Normal Motor Automatism' Stein and Solomons write that they are 'both ... perfectly normal - or perfectly ordinary'.⁸³ By attributing normality to themselves they become assimilated within the objectivity, neutrality, and universality claimed by contemporary science.⁸⁴ This means to ignore scientific charges of Jewish abnormality of which they were aware - Stein, for example, once asked Solomons why Jews were more prone to depression than other groups, and he replied that there was 'a much higher percentage of all kinds of abnormality', because of the prevalence of intermarriage.⁸⁵

Weininger also suggests that Judaism is a universal trait, but his baptism and suicide suggest something other than assertiveness, and Stein is, after all, following his lead. Or perhaps she is using her systems in order to cancel the fixed categories allotted to her as a Jew. Weininger was certainly subverting lines of social inquiry, but in a self-destructive way. He is an example of how the ability of Jewish writers to adopt a positive attitude by incorporating elements of anti-Semitic discourse in their own work flips back easily into prejudice against their own people.

⁸¹ Damon, op. cit., 495.

⁸² See Stepan and Gilman, 'Appropriating the Idioms of Science', *The Bounds of Race*, ed. LaCapra (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 84; 86.

⁸³ 'Normal Motor Automatism', *Motor Automatism* (New York: The Phoenix Book Shop, 1969), 10.

⁸⁴ See Stepan and Gilman, op. cit.

⁸⁵ Leon Solomons to GS, Jan 4, 1898, YCAL. Incidentally, Katz comments on the fact that Stein referred to herself as 'oriental' in later life, implying that this is a rejection of her Jewishness (204). But late nineteenth and early twentieth-century commentary on Jews frequently classed them as oriental - Stein is again appropriating, perhaps assertively, the language of anti-Semitic language of medical/scientific discourse. Scrawled among her notes is the name of Wagner's Kundry, the character from *Parsifal* who represents 'the sensual and oriental Jewish woman', Robertson, 'Historicizing Weininger', *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*, op. cit., 33. See 'Tubercular diagnosis', YCAL.

Weininger categorically states that Jews have no claim to any sort of nobility, while the Anglo-Saxon is one of the noblest races on the planet. This would appear to be corroborated by Stein's use of the term 'middle class' for Jewish, in contrast to 'Anglo-Saxon'. If Jews are not noble, can they attain genius? Weininger answers in the negative. Stein is capable of accusing Jews of mediocrity, but she is also capable of claiming their intellectual superiority. She asks what value social mobility has for her 'middle class' families, whether it is possible to change.

Although SC's idealism is eventually overshadowed by its tragic outlook, it contains a work ethic similar to the American one; everything is to be had, made for oneself, even to the point of attaining genius by working at it.⁸⁶ All superficial boundaries, such as those of class, are to be overcome by the self-made genius, just as they are in novels of rise and progress, but for Weininger this is only possible by a repudiation of his own Jewishness. Despite an upward mobility suggested in the rich surroundings of her Jewish family, Stein's Jews suffer from 'inevitable mediocrity' (NB-A).

SCIENTIFIC IDIOM

In this section I will look at Stein's disillusion with the 'scientific' idiom with which, as we have seen, *MA* had become infused. Stein's notebooks are full of observations which have a distinct tone of the psychologist/sexologist. The idiom of characterology is directly discernible in *MA*, where the narrator investigates 'the way they react to things which may be different from the way they feel them,' analysing the origins of feeling versus 'reacting to stimulus' (455).

Stein also strays into the realms of graphology when she notes that people who have the 'same way of hand-writing' have the 'same way of succeeding, of beginning, of loving' (4-2).⁸⁷ Handwriting should be beautiful. Stein has David Hersland sent by his father to 'writing school' on account of his 'bad hand-writing' (NB-MA); because the father 'has great hope of him', as indeed does Stein at the outset; he will be her hero, her personification of herself, her genius.

⁸⁶ Will, op. cit., 30, argues for Stein's belief in genius as democratic/inclusive.

⁸⁷ Stein's interest in handwriting and typewriting forms an extensive subject by itself; it occurs again, D-25. Though I do not have space to investigate it here, we have seen one aspect of its importance in chapter 2.

In the notebooks the literal diagram which Stein refers to in *MA* (225) can also be found.⁸⁸ This, like the 'map of living' she brings in later (*MA*, 390) has contemporary conceptual analogues in Freud's diagram of the subconscious and conscious mind, and indeed Weininger's equations. It is likely that Stein was attracted to the confidence of an idiom in which the writer could state 'it is a matter of universal recognition' about anything he chose, with relative impunity.⁸⁹

Weininger bemoans the fact that science has so far been unable to cope with explanations for 'such facts as heroism and self-sacrifice' (*SC*, 82), and adheres to a dual scheme for a treatise which is biological and philosophical, finding a nexus between 'forensic and medical literature'⁹⁰ and creative literature. Stein emulates the same mutually corroborating approaches.

Stein's schemes are worked out with an exhaustive determination to be exact. The doctrine of *SC* suggests that statistical data results in no more than lists of averages; Weininger does not propose scrutiny of every individual but a complete study of a few. Once the complete knowledge is attained, he hopes each character will define the limits of other characters (62). Perhaps unavoidably Stein's examples start to overwhelm her original schemes; the narrative disillusionment with the characterological idiom begins as the observations encroach into the text's present day; for example, 'I saw yesterday afternoon two of them together...' (*MA* 571).

Weininger himself had recognized the pitfalls which await the systematic investigator of character;

even if we are able to determine the exact point occupied by an individual on the line between two extremes, and multiply this determination by discovering it for a great many characters, would this complex system of coordinate lines really give us a conception of the individual? (81)

For both writers there is concern as to whether enumeration or some amount of generalization will produce the more exact results. With no particular fondness for scientific objectivity, Weininger seems almost to be calling for a novelistic approach, a marriage of eros and psyche:

The new psychology would be a doctrine of the whole, and would become fresh and fertile ... Many disputed points of psychology (perhaps the most important) would be settled by an application of such characterology, as that would explain why so many

⁸⁸ DB-1.

⁸⁹ See Russett, op. cit., 45, for the popularity of this approach.

⁹⁰ Gilman in *Jews and Gender*, op. cit., 110.

views have been held on the same subject. The same psychical process appears from time to time in different aspects, merely because it takes tone and colouring from the individual character. And so it may well be that the doctrine of differential psychology may receive its completion in the domain of general psychology (*SC* 83-84).

Here Weininger toys with ideas of 'tone' and 'colouring' to describe the manifestations of character, vaguely descriptive terms which are much in the same vein as Stein's 'flavours'. The 'doctrine of the whole' importantly fuses art and science in the unfolding of a broad new psychology. In 1932 Stein recalled that at this time she had lost faith in traditional 'scientific' ways of doing this: 'I ... lost interest completely in practical medicine and fairly completely in scientific as opposed to authentic ... observation'.⁹¹

Stein's attitude to her 'characters' is often opaque. There are two sorts of characters, which illuminate the difference between the character in characterology and the fictional character in a story. There are the named or relationally identified characters, who play a role in the ostensible fiction, and the 'one's', the pronouns, who are more like case studies to do with the explication of the process of its writing, like the one she describes as 'damned', and informs of her judgement. He or she is just an illustration of her point, but seems to be drawn directly from real life, which raises the question of how far he or she can be taken as part of the fiction. Indeed, it is a matter of conjecture how fictional either type of character is anyway. They are either part of an ongoing autobiography or drawn from memory, or they are part of a supposed 'history' or mere types which are hardly fleshed out.

'There was one .. I had heard descriptions of this one, I was interested but not more than I am in every one ... Then I saw this one, then I looked intensely at this one ... it gave new meanings to many things' (*MA* 313). It is hard to see where the territory of fiction ends, and where 'real life' begins. In her attempt at characterology Stein may be emulating Weininger's method of mingling examples from his life with folkloric generalizations and with ideal types which, unsurprisingly, leads to some confusion for both writers.

There is a precarious logic to Weininger's thesis, sometimes in spite of the logic it imagines itself to be following. It is, however, full of non sequiturs and arguments which go too far, and at some points it gets bogged down with defining its own terms. Weininger digresses, becomes unsystematic and realizes it. Things get out of control,

⁹¹ Draft of letter to Lennard Gandolac, 1932, n.d. (YCAL).

and Weininger leaves traces of how threatening his work has become. On the first page of *SC* Weininger had compared the struggle of the artistic mind over the material presented by the world to the struggle for existence, and that struggle is explicit in his writing.⁹²

As Weininger's system grows, its literary or philosophical element threatens to overshadow its scientific purpose. Stein's system also starts to validate itself with minimal input of information. While an unmistakably scientific idiom deliberately encroaches ('I have now described ... I will now be ... I will then go on to ...' (*MA* 574)), her work begins to generate its own subject until it no longer represents anything but its own schemes; it is no longer scientific but purely literary.⁹³ While Weininger's free association brings him in a circular way to unoriginal observations which amount to little more than prejudices, Stein's schematic frenzy takes her beyond limits and invests her with creative freedom.

Stein comes to realize that one cannot discount 'the participation of the theorist in his theory', and begins to satirize the sexologist's method.⁹⁴ Becoming aware of the problems inherent in its own composition, with intense, neurotic qualification of every judgement made, *MA* almost seems a parody of the scientific approach.

At one point in *SC* Weininger relates the story of how he has been proved correct several times in his swift analysis of the sexual characteristics of his acquaintances (31). *MA* contains a similar incident:

This one was a stupid one when between timidity and universal attacking this one had intuition. "Yes I can always tell what any one is, what a man is, what a woman is, what a child is, what a very little child is," said this one. "I am very certain in my feeling, just listen. Once I met a man, I knew this man was just the kind of a man I knew he was, I was certain when I saw him, every time I saw him I was certain, once he came into this house and I shook hands with him, I was more than ever certain that this man was the kind of man I had thought him. I don't see him very often, I would never meet him if I could avoid him, I never make a mistake about a person about a man or a woman or about children when I have an intuition" (572).

⁹² Weininger sees the whole history of thought in Darwinian terms. A human lifetime or a period of history is subject to an 'enormous number of stages between light and darkness, the minute gradations of detail that follow each other in the development of thought' (*SC*, 97). Resemblance is the key to much of his theory of composition and of living. *MA* suggests that 'every one reminds some one of some other one who is or was or will be living' (290).

⁹³ See Moore, op. cit., 54; 93.

⁹⁴ Toews, op. cit., 36.

This passage points out the stupidity of some forms of systematic thinking; it may be self-lacerating, or it may be aimed at the Weiningerian approach. 'Intuition' is often seen as a female quality, and in fact the character Stein mimics here is female.

THE COMPLETE INDIVIDUAL

MA ultimately occupies a transitional status; its form becomes an expression of its preoccupations with the American status of always moving - the making, present tense, of Americans. It is also, according to Stein, to be read in a transitional way; 'everyone should be reading at it or it.'⁹⁵ This should not disguise the fact that its authorial voice strives towards a Weiningerian completion, of knowledge and of character, which the novel's own schemes seem to disprove or dispel.

Success is seen in terms of resolution or completion, wholeness of being which can be achieved by finding a complementary character:

Mostly for successful living two living together, man and woman or two women or two men, there should be in them the two kinds of them, one independent dependent the other dependent independent, one with attacking as the natural way of fighting, the other resisting as the way of being; but in loving and in friendly living this is mixed up in different ways to make a pair of friends for reasonably successful living (228).

This prescription for the perfect partnership is similar to Weininger's perfect attraction, developed from *Elective Affinities* and Platonic thought. It is based on grades of resemblance and difference. Stein suggests the erotic nature of her own project when she writes 'To know surely in these cases one has to know the complete history and weigh it carefully, almost one has to love them, to find out[;] it is the borderland of types' (A-6, 3). Weininger states that there is more than one law of sexual affinity (36), just as Stein does: 'There are many ways of making kinds of men and women. In each way ... there is a different system of finding them resembling. Sometime there will be here every way there can be of seeing kinds of men and women' (*MA* 290).

Stein takes this to mean that each person is predictable, if only she can discover the correct scheme. She mulls over possible approaches:

Then there will be realised the complete history of every one, the fundamental character of every one, the bottom nature in them, the mixtures in them, the strength and weakness of everything they have inside them, the flavour of them, the meaning in them, the being in them, and then you have a whole history then of each one (*MA* 290).

⁹⁵ Stein quoted by Meyer, 'Introduction' to *The Making of Americans* (Normal, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995), xiv.

When all these elements of people are synthesized, everything they do is to become clear to the 'completed understanding'. Stein points out that it is not yet clear to her at several points in *MA*, but the satisfaction of completion is still longed for. Weininger anticipates that 'there will be completed for the first time a real psychology'(84); although his characterology is a work in progress, he stresses again the importance of completion as opposed to transition. For Stein, this can be accomplished, moments can be made to cohere, as every action - thinking, smoking, loving - reveals the permanent nature to the enlightened observer.

Stein's 'complete history'⁹⁶ emulates the wished for integrity and finality of Weininger's 'theoretical biography' (130) in trying to quantify and qualify difference. Having adopted Weininger's notion of types, Stein only seems able to make the categories meaningful by fusing theory with expression, description, exhaustion, of possible combinations. Stein and Weininger both encounter the difficulties of putting 'character', or a character, into words, as is evidenced by the many different terms they use for it; 'temperament', 'personality', 'nature', 'individuality', 'soul' and so on - and this is before Stein embarks on her miscellany of schemes. Already in the notebooks for *MA* Stein's categories are much more intricately mapped than Weininger's. Although this might appear to make her categorizations more rigid, it actually means the proliferation of difference, only guided by laws which she hopes will be inconvertible. Stein's project is to get to the root of what creates that difference; by showing how every one feels themselves to be in some way distinguished from everyone else (*MA* 448) she will, she hopes, uncover the secrets of character and completeness of character (448-449). The complex network of schemes is not restrictive but liberating; it is not necessarily to be seen as a failure of Stein's appropriation of Weininger's project that it leads her stylistically ever further towards a non-representational categorization of personality.⁹⁷

Weininger's notion of genius is tied to the idea of the complete individual. Only the genius is capable of real autobiography - masculinity equates with form, femininity with

⁹⁶ e.g. *MA* 283.

⁹⁷ Mizruchi argues that '[Stein's] understanding of social scientific method reveals its fundamentally aesthetic aspects. While it locks others into typological schemes, it frees the typologist for acts of invention', 'Fiction and the Science of Society', *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Elliott (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 215.

formlessness.⁹⁸ Stein's most radical exposition of the relational definition of femininity, as opposed to the 'masculine' achievement of autonomous individuality, is in her literalizing of Weininger's image of the 'continuous plasmodium' in her fluid female characters for whom all individuality amounts to is a piece of skin enclosing them and separating them from other people (398). The focus of such passages is the female identity and 'the relation of things to her being' (398). While the women of *MA* exist in relation to their communities, its geniuses are alienated, recognizable by their difference.⁹⁹ Stein is also an isolated figure in her own fiction.

Weininger's belief in progress rests on the perfectibility of the individual; tokens of genius are suggestively appropriated by the author himself in the composition of his magnum opus; his idealistic, individualistic manifesto depends on a belief in complete knowledge determining the completed individual. Both Stein and Weininger aspire to a completeness of knowledge which will confer on them a completeness of character, or genius.¹⁰⁰

Genius, as expounded in *SC*, has nothing to do with talent. Talent is hereditary, genius is individual. As is the case with so many of Weininger's dualisms, the moral implication of the terms depends on their relation to an impulsive individuality as opposed to the bonds of any sort of institution; national, religious or familial. All men have some genius at some point in their lives; in this respect it is a democratic attribute. Unsurprisingly, however, genius is not available to the Jew or the woman.

Other important characteristics of the genius are his timelessness and his incomparable understanding of his fellow men; 'Universality is the distinguishing mark of genius ... The genius is a man who knows everything without having learned it' (112). In creative spheres, 'The genius is not a critic of language, but its creator' (138), while it is likely that he will experience periods of both artistic and scientific expertise (107), clearly an appealing criterion for Stein. The genius was aristocratic and masculine.¹⁰¹ Weininger was struggling against a contemporary image of genius as

⁹⁸ See Marcus, op. cit., 64.

⁹⁹ In *MA*, fighting and thinking are linked in the best men, the geniuses (494).

¹⁰⁰ See Will, op. cit., 7. As the supposed culmination of a natural progression towards perfection, genius had taken on the weight of such Darwinian offspring as morphology, physiognomy and eugenics. The criteria of genius also became an explicit concern of *MA* (e.g. 494).

¹⁰¹ See Marcus, op. cit., 64.

effeminate - the Wildean image with which Stein too would struggle (she invents elaborate terminology in the notebooks to dismiss such figures as Wilde).¹⁰²

In Weininger's scheme the only individual to conquer history, to transcend time, is the genius, and it is a necessary prerequisite of genius that he does so. The genius does not forget (women's memories are the most deficient):

His universal comprehension and memory forbid the annihilation of his experiences with the passing of the moment in which each occurred; his birth is independent of his age, and his work never dies (136).

Stein no doubt sensed the allure of this possibility.

Woman and Jew are in continual, immoral connection with forms of collective existence, but Weininger's concept of genius rests on a very similar tension with the multitude:

The ideal of an artistic genius is to live in all men, to lose himself in all men, to reveal himself in multitudes; and so also the aim of the philosopher is to discover all others in himself, to fuse them into a unit which is his own unit (106).

The formulation of a 'unit existence' is the task of Weininger in his new science - 'I must set out with a conception of character itself as a unit existence' (*SC*, 83) - a task which is adopted by Stein. As individuals, everyone has their own way of doing everything but can still be classified under different types.¹⁰³ Stein plays on the fact that 'every one' can mean either all or each, every single one. She begins to think of people as 'ones', units. Her genius can be completely certain about everyone around him, while maintaining an identity, a oneness. Isolating her characters by referring to each of them as 'one' allows them each an individuality while being processed as one of many. The ability to understand multitudes of people is proof of genius; Stein, aware that genius can also, in Weininger's opinion, be achieved through productivity, took these ideas to their extreme in striving to give a description of 'every kind of human being that ever was or is or would be living'.¹⁰⁴

Stein's fascination with autobiography suggests an ontogenetic impulse as forceful as her need to conquer history. Stein's famous pronouncements about her own genius begin in the *MA* notebooks; 'maleness that belongs to genius. Moi aussi perhaps' (C-21). In the notebooks she classes herself with Picasso, Balzac and Zola 'through love of

¹⁰² e.g. 13-2; MA-54; DB-18.

¹⁰³ See, for example, MA 245.

beauty [rather than love of God]. The true and the beautiful' (NB-J). Elsewhere herself, Johnson and Balzac again are the same kind, the 'unaggressive complete egotist' - the genius (C-46). Characterology inevitably leads to self-analysis, as Moore notes, and this can play havoc with the systematic nature of a characterological work.¹⁰⁵ Moore states that Stein's self-proclaimed genius is an edifice from which she creates an intellectual as opposed to a Jewish identity.¹⁰⁶

It is unclear whether Stein is writing about David or herself when she says 'All generalizations from experience have equal validity. You are superior to everything but anarchy . I have to come to you to prove I am superior to art' (NB-MA). For Stein and Weininger intellectual freedom is opposed to the concept of being tied to a relationship.¹⁰⁷ In the notebooks, Stein had summarized the situation as an opposition between two characters: 'George efficient in the world, inefficient alone, David the other way, world ethics/personal ethics opposition' (NB-MA). David Hersland is her embodiment of the genius. In the notebooks she writes 'David completed individual' and 'must realise my hero by making him go through my development' (NB-MA, 23); the self-willed, autonomous, American character, who represents her own artistic development, is masculine.

Stein could at first find encouragement in the confidence of Weininger's schemes, but she came later to understand that his was the poignant bravado of a man already committed to killing himself. Writing about himself in the past tense in his notebooks, in what amounts to a piece of 'posthumous autobiography', he had imagined a putative posterity with a mixture of arrogance and self-pity:

I believe that my intellectual powers are surely such that I would have become in a certain sense the resolver of all problems. I do not believe that I could have gotten bogged down in error somewhere for very long. I believe that I would have earned the title of resolver, for that was my nature.¹⁰⁸

It is unlikely that Stein would have read this, but somehow these private notes are unsurprising as the product of the same mind that fathered *SC*, even to the extent that

¹⁰⁴ 'The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans', *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein* (New York: Random House, 1962), 246.

¹⁰⁵ Stein's self-discovery perhaps supports Weininger's Kantian belief that respect for others stems from respect for oneself. In *MA* Stein discusses the difficulty of being good not in relation to family or god or country or profession, but to oneself (501).

¹⁰⁶ Moore, op. cit., 18.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, *MA* 230.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in *Jews and Gender*, op. cit., 58.

the book betrays the romantic disposition beneath its author's implacable scientism. Here is an admission of the importance of determining his own nature, of self-analysis, to the author, examining and refusing to find fault with his own credentials. Similarly Stein writes:

I am hoping sometime to be right about every one, about everything ... I want to realise every one, I want to write a history of every one ... of every kind there is in men and women. It would be such a satisfaction always to be right about every one, such a certain, active feeling in me. I want sometime to be sure when I know something that I am completely right in my certain feeling ... and in this way only in me can it come to be in me that to be dead is not to be a dead one. Really to be just dead is to be to me a really dead one. To be completely right, completely certain is to be in me universal in my feeling, to be like the earth complete and fructifying (*MA* 573-74).

Stein sees complete certainty staving off death; her quest for or premature belief in her own immortality is reminiscent of Weininger's contention that 'the new psychology would be a doctrine of the whole ... fresh and fertile' (*SC* 83-84).

In the notebooks Stein includes Weininger himself in the 'fanatic group' whose 'danger' is 'the denial of experience'; she says this made him, and her old friend Leon Solomons, who also died young, 'moral enthusiasts'. She continues 'it is this quality in them that so often makes their genius sterile ... and so there are innumerable ways of shipwreck' (#45, 5-6). When Stein discovered Weininger's suicide she was shocked, but further impelled to use him as a model for David Hersland; 'some young ones kill themselves then, stop living then, this is often happening' (*MA* 484).¹⁰⁹

Stein presents a sceptical approach to idealism of various sorts throughout *MA*, but idealism has many forms, as she points out. One remnant of Weininger's idealistic religiously fuelled enthusiasm which Stein espouses intact is his desire for immortality and his sense of destiny, in connection with both the authorial voice of *MA* and its representative genius figure, or 'man of destiny' in Weininger's term, David Hersland.¹¹⁰ In the notebooks Stein had written 'I need not be in a hurry to give birth to my hero because it will be an enormous task to struggle his development. I want to make him realise everybody in the book the way I am' (#6).

In the 'David Hersland' chapter Stein begins what appears to be a long digression on the qualities of completeness and certainty needed in her own composition, but which is also a mandate for the compositions of others as she discusses whether it is

¹⁰⁹ See Katz, op. cit., 281, for Stein's discovery of Weininger's suicide. Suicide encroaches at various stages in the novel (e.g. 536).

possible to include everything that one experiences in the telling of it. Genius almost seems to be a question of technique. Stein then begins to write about the links between experiencing, understanding and transcending in David Hersland. His problem of how to incorporate experience into his philosophy echo her own and Weininger's:

He certainly had enthusiasm, he certainly could have some experiencing, he certainly was needing for his own satisfaction to put in everything any one could be experiencing in thinking about anything ... He was one in a way never coming to be completely doing this thing, he was one having almost absolute conviction, he was one having real enthusiasm. He was one not being certain that experiencing being intensified was spirituality and idealism He almost came to be certain that one could not be experiencing something more complete than any experiencing, he came to be almost certain that one can be experiencing something that is more than experiencing. He came to be certainly quite certain that not any one could explain such a thing, he came to be almost certain that perhaps he could sometime explain such a thing (*MA* 780-81).

The possibility of transcendence comes from it meaning more than the intensification of experience. Weininger claims that genius is revealed through gradual intensifications of understanding (107), but his own meaning is not exactly clear. In describing genius, both writers come across the troubling relation of mind and matter as a spiritual as well as an artistic question. This question is tied up, by the way they write about it, with the universal writerly problem of inclusion and exclusion. David Hersland needs to experience and to explain but is never certain of either side of the contradictions he poses himself.

The assumption in *MA* is that complete understanding will produce an ending - but the eventual realization is that the only ending can come through death. As Bush points out, *MA* is in part a *Künstlerroman*, the story of 'the struggles of the artist to free himself from the immediate realities of his childhood and adolescence',¹¹¹ but it enacts not only that struggle but its failure. If Weininger's work shows 'the inner connections between becoming a man, finding a home, and being an artist' for the modernist writer, so too does Stein's - in the sense that it shows the impossibility of all three goals. David Hersland, like other modernist figures of the failed artist showing the characteristic 'inability to sustain the kind of disciplined work which would mark the achievement of an adult identity',¹¹² suggests the failure of Stein's own aesthetic schemes.

¹¹⁰ See Marcus, op. cit., 66.

¹¹¹ Bush, 'Toward the Outside', *Twentieth Century Literature* 24 (Spring 1978-9), 28.

¹¹² Toews, op. cit., 43, 51.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Modern Jew

‘The old people in a new world, the new people made out of the old, that is the story that I mean to tell, for that is what really is and what I really know.’¹

INTRODUCTION

I suppose you’ve read the Alice B. Toklas. Well, Gertrude Stein is a fine big serene girl, is she? beyond prejudice, - beyond being touched by the world’s good or bad opinion? THEN: why does she never mention that she or Miss Toklas are Jewesses? and why in the bundle of pages which were all that I could endure of ... “The Making of Americans” does she not mention that the family she is analyzing in such detail is a Jewish family. And why in fabricating a fictitious name for her family does she construe one that only faintly might be Jewish.

It’s Henry Adams’ wife, again. It’s possible to make books of a certain fascination if you scrupulously leave out the essential. (Thornton Wilder to Alexander Woollcott, 16 September 1933.)²

Wilder’s point is important. In the notebooks for *MA*, several of the names had sounded far different from those eventually used: the Genandenfeldt family, Katisha Bercklin, Mrs Meininger, Menda Herzel, Rena Barkholt, and Abel Pfefferman Panns, for example.³ Katz has briefly explained how a clearly Jewish plan for the novel changed.⁴ The original story as elaborated in the notes and diagrams had concerned a ‘German Jewish’ family and was to be ‘a study of assimilation’. Later there was also an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ family, though it formed at first a subsidiary part of the narrative. But the Jewish family was silently assimilated, as the word ‘Jewish’ was replaced by ‘German’ in the original draft and finally, in the novel itself, by ‘middle class’, in contrast to ‘Anglo Saxon’.⁵

The complex and inadequately addressed question of Stein’s own Jewishness forms, I shall argue, a conscious and essential part of her own conception of her status

¹ *MA* 3.

² Burns and Dydo, editors, *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 142-143, n.3. See *The Education of Henry Adams in Novels, Mt. St. Michel, The Education* (New York: Viking, 1983): ‘He had little to say, and he said it not very well, but that mattered less. The habit of expression leads to the search for something to express. Something remains as a residuum of the commonplace itself, if one strikes out every commonplace in the expression’ (801).

³ Notebook #105, YCAL.

⁴ Katz, ‘The First Making of *The Making of Americans*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1963), 206-07.

⁵ In the notebooks she planned to end *MA* on the story of ‘Yid and Anglo Saxon’ (#54).

as a modernist writer. What this boils down to is whether Stein is affirming or shedding her difference in an attempt to cultivate the modern, whether the modernist identity means for her an ability to assimilate cultures or to be assimilated within a culture. Stein certainly employs debates about race and family, as well as femininity, Weininger's axes of amorality; but why did she remove the personal element of her Jewishness?

The question of whether one denies oneself in order to create returns us to the problem of individual concerns set against universal requirements, the crux on which both liberalism and literary creation depend. The matter of Stein's own allegiances has a direct bearing on how we interpret her novel's relation to democracy, and her vision of America, whether she was celebrating regional particulars, or expressing a unified vision of America. Stein's paternal grandparents had arrived in America in 1841 from Germany; they belonged to what became known as the 'old immigration', from the countries of central and northern Europe. After 1890 the 'new immigration' saw an influx from southern and eastern Europe, and with it increased intolerance of the new population. In 1906, Stein's correspondence suggests that her unwillingness to return to live in America is connected to the new American attitude to the immigrant.⁶

Although Stein wrote of Harvard that it was the place 'where to be a Jew is the least burden on the individual of any spot on earth',⁷ she appeared to speak from experience when she added: 'A Jew admitted into the society of Gentiles is admitted on sufferance only. As long as they like him personally all is well, but the instant he does aught that is blame-worthy, swiftly comes opprobrium, not only to the man but to his race'. As a Jew in America Stein was certainly treated as different, at the very least.⁸

Hutchins Hapgood remarked on Stein's pronounced Jewishness,⁹ as did other friends; Lachman, a college correspondent, cracks several not very good jokes about Stein's race in his letters to her;¹⁰ Stein took them in good humour and had the last laugh by basing the character of Olf Rudeiner in *MA* on Lachman; 'He makes jokes and

⁶ See Wineapple, *Sister Brother* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 250. Unfortunately Stein's letter on the subject has been lost, but a letter from Mabel Weeks implies that Stein has written that 'the emigrant theory' is her reason for remaining in France. Weeks's response tells her not to identify herself with the 'one-and-two generation citizens' who are the cause of the controversy.

⁷ 'The Modern Jew Who Has Given Up the Faith of his Fathers Can Reasonably and Consistently Believe in Isolation'; Third Forensic, March 7, 1896 (YCAL).

⁸ See Mellow, *Charmed Circle* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1974), 24, for Stein's brother Leo's 'Jew complex'.

⁹ Hapgood, *A Victorian in the Modern World* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1939), 535.

¹⁰ Arthur Lachman to GS, YCAL; December 21 1897 and June 18 1896, when, for example, he teases her about her forthcoming career, 'your race has ever been alive to commercial advantages'.

religion', she comments.¹¹ According to another acquaintance, Dorothy Reed, a certain professor at Johns Hopkins (John Whitridge Williams) refused to pass her for his course; he 'couldn't stand her marked Hebrew looks'.¹² Santayana reflected on Harvard at this time, and on the Jewish character, in *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1920), where he defines 'Hebraism' as materialism and displays uncomplicated cheerfulness about the apparent cheerfulness of the American immigrant.¹³

Bernard Berenson's description of Stein was that her clothes 'made her look like the proto-Semite, a statue from Ur of the Chaldees',¹⁴ while Bravig Imbs, a Paris friend, claimed that she was distinctly un-Jewish, whatever that meant.¹⁵ Everybody seemed to find it necessary to make some comment on the fact that she was Jewish, apart from her. Apart from a few stoical comments about the Jewish people - on the rarity of 'the ethical Jewess',¹⁶ for example - Stein was not well-known for her statements on the subject. *MA*, however, fills in some important gaps.

STEIN AND THE JEWISH QUESTION

The political background to *MA* includes, importantly, Roosevelt's immigration act of 1903. As Higham has recorded, 'in 1899 the new immigration began a fantastic nine-year climb.'¹⁷ In 1881 the number of Jewish immigrants was 5,692 out of a total 669,431. By 1907, when immigration reached a new peak, Jewish immigration also reached an all time high of 149,182 out of a total 1,285,349 immigrants, making a Jewish contingent of 11.6 per cent for that year.¹⁸

There is no doubt as to how well informed Stein was about the racial discourse of the turn of the century. For example, she attended Israel Zangwill's lectures when he toured the States in the late 1890s - lectures in which he addressed the problem of American immigration; not only that, she had been to dinner with him in London,¹⁹ and

¹¹ Notebook MA-10, YCAL.

¹² Mellow, op. cit., 45.

¹³ (London: Constable and Co., 1920), 18-19; 46-48. Later Santayana's discussion of race and atavism becomes slightly more complex (169).

¹⁴ Mellow, op. cit., 47.

¹⁵ Imbs, *Confessions of Another Young Man* (New York: Henkle-Yewdale, 1936), 123, 124.

¹⁶ Mellow, op. cit., 242.

¹⁷ Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 110; Garis, *Immigration Restriction* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 207.

¹⁸ Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 214.

¹⁹ Wineapple, op. cit., 174.

indeed corresponded with him in the 1920s on the subject of *Three Lives*.²⁰ Her cousin Fred published an eight-page political pamphlet called *The Voice of the Ghetto* in 1901.²¹

Zionism came up in letters sent to her, though with a certain scorn, and was a popular movement of the day with which she, her friends and family were at least familiar. Stein, as we shall see, rejected assimilation, believed in the idea of a distinctly existing Jewish community but could not commit or fully adapt to its reality. Eventually she articulated a conscious rejection of Zionism.

It is likely too that Stein would have been well versed in the Jewish fiction of the day, as Leo Stein was reviewing and expressing strong opinions on 'immigration novels' for Jewish periodicals.²² The *Jewish Comment* in 1909 carried a review of *Three Lives* which Etta Cone mailed to Stein. In one letter written to Stein it becomes clear that she has recommended Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* to a friend.²³

Stein had a mutual friend with Abraham Cahan in Hutchins Hapgood, whose *Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902) has been described as 'a pioneering work in sociology'.²⁴ Hapgood wrote, many years later, in a letter to Hemingway, that Jews were renowned for their 'extreme sensitiveness'; evidence came from a trip he had taken with Fred and Leo Stein in the 1890s, when he had 'happened in conversation to use the phrase "jew me down"', and was surprised by the violence of their reaction. The subject arose in this letter because of Stein's bad treatment of Hemingway in *The Autobiography*, which Hapgood attributed to the portrayal of Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*.²⁵

In short, while Stein was no standard-bearer for Jewishness - Damon rightly refers to her 'radical anti-identitarianism'²⁶ - we should be sceptical of arguments that she saw

²⁰ His first impression was that its 'method is not inconsistent with sanity', as opposed to some of her other work (Zangwill to GS, 26 September, 1920, YCAL); after reading it fully he called it 'a very considerable literary achievement, full of subtlety and originality, and revealing a beautiful sympathy with humble lives' (6 October, 1920).

²¹ Rischin, *The Promised City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), 228.

²² See Leo Stein, 'The Jew in Fiction', *Jewish Exponent* II.5 (May 1900), 6-7.

²³ E.L. Erving to GS, December 9, 1912: 'And the Mary Antin book, *The Promised Land*, interested me wonderfully' (YCAL).

²⁴ Mellow, op. cit., 34.

²⁵ Hapgood to Hemingway, May 27, 1937, quoted in Hapgood, op. cit., 535. Hapgood remembers how Stein 'talked to me for a long time about how impossible it was for a Jewish woman to marry a Gentile', remarking on what he sees as Stein's intense Jewishness.

²⁶ Damon, 'Gertrude Stein's Jewishness', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 42.3 (Fall 1996), 492.

herself as 'a kind of creole', but was trying to escape the confines of Jewish identity,²⁷ or that Stein sought to remove her writing from 'any definite spatial or temporal context'.²⁸

'THE MODERN JEW'

The strength of Stein's early racial concerns can be found in her Radcliffe essay, entitled 'The modern Jew who has given up the faith of his fathers can reasonably and consistently believe in isolation'.²⁹ Above all, Stein's attitude here is reasonable, well-informed, and assertive. The essay locates a schismatic moment in Jewish history, when the people are split between contradictory urges to assimilation and a revival of Jewish faith. It asserts a strong sense of racial bonds and the danger of their undoing. The importance of the family is stressed, and Stein insists on the peculiar appositeness of the question at the end of the nineteenth century, when the future of the race has come to a 'crucial point'. Thus, 'race' - which is the term used by Stein herself - is viewed in unequivocally familial terms.³⁰

The essay also demonstrates a familiarity with all the characteristics traditionally attributed to Jewishness by the anti-Semite - 'financial ability' and 'clannishness' here are 'assertively appropriated', to paraphrase Damon, to prove the 'great power' of the Jew - and it is equally conversant with the prejudice these attributes have aroused: 'we seem to be on the eve of a worse anti-Semitic crisis than ever before. To illustrate one need but draw the attention of the reader to the spirit prevalent in Germany, the recent anti-Semitic riot in Paris and the not so very distant exodus in Russia.'

In this essay, Stein first attempts to describe what makes a Jew, and aware of the inherent multiplicity of the term, offers a variety of meanings for the Jewish faith, stressing either the formal aspect of Jewish 'law, customs and observances', as opposed to the 'reform Jew', the 'extreme liberal', or the believer in 'a Matthew Arnold sort of

²⁷ North, *The Dialect of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72.

²⁸ Weinstein, *Gertrude Stein and the Literature of the Modern Consciousness* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1970), 28. Moore, *Gertrude Stein's The Making of Americans* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 17, also claims that Stein writes without national or regional identities, and certainly there is an urge to move away from the constrictive aspects of these, but *MA* does have its regional biases; for example the richer and poorer areas of Gossols.

²⁹ All quotations given here are from the manuscript held at YCAL, op.cit., no page numbers.

³⁰ Sollors has given some account of the dynamics between the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' in 'Theory of American ethnicity', *American Quarterly*, 33 (1981), 257-83, and of the ambiguities of the term 'ethnicity' in *Beyond Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), chapter 1. Clearly the terms are liable to confusion and to multiple interpretations. Part of the object of this chapter is to elucidate what 'race' means to Stein.

“force that makes for righteousness”. She settles for the middle ground; ‘I propose that we here consider the Jewish Faith to mean a belief in a personal or quasi-personal God such as is described in the Old Testament, a belief in the Revelation of the law by the Lord through Moses and the prophets and in the faith that the people of Israel are the chosen people of the Lord’, as well as the observance of certain customs such as Passover. Interestingly her original wording here had been ‘the *fact* that the people of Israel are the chosen people of the Lord.’ Perhaps Stein’s ideas here were influenced by discussions of comparative religion which, according to Lachman, took place every week and to which she was an eager contributor.³¹

The wording of Stein’s definition of ‘isolation’ gives a sense of her own standpoint:

The Jew shall marry only the Jew. He may have business friends among the Gentiles, he may mix with them in their work and in their pleasures, he will go to their schools and receive their instructions, but in the sacred precincts of the home, in the close union of family and kinsfolk he must be a Jew with Jews; the Gentile has no place there.

Racial purity is a chief concern; ‘the most liberal and the most orthodox alike hold non-inter-marriage to be the sine qua non of Judaism; and justly, for inter-marriage would be the death-blow of the race.’ If intermarriage occurs, ‘The children of the second generation are Gentiles with Jewish blood and in the third generation all trace of Judaism is gone and *the Jew has become the Gentile*’ (my italics). Racial mixing with the Gentile is distorting and threatening to an essential Jewish identity, and will lead to its disappearance. The concern with three generations as the unit of descent is reminiscent of the version of this argument in the opening pages of *MA*. Stein has already figured out her own position as a ‘non-believing Jew’ who nevertheless sets up a ‘claim’ to Judaism.

The essay continues:

And God said unto Abraham, “I am the almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect and thou shalt be the father of many nations” (Genesis XVII) It was this feeling of a great destiny in the sense of being a great power, a nation standing by itself, ethical, civilizing, blessing other nations (Genesis XXVI, 4) but apart from them. These ideas were at the basis of the formation of the Jewish race, not a nation formed to disseminate a particular creed or type of worship, but a nation to stand apart, to be with nations but not of them, to be ever in the forefront of progress and enlightenment but not to mingle with others.

³¹ ‘One of our chief stimuli came from regular attendance every Sunday at the lectures held at Harvard Chapel. These were given by a succession of clergymen of various faiths ... Our Sunday night review of what we had listened to lasted too often far into Monday’s wee small hours’ (Lachman, ‘Gertrude Stein When I Knew Her’, YCAL).

This is particularly important for a reading of *MA*'s 'history of a family's progress', and its attitudes to the apartness and togetherness of the family and the nation. In answer to the question 'Can one claim any meaning in the existence of a race which disregards the laws and observances commanded to it by its greatest prophet?' Stein supplies a firm 'Yes'; 'it is possible to still be a Jew' without keeping the Sabbath or other observances. Her reason is that 'before the Sabbath had been declared, before the eating of unclean meat, shell fish, etc. had been prohibited, before the keeping of the Passover had been described and the treatment of the diseased had been ordained, the race had become a nation, the three great founders of it Abraham Isaac and Jacob had already lived and died.' These laws she describes as merely sanitary in origin. Ceremonials 'cannot be said to affect the existence of a race of whose past great moments they are but the beautiful symbols.'

It is a telling fact that Stein's concern here is with the origin of the nation and the race, a race of chosen people to whom she wishes somehow to belong, and for whom she suggests racial dominance. 'The spiritual meaning of the Chosen People may well signify a race having inborn a strongly ethical and a spiritual nature ever fostered and increased amongst themselves, thus making them in the very highest meaning of the words, Chosen People chosen for high purposes'.

Stein has a simple enough approach to the question of divided allegiance, and the idea that 'by keeping up his strong race feeling [the Jew] must inevitably be only half hearted in his loyalty to his country'; this was an objection that was addressed by numerous Jewish writers, including Mary Antin. The familiar response is also made; 'the Jew's loyalty to Judaism is not that of obedience to any temporal power, nor to a formation of any kind of government. It is a race-feeling, an enlargement of the family tie.' And, she continues, a love of family 'does not in any sense clash with the loyalty of a man to his nation.' So race is happily seen as the link between familial and social relations. The paradox is that though the separation of religion and race is advocated here, and the Jew can become American, he still must not transgress the racial line; intermarriage is not acceptable.³²

³² Stein's fervently held belief that a person can be a Jew and an American, and defined by both categories, relies on a definition of ethnicity as Jewish and identity as American which equates to a perception of the former as ancestry and the latter as marriage - Sollors brings these ideas together in his Foreword to *Theories of Ethnicity* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), xx.

As it concludes, Stein's college essay takes on the familiar highly emotive language of racial discourse; 'Thus it is now and has ever been. A bond of love and of duty exists between perfect strangers members of the one race too strong to be broken, they are as brothers, to love, to help and to bear the burdens one of the other.' She appeals to the memory of 'a race of sturdy independent forefathers' in support of isolationism, a 'spiritual legacy', a feeling so strong that 'a departure from it makes one a dastard and a renegade'. She culminates in a crescendo of optimism;

let the modern Jew accept this isolation as his birth-right. Let him not attempt to escape from it and thus do violence to the noblest part of him; let him rather turn this feeling to great purpose and give his race a new mission, of disseminating the broadest ideals the noblest brotherhood of man. Let him thus still be a Jew *although his Judaism is no longer a creed but a religion of endeavour*. Let Judaism mean a bonding together of a people making of themselves a brotherhood devoted to noble aims and great deeds (my italics).

The concept of the wandering Jew, the stranger in the land, is one which lies behind the movement of *MA*,³³ but the language of this passage has more in common with Mary Antin and other patriotic Jewish immigrants to America than to the Stein whose voice we now recognize. Nevertheless it also feeds into the rhetoric about the 'middle class' (Jewish) family in the opening pages of *MA*, as Katz mentions (207); in *MA* the distinctions of 'strangers' and 'brothers' would be questioned. What made her become, at least in part, a 'renegade'? A clue lies in the idea that 'Judaism is no longer a creed but a religion of endeavour'; or, as Michaels puts it, 'in nativist modernism, identity becomes an ambition as well as a description.'³⁴ Categories are no longer straightforward, no longer one's birth right; one must work to become American.

IMMIGRATION STORIES

The new wave of immigration brought to American fiction a sense of different people writing about a new experience of America, which changed the idea of America as lived and written about - of what the Great American Novel might consist of - and yet drew

³³ In 'The Stranger' (1908), Simmel associates Jewish history with being the stranger, not the owner of the land, and with mobility (*Theories of Ethnicity*, op. cit., 38). Edward Steiner, in *On the Trail of the Immigrant*, wrote that: 'The Jew has no home' (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 126. Marcus Ravage, in *An American in the Making*, calls himself 'a man without a country' (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1917), 266. David Hersland is seen in the notebooks 'wandering in search of knowledge' (12-4).

³⁴ Michaels, *Our America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 3.

on preexistent strands of Americanism. The immigration narrative became an identifiable genre.

MA may be classified within this genre because it traces the movement of a family from Europe to America, from poverty to riches, as entailed in the typical plot of an immigration novel.³⁵ These novels drew on a tradition in the plots of nineteenth-century Yiddish novels which, as well as being 'absorbed by the question of Jewish identity itself',³⁶ had tended to concentrate on generational struggle and final reconciliation between long lost fathers and sons.³⁷ Later, women's immigration stories would echo this in the story of the departure and return of the Jewish daughter.³⁸ Here I will discuss Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912), and Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers*. (1925)

The centrality of family life in *MA* owes much to the importance of heredity in novels of the realist tradition, and just as much to Stein's autobiographical leanings, but it is also easy to see how Stein's text may be aligned with some other immigration stories of the period, less experimental than hers, but with surprising connections, particularly to her use of the immigrant experience as a metaphor for the processes of assimilation and recall involved in composition, and the representation of time and memory in narrative. *MA* may be seen as an important part of the crossover between Puritan and Hebraic mythologies of arrival in and creation of America, the 'Promised Land',³⁹ without the religiosity or mysticism which such an event usually induces.

Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers*, published in 1925 but set at the turn of the century, is the story of a Jewish girl's conflict with her father and her attempt to outgrow

³⁵ In *Constituting Americans* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), Wald provides a precedent for viewing Stein as an Americanist, in the context of such 'narratives of allegiance' as Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912). (The phrase is Bill Brown's, 'Identity Culture', *American Literary History*, 10.1 (Spring 1998), 171). Dearborn has also discussed *MA* as a 'generational narrative' which draws on common themes of immigration novels, *Pocahontas' Daughters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

³⁶ Jacobson, "'The Quintessence of the Jew'", *Multilingual America*, ed. Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 104.

³⁷ An outstanding exponent of this genre was Shalom Aleichem (1859-1916), whose widely read novels were influenced by Dickens. The 'generational epics of Daniel Fuchs and Meyer Levin' carried on this tradition, Ferraro, *Ethnic Passages* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 58.

³⁸ See Dearborn, op. cit., 74, for summary of the themes of immigrant women's novels.

³⁹ On this Puritan tradition, see Olney, 'The Autobiography of America', *American Literary History*, 3.2 (Summer 1991), 385.

her family through education and marriage to an American.⁴⁰ (In all these stories, education is the basis of assimilation.) The peddlers, marriage brokers and matchmakers elaborated in Stein's notes and in *MA* itself are reminiscent of just such a story.⁴¹ Indeed Katz has described the marriage plot of *MA* and 'the drama of the Dehning daughters' in terms which suggest the dynamics of *Bread Givers*, one sister married off and one struggling with her father to choose her own husband, only for each to be trapped in an equally bad marriage, the first 'empty' and 'lifeless', the second full of 'passionate "agitated" misery'.⁴² Julia's 'liberated' approach has no better results than it would had she allowed someone to be chosen for her. The girls' mothers are powerless to introduce their daughters to a society to which they themselves do not belong.

There is a similarity also in the attitude of the father in finding a new wife after the mother's death; Jenny Dehning (based on Stein's Aunt Pauline) 'speaks of Herman's marriage both to him and to her children' before dying. Herman Dehning (based on Stein's Uncle Sol), dies 'after 3 years of trying to marry after death of his Miss Jenny' and being thwarted by interfering family members.⁴³

Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* was serialized in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1911-12 (an achievement which Stein herself coveted), and when it was published in book form in 1912 it became an immediate bestseller. Accessible and aspirational, it is a description of Antin's own emigration from Russian Poland, where she lived until the age of ten within the Pale, the area designated for Jewish settlement. This fact endows the narrative with its central awareness of the values of enclosure and freedom. As the title suggests, *The Promised Land* is a quasi-religious firsthand account of relocation and conversion to the American way of life. Although Antin stops short of mentioning her own conversion to Christianity, she joyfully replaces the authority of the Russian Tsar and his police and the prescriptive Judaic codes with the teachers and preachers of

⁴⁰ Yeziarska and Stein met in 1922. Yeziarska described Stein as 'a very nice big cow'; Dearborn, 'Anzia Yeziarska and the Making of an Ethnic American Self', *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 114.

⁴¹ An important passage on page 69 deals with women's involvement in arranging marriages; this is against the professed American tradition of marrying for love, but nevertheless, Stein protests, the arranged marriage is the most common practice, performed by the man's female relations; Stein wants to chronicle this process because 'the american tradition makes us lie about them and mostly in our writing there are none of these ordinary, good enough, comfortable, well to do men and women.' Notebook #91 also discusses the figure of the matchmaker.

⁴² Katz, op. cit., 47-48. In *Bread Givers*, Sara's sister Mashah's spirit is broken and she marries a man who is wealthy but unsuitable. Her other sister Bessie is married off to a fishmonger for profit.

⁴³ NB-MA, YCAL.

American democracy, and in particular with the figure of George Washington, the focus of an almost idolatrous obsession. She wilfully conflates Jewish and American myth: 'Never had I prayed, never had I chanted the songs of David, never had I called upon the Most Holy, in such utter reverence and worship as I repeated the sentences of my child's story of the patriot'.⁴⁴

Both the autobiographical novel *Bread Givers* and the 'premature biography' *The Promised Land* document the lives of recent immigrants to America from childhood through adolescence to womanhood. At the same time, both narratives use childhood as a metaphor for the state of America itself. America, like the immigrant family, is young and old at the same time. Listening to her father chastising her for her ambition, Sara Smolinsky of *Bread Givers* realizes: 'He could never understand. He was the Old World. I was the New' (207). Antin describes the process of Americanization as the nurturing of an infant (180). Towards the end of her narrative, she rejoices: 'it is not that I belong to the past, but the past that belongs to me. America is the youngest of the nations, and inherits all that went before in history. And I am the youngest of America's children, and into my hands is given all her priceless heritage' (364). In 1933 in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein plays with this notion in claiming that America was the 'oldest country in the world', because it had been modern for longest (86). In *MA*, her conception of America as an 'adolescent world' (47) suggests that America's attainment of maturity and that of its citizens, processes of individuation for author, characters, and country, are to be simultaneously described.⁴⁵

When Stein announces, at the beginning of *MA*, that 'It has always seemed to me a rare privilege, this, of being an American, a real American, one whose tradition it has taken scarcely sixty years to create' (3), she is speaking from within a firmly patriotic immigrant tradition, like that articulated by Antin: 'How long would you say, wise reader, it takes to make an American?'⁴⁶ *Bread Givers* carries the subtitle 'A struggle between a father of the Old World and a daughter of the New'; Stein's 'old people in a new world, the new people made out of the old' (*MA* 3) participate in similar struggles.

⁴⁴ Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 223.

⁴⁵ Olney and Sayre have argued for 'the conflation of personal and communal history in autobiography and nation making', particularly in America; see 'The Autobiography of America', *American Literary History*, 3/2 (Summer 1991), 380. The word 'adolescence' may also contain a loaded accusation in the contemporary context of, for example, G. Stanley Hall's work on 'adolescent races' which sees adolescence as movement from savagery to civilization. *Adolescence* (New York: Appleton, 1904), II.648-748.

Aware of the tradition which binds the individual story to the progress of the nation, Stein is deliberately echoing the tradition from which Antin speaks: 'We are the strands of the cable that binds the Old World to the New'.⁴⁶ For both Stein and Antin there is an initial urge towards conciliation between past and present. What was Stein's point, in imitating and inverting the declamations of early twentieth century assimilationists? I will return to Antin below as I try to answer this question, but first I will consider a further possible archetype for *MA*'s story of progress.

Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*, written during the years of growth of New York's Jewish East Side and published in 1917, chronicles a different 'historical' experience of twentieth-century America, through the life of a Russian Jew, his childhood in Antomir, his move to America, and his arrival at a dubious and regret-filled maturity. The autobiographical narrator proves unable to cope with the self-reliance expected of him in America. The opening pages contain a meditation on memory, the melancholy mood of which pervades the whole novel:

When I was young I used to think that middle-aged people recalled their youth as something seen through a haze. I know better now. Life is much shorter than I imagined it to be. ... I love to brood over my youth. The dearest days in one's life are those that seem very far and very near at once. My wretched boyhood appeals to me as a sick child does to its mother.⁴⁷

The telescoping of time scales and the early introduction of the correlation of homesickness with guilt and regret pave the way for Cahan's careful plotting of his protagonist's physical growth, sexual enlightenment and efforts towards education in accordance with his gradual movement away from home and journey to America.

In this internalization of Levinsky's environment, America represents a liberation from traditional bonds of religion which degrades into promiscuity, and a promise of the fulfilment of educational ambitions which deteriorates into the encouragement of financial acquisitiveness. Instead of representing the innocent alternative to cynical old Europe, America is seen to pervert the European child. This turns on its head the contention made by Henry James (among many others), when in *The American Scene* (1907) he railed against the contamination of America by outsiders, experiencing 'a haunting wonder as to what might be becoming of us all, "typically", ethnically, and thereby physiognomically, linguistically, *personally*'. James poses a barrage of

⁴⁶ Antin, op. cit., 222.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, xiii.

questions about growth and mutation in these overlapping spheres: who or what is an alien? and, before that, what constitutes an American? What form of heredity is being mixed on the streets of New York? 'Swarming ingenuous youths, *whom did they look like the sons of?*'⁴⁹ The contemplation of becoming, or change, on all these levels, is even more pertinent from the immigrant's point of view, of course.

David Levinsky has no father to claim inheritance from, he looks like nobody's son, and he becomes, at various points in the story, a homeless wanderer. After the death of his mother, for which he is partly responsible, David moves away from home to live with a supercilious and flirtatious girl who is better born than he. In her house he receives further education, and she becomes his first love then spurns him by refusing to come to America with him. Later, when the two meet again in America, they have polarized in accordance with their environments, she a Russian Marxist, he an American capitalist.

In Katz's reconstruction of the original plot of *MA* from the notes, we can see how David Hersland's story follows an analagous path of struggle with the father, early death of the mother, a liberating period of travel around America, curiosity about different approaches to the spiritual life, movement east, early disappointment in love affairs and eventual entanglement with a woman who does not love him, and finally utter disillusionment, continual thoughts of death, and the discovery that he 'has not really affected people' in his middle life; his solitary end precipitates the novel's ending.⁵⁰

Cahan, an advocate of Spencerian evolution, saw that the experience of America could be characterized as a form of evolution, the unfolding of latent possibilities, but he saw too that adaptation could bring about loss. Antin writes of 'the pains of adjustment, as racking as the pains of birth';⁵¹ alienation was just as likely as assimilation, for parents and children and for husbands and wives.⁵² *The Rise of David Levinsky* is the tragedy of a self-made man who forgets to make himself a family, and hence secure a future in America which will continue after his death (376-377). In the novel families are fragmented as old codes are broken, and the immigrant mother is a tragic, voiceless figure, tied to a home life the relevance of which has been overturned

⁴⁸ Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1969), 3-4.

⁴⁹ *The American Scene* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 50; 95; 92; 50.

⁵⁰ Katz, op.cit., 190. See 159-94 for a reconstruction of the entire 'buried' but integral narrative.

⁵¹ Antin, op. cit., 271.

by her own dedicated efforts to assimilate her children. Mary Antin describes this in Spencerian terms as 'part of the process of Americanization; an upheaval preceding the state of repose. It is the cross that the first and second generations must bear, an involuntary sacrifice for the sake of future generations'.⁵³

For children of our immigrants to outgrow their parents, not only intellectually, but physically as well, is a common phenomenon. Perhaps it is due to their being fed far better than their parents were in their childhood and youth.⁵⁴

This observation, made by David Levinsky, contains both pride and repulsion; there is a hidden wryness to the matter-of-fact explanation for the slightly monstrous but ultimately commendable development of the children. The children in these stories see themselves as the youngest and most American of America's children, and eagerly allow American habits to supplant family rituals. The Dehning family at the beginning of *MA* is involved in just this process (9-11).

The marriage market survives, but in debased form, in the new milieu. In middle age Levinsky looks at the new generation with suspicion and disapproval, in reaction to the society of which he was, by chance, one of the founders. Despite his general lack of discernment, Levinsky notices the 'spaces full of gaudy desolation'⁵⁵ in the merchant families' houses - compare this with the merchant family's house in *MA* (28), 'like a large and splendid canvas completely painted over but painted full of empty space' - and seems close to admitting that as orthodox Jews have compromised their faith to become merchants, mass production has overwhelmed individual effort. The success of the community has led to the debasement of the individual.

Many American Jews who read Cahan's novel felt their own 'respectability threatened' by Levinsky's story, largely because of the very volatility of their position, which Cahan was trying to describe.⁵⁶ Stein's brother Leo was one of a minority of American Jews who publicly applauded Cahan's enterprise at the time.⁵⁷ Levinsky is only dimly aware of the ironies of his own 'rise'; he lists the conflicts and adjustments relating to his gesticulation and pronunciation, but does not evaluate them, unlike later

⁵² Cahan's earlier work, *Yekl* (first published in 1893 in Yiddish, and in English in 1895), is the story of that alienation.

⁵³ Antin, op. cit., 271.

⁵⁴ Cahan, op. cit., 354. Antin makes a similar point, op. cit., 364. Antin's scheme places the family in the past, and is obsessed with the individual.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 394.

⁵⁶ Higham, *Send These to Me* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 88.

⁵⁷ Wineapple, op. cit., 132.

immigrant narrators like Sara Smolinsky of *Bread Givers*. *The Rise of David Levinsky* really is, in part, a romance of the successful business venture:

The man who has built the greatest skyscrapers in the country, including the Woolworth Building, is a Russian Jew who came here a penniless boy. I cannot boast such a distinction, but then I have helped build up one of the great industries of the United States, and that also is something to be proud of (529).

We can compare this to the treatment of economic success and failure in one of Stein's early themes.

'ONLY A QUESTION OF RENT'

In Stein's theme, two brothers, Joseph and David, 'the only children of a peasant way off in Deutschland', make their way to 'this land of promise', America.⁵⁸ The story is narrated by Joseph's daughter. In America David becomes a storekeeper and Joseph, a handsome young man, is 'invaluable to [him] as a salesman'. This family business is a precursor of the family store at the beginning of *MA*. Joseph leaves the business when he gets married, to the irritation of his brother; the two argue and a feud begins between them. Joseph, who has brought his mother with him, looks after her until she gets annoyed with his wife and moves to David's house. The narrator daughter continues:

During the years that passed my uncle grew constantly richer, while my father only made a fairly good living. His landlord wished to use the store he was occupying for some other purpose and so my father began to look about for new quarters. My uncle came to him and told him that he was going to move out of his present place into a larger store, and that he would gladly rent his old store to him. He said that he wished to bury the old troubles and proposed that they live like brothers should. My father, always ready to keep the peace with his brother ... consented and took a lease for three years. During this time the street lost prestige and rents went down very much.

Expecting a rent reduction, he approaches his brother, but 'my uncle handed my father a paper and said with that slight foreign accent which makes cruelty more cruel because more hopelessly removed from ourselves' (Stein is distancing herself from these 'foreign' people), 'Yes Jo here is your renewal.' He has raised the rent and made a lease for ten years.⁵⁹

Facing ruin for his wife and children, Joseph asks his brother why, and he announces 'You see I have you between my thumb and finger so and now I crush you.' (This early attempt to imitate German immigrant speech was simply crossed through by

⁵⁸ 'Only a Question of Rent', *Daily Themes for English 22 at Radcliffe*, 1894-5 (YCAL).

⁵⁹ The treatment of tenants by landlords was an extremely popular theme in contemporary Jewish fiction.

Stein's teacher who considered it 'incoherent'.) Seven years later, Joseph is unable to talk to his brother's child and 'bitter, moody and tyrannical' to his own.

This piece, written in the 1890s, is Stein's early attempt to convey the realities of immigrant life. In *MA* there is further description of the petty entrepreneurship of first generation Jewish immigrants. In the original plan for *MA* the last of the older generation is David Hersland senior, whose life is briefly described; he 'fails in business, loses wife before failure', as he watches his children leaving home, marrying and going to college.⁶⁰ In this version, the financial adventures were also explained in more detail. For example, Alfred Hersland begins by setting up practice as a lawyer, then becomes interested in stocks. Katz summarizes the failure of Alfred, and the family feud which takes place, reconstructed from the notes, as follows:

Alfred in desperation has turned to his father-in-law to ask for large sums of money to go into politics. Old Dehning refuses flatly to help him, and the "struggle for victory" between the two men begins in earnest. Alfred, telling no one, borrows the money elsewhere, but his political coup fails miserably, and he loses all his borrowed money "by not altogether a straight deal." Seeing no alternative, he confronts an enraged Dehning once again with a demand for help, this time because he is ruinously in debt.

Dehning eventually 'capitulates to Alfred by paying all his debts'.⁶¹

The prominence of storekeepers and salesmen, and deliberations over sales and goods mimic the traditional circumstances of Jewish arrival in America (e.g. *MA* 496-7). The nouveau riche characters are also identifiably Jewish stereotypes. The difference between the two families is partly a distinction between old and new money; 'The Hersland family, they had not had their money longer but they had taken to ideas and to culture quicker' (NB 9-8). Stein's criticism of the tastelessness of the parvenu Jewish-American home may suggest an assimilationist's disgust at incomplete assimilation, but we should remember the suggestion in Stein's Radcliffe theme that the Jew could be isolated from the rest of the community, yet remain a patriot, fighting for America if need be but retaining his Jewish identity. Radical thinkers such as Randolph Bourne, who espoused the anti-assimilation rationale, expressed a desire to see the immigrant retain a culture, a 'taste';⁶² this may be part of Stein's reasoning.

⁶⁰ NB-MA.

⁶¹ Katz, op. cit., 172, 183-5.

⁶² See Bourne, 'Trans-National America' [1916], *Theories of Ethnicity*, ed. Sollors (op. cit., 98-99).

THE AMERICAN NOVEL

In 1903, the year Stein began composing 'The Making of Americans', Frank Norris stated that 'The Great American Novel' was the most 'overworked phrase of overworked book reviewers'.⁶³ Stein had her own comment on the subject:

I am afraid that I can never write the great American novel. I don't know how to sell on a margin or to do anything with shorts and longs, so I have to content myself with niggers and servant girls and the foreign population generally Dey [her stories] is werry simple and werry vulgar and I don't think they will interest the great American public.⁶⁴

Despite this early disclaimer, Knox refers to *MA* as a 'super-spoof of the tradition' of the Great American Novel. He argues that in giving epic status to one family, combining the universal and the local, *MA* fulfils all the criteria for what Wallace Stevens terms the 'supreme fiction', but 'parodistically'.⁶⁵ Like other 'Great American Novels', *MA* attempts to see itself as the last word; it is the *ne plus ultra* of the bourgeois family saga.⁶⁶ If the Great American Novel is a text both embodying and charting the characteristics of the American nation, *MA* does indeed have a pretty strong claim. The idea of the 'universal American' is employed,⁶⁷ while the American condition seems also to be one which is summed up in the experience of the immigrant; this novel must be capable of fulfilling the urge to 'express America by embodying it'.⁶⁸ Interestingly, Stein uses a dialect voice in her evaluation of the impossibility of her own work becoming a Great American Novel.

Generational struggles and individuals who propel themselves to success through hard work and dedication to the American way of life are the stuff of what William Carlos Williams heralds as the latest American 'romances', in *The Great American Novel*.⁶⁹ Their equivalent in *MA* are failure stories. David Hersland, a loser in the Darwinian struggle, falls into the chasm which David Levinsky sees beckoning. A single, self-made man can cross class and race boundaries, but cannot also succeed in family life.

⁶³ Norris, *The Responsibilities of the Novelist and Other Literary Essays* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), 1.

⁶⁴ GS to Mabel Weeks, early 1906, n.d. (YCAL). Wald (op. cit., 239-40) performs a close reading of this letter.

⁶⁵ Knox, 'The Great American Novel: Final Chapter', *American Quarterly*, 21 (Winter 1969), 679.

⁶⁶ In 1904 Stein stated that she wanted *MA* to be 'the epoch-making book' (cited in letter from Germania Oppenheimer May 11 1904).

⁶⁷ See Santayana, op. cit., 168.

⁶⁸ Michaels, op. cit., 84.

⁶⁹ William Carlos Williams, *The Great American Novel* (New York: Folcroft Library, 1973), 72: 'In industry and commerce the stories of many of the successful immigrants read like romances.'

In *MA*, Stein wants to provide an 'exhaustive inventory' of American life, but rather than envisioning the nation on the panoramic scale of a work like Dos Passos' *USA*, Stein makes the family itself representative of the country, recalling Antin's conflation of state and family in *The Promised Land*: 'United in America, there were ten chances of our getting to our feet again to one chance in our scattered, aimless state'.⁷⁰ The words 'united', 'state' and 'America' in this sentence are significantly disassembled and reunited in a new meaning. The object of Stein's satire, if her scepticism may be called that, is the format of the family novel itself. Stein is of course intensely interested in family life in the writing of *MA*, and 'living down the tempers we are born with' is prime matter for the realist novel; but Stein's novel does not go 'into the home to stay';⁷¹ its concern is how to move beyond it.

For all the bourgeois narrator's love of the middle classes, the middle-class America depicted in *MA* is a place with hardly any sincere esprit de corps, except in the prescriptiveness of its institutions which, as Stein demonstrates, are beginning to come apart at the seams. The narrator seems fearful of change. It is only the poor people and the unconventional people who have anything to keep them together, and that is their status as outsiders. But the voice suggests that the new America seems bound to be defined by these marginal inhabitants; the alien, the immigrant, the rebel.⁷² Stein's title, *The Making of Americans*, suggests an attempt to rediscover the unity of the nation. Entirely new relations are being set up through scientific categorization, changes are endorsed; there may be no need for the old codes at all. Still, there is a pervading scepticism about the entire project, the whole idea of relational identity.

In *MA* class is related to type, but this is more liberating than it sounds; Martha has a preference for people who are 'of her natural kind' (425); this means that she can move beyond the socially enforced barriers established by her 'class' (which, as we have seen, is a euphemism for race). Abolishing and creating difference at the same time, two types of liberalism appear to be at work. *MA*'s ideas of belonging, propriety, and true

⁷⁰ Antin, op. cit., 162.

⁷¹ Norris, op. cit., 10.

⁷² Liberal contemporaries frequently endorsed this idea. Randolph Bourne, for example, maintained that only the "so-called 'hyphenates'" could revitalize the country's 'creative power'; 'Trans-National America', op. cit., 97, 107. In a 1998 article dealing partly with Stein, Brown quotes Arjun Appadurai's call to stop calling America 'a land of immigrants' (Brown, op. cit. 166), to the exclusion of recognition of a global set of diasporas; clearly the term is a mainstay of American iconography and a commonplace in cultural criticism. But at the time of Stein's composition of *MA* it was still possible to employ it straightforwardly.

nature may mean you belong elsewhere than where you are born.⁷³ Consciously or unconsciously, *MA* enacts a form of liberalism which both accepts and eradicates difference. But the social reality, for Martha at least, is an inevitable movement away from the poor children around her (426).

Stein's opening description of what it is to be 'a real American, one whose tradition it has taken scarcely sixty years to create', coincides directly with the rhetoric of immigrant writers such as Marcus Ravage, who expressly stated that the new Americans were the real Americans, 'What, I wonder, do they know of America, who only know America?'⁷⁴ Only the alien, in other words, knows what America is. This was a politically explosive belief at the turn of the century, and guaranteed to rile supporters of the nativist cause. But in *MA* this belief is usurped by the Anglo-Saxon ideal.

EAST AND WEST

The traditional antithesis of eastern effeminacy and western masculinity exists in *MA*. Turner's 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' had associated the advance of the settlement of the western frontier with individualism, and with strength and energy.⁷⁵ Stein's distinctions between east and west take on racial meanings.⁷⁶ In the notebooks for *MA* the westerners are the geniuses, the easterners have 'profound unoriginality'.⁷⁷ The 'Anglo-Saxon and American' type has 'courage', is 'clean sexually, practical not sordid, strong in attack, have to be beaten to be conquered, hard', while 'the other' (the Jew - and the definition as 'other' is surely significant here) is 'earthy, sordid, cowardly, tenacious, prudent' - and in this group Stein includes herself.⁷⁸ The idea is an association of the East/the Jew with effeminate intellectualism; the West/the Gentile with true creativity.

In a college theme of November 22 1894, Stein had uncovered the 'constitution' of an American woman, perhaps herself, as a hybrid of east and west, and a state of mind which makes her always want to be the other. Stein offers the 'freedom, imagination and unconventionality' of the West as opposed to the 'cold New England tradition' in this

⁷³ Here Stein suggests, like for example Benjamin Franklin, that progress means making your way in the world by going elsewhere. In the notebooks she compares herself to David Copperfield (2-23).

⁷⁴ *An American in the Making*, op. cit., introduction.

⁷⁵ 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' [1893], *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 37, 35.

⁷⁶ Katz, op. cit., 207.

⁷⁷ NB-MA, YCAL.

theme.⁷⁹ She intended to make her work entirely different to what she perceived as the narrow regionalism of such writers as Mary Wilkins Freeman.⁸⁰

Stein had always preferred the east/west to the north/south dichotomy to illustrate her points about American character.⁸¹ Following real life, she had installed the Hodder character, Phillip Redfern, in an eastern college which is, by her own definition, 'too damn anxious to be safe' (NB 11-2).⁸² The evolutionary drive to success lies with the West. 'David death due to fear of feminisation'⁸³ - like Owen Wister or Roosevelt, David heads for the robust, masculine West in an attempt to rid himself of dangerous effeminacy.⁸⁴

Traces of the racial segregations made in the notebooks remain in the novel's opposition to eastern intellectualism: for instance, the way in which one character 'ran himself by his mind' (371) - a large section of one notebook had been devoted to an elaboration of the pitfalls of this tendency, as a particularly Jewish characteristic (A-3). In *MA* itself, Stein would become eager to dispel an image of herself as weak, effeminate, Jewish, and dependent on relational identity. In *MA* genius is categorized as being 'without weakness'; geniuses 'are the very strongest thing that there can be' (494).

In the notebooks and in *MA* Anglo Saxon and Jewish/middle class are not imbued with overt race hatreds of the kind that Weininger distilled, but are separate worlds which reflect each other's inadequacies:

And now we come back to the Dehnings and their very different kind of living, the very different things they needed to win out in, the very different way they looked at freedom, and it is for Julia Dehning and Alfred Hersland to make out between them their life when they had made such a different kind of a beginning.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ C-35.

⁷⁹ Theme of Nov 22, 1894. 'She is a bit of New Englandism but unfortunately not a complete bit.' This emphasis on lack of completion, on being only a 'bit', though inconspicuous here, will determine the way Stein perceives character. The muddle of influences, too, in this hybrid of east and west, will inform her dualistic ideas about character. On eastern austerity, see for example Freeman's 'A New England Nun', *A New England Nun and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 2000).

⁸⁰ *Pembroke* had been published the same year, and Stein wrote: 'it has left me with a feeling of soul sickness and utter hopelessness. The intolerance of these New Englanders is overwhelming'; Radcliffe theme, December 1 1894, YCAL.

⁸¹ Bridgepoint (Baltimore) and Gossols (Oakland) are the two poles in *MA*.

⁸² NB 11-5; 'Smith is where Hodder performance takes place.'

⁸³ MA-22.

⁸⁴ In the notebooks the David character is 'living free life in the mountains all kinds of people feels like me ... when he gets East with civilised ones' (2-23).

⁸⁵ NB-MA.

The intermarriage, of course, is a failure. As we saw in chapter 2, the incomplete status of a people between eastern and western traditions, old and new worlds, is the cause of this failure.

ASSIMILATION

Stein deliberately adapts the status of the Jewish family in *MA* in order to make it less like her own, yet the autobiographical elements are still obvious, and the idea that self-knowledge is attainable through knowledge of three generations of one's forbears makes the time scale fit Stein's own experience as a third generation American. The emphasis on this relational identity, beginning with the grandparents, at the beginning of *MA* is of course a common novelistic feature, but Stein makes the mechanics of her genealogy particularly evident, seeming to insist not only that we must know these generations, but that this is all that we need in order to know ourselves.⁸⁶ The idea that one can be contaminated by one's ancestors is of course of much wider application; forms of atavism in terms of disease and family resemblances of all sorts are literary and philosophical concerns as well as scientific ones. Resemblance in terms of inheritance is like a physical memory, but this scheme takes in more than family resemblances, and breaks down family bonds to discover new ways of connecting people.

Henry Dehning undergoes a sense, typical in Jewish-American immigration novels, of separate selves when he sees a peddler, triggering memories of the old world and an old version of himself (*MA* 14).⁸⁷ There is an irony, though, to Stein's statement that 'We need only realise our parents, remember our grandparents and know ourselves and our history is complete' (3), when knowing oneself becomes as problematic as it does in the course of *MA*; wiping the slate clean in this way, becoming a 'new', 'real' American, involves refusing to know the former self. The paradoxical concept of the alien as the true American means that to be an American is to have been something before you were an American. Ravage's story ends with the words: 'I had become one of them. I was not a man without a country. I was an American'.⁸⁸ Stein's story begins with this premise, but ends by being much less convinced.

⁸⁶ Hitler's idea of racial purity was based on the same precept, as he urged the German people that the examination of three preceding generations could accurately indicate the purity of a family's strain; Harrowitz and Hyams, eds, *Jews and Gender* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 31.

⁸⁷ For another contemporary version of this trope, see Ravage, *op. cit.*, introduction (no page numbers).

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 266.

The question of how long, in generational terms, it takes for the immigrant to divest himself of his previous identity depends on the proportion of inherited to acquired characteristics.⁸⁹ For example, the Herslands' governess Madeleine Wyman, part of the second generation, 'had lingering in her a little, being foreign. She was american, her brothers and sisters were american, and her father and her mother, in their feeling' (281). This is an important distinction; the father and mother have *not* been born American, unlike the children, but the fact that they feel themselves to be American in one sense makes them so; even though they 'were very foreign to every one that came to know them' (281). But in contrast to her brothers and sisters who are 'entirely american, being entirely of their american generation in education and feeling' (280), Madeleine, born American, is not entirely so; she is 'still a little foreign' (280). Because she is both American and foreign, Stein suggests how she might deviate from the system, the system under discussion being American education.

In *QED* Stein had listed the characters of each of her protagonists, showing the influence of different localities, different forebears and different family ideals. They were distinctly American but each one at the same time bore definitely the stamp of one of the older civilisations, incomplete and frustrated in this American version but always insistent.

Helen although 'upright' is somehow 'brutal', Mabel's 'angular', 'awkward' exterior disguises a 'nature of the tropics', while Adele's movements 'suggested a land of laziness and sunshine'. Mabel's face

was pale yellow brown in complexion and thin in the temples and forehead; heavy about the mouth, not with the weight of flesh but with the drag of unidealised passion, continually sated and continually craving. The long formless chin accentuated the lack of moral significance.

Stein emphasizes the racial aspect of these attempts at finding physical correlatives for moral attributes by adding, with overtones of 'Degeneration in American Women', that 'in the American woman the aristocracy had become vulgarised and the power weakened'.⁹⁰ Though they have the outer accoutrements of Americanization - speech, dress, manner - their assimilation has been somehow imperfect.

⁸⁹ Michaels shows how by 1924 this position could be reversed, and American identity promoted as a heritage rather than an achievement (op. cit., 8).

⁹⁰ *Fernhurst, QED and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), 54-56.

As Russett points out, in the face of Darwinism 'women and the lesser races served to buffer Victorian gentlemen from a too-threatening intimacy with the brutes.'⁹¹ Stein indeed was explicitly interested in defining 'brutishness' among men and women. The word 'brute' is dwelt on in both *MA* and *QED*, where dangerous atavistic natures lurk beneath the women's civilized American exteriors.

Similarly, 'Under Julia's very american face, body, clothes and manner and her vigor of the domineering and crude virgin, there were now and then flashes of passion that lit up an older well hidden tradition' (15). This is a strange list; American 'clothes' and 'manner' are surreptitiously used to justify a conception of an American 'face' and 'body'. One thinks of Boas's 1911 report on the effect of American surroundings on the shape of the immigrant's head, which was taken as proof of the assimilation of all racial types to an 'American type', with an 'American face', or of Chessnut's 1900 evocation of 'the future American ethnic type'.⁹² An American type, an American face, expunges the provincialism that both Stein and the new breed of liberals, some of whom belonged to her circle of American friends, were opposed to, but creates a new cultural identity based on national allegiance.⁹³

The form of atavism described here is presented not in terms of what that older culture might mean, but simply in terms of those characteristics Julia gets from her mother, transforming the observation into a comment on the universal nature of inheritance. And there is a sardonic moment of reflection on the practice of converting Jewish names into Anglo-Saxon sounding ones:

the boy George ... was not named after his grandfather. And so it was right that in his name he should not sound as if her were the son of his father, so at least his mother decided for him, and the father, he laughed and let her do the way she liked it. And so the boy was named George and the other three were there but hidden as an initial to be only used for signing. (15)

This incident of the suppression of Jewish identity is made even more significant by the fact that Stein herself was doing exactly the same thing to her characters, who had been named as Jews and were now being turned simply into 'middle class' Americans.⁹⁴ What is even more ironic is that in the very next line she refers to George's

⁹¹ Russett, *Sexual Science* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 14.

⁹² See Higham 1988, op. cit., 125; Charles W. Chesnutt, 'The Future American', *Theories of Ethnicity* op. cit., 18.

⁹³ See Higham 1984, op. cit., 196.

‘christening’. It is hard to tell how disingenuous Stein is being in the comment that follows; ‘George Dehning now about fourteen was strong in sport and washing. He was not foreign in his washing. Oh, no, he was really an american’ (15).⁹⁵

RELIGION

A few references to the Plymouth Brethren (495) and Christian Science (e.g. NB 14-7) and to priests (62) hint at the novel’s original interest in different codes of behaviour, though otherwise religious references are mostly veiled, as in meditations on the rewards of the afterlife - ‘Some love themselves negatively, then impersonal future life is for them all right, a good enough future thing’ (444) - or cloaked in generality when Stein mentions ‘religion’, or ‘a god’, rather than any particular one; when religion may be interpreted ecumenically as any form of certainty (e.g. 450); or fanaticism in any field, ‘skepticism ... opportunism ... socialism ... monarchism’, even ‘irreligion’ (371). The novel does have several lengthy passages concerning levels of religious feeling in its characters (e.g. 63). It also stresses the importance of simple practices such as washing and eating which have a resonance in Jewish culture, but it does so without much explicit reference to religious observance.

An exception is when Fanny Hissen, who becomes the mother of the Hersland family, faces a crisis of conscience, having realized that her husband’s religious customs are not the same as her father’s. She writes to her father for advice and he replies with the tale of a priest who was asked by a member of his church whether he could get shaved at a barber’s on the Sabbath. The priest forbids him to do so, as ‘it would be a sin’. Two weeks later the man bumps into the priest coming out of the barbers, freshly shaven:

But how is this, the man said to him, you told me that it was forbidden ... that it would be for me a sin. Ah! said the priest to him, that was right, I told you I must forbid you to go Sunday morning to a shop and get some one to shave you, that it would be a sin for you to do this thing, but don’t you see, I did not do any asking. (MA 62)

⁹⁴ On Jewish renaming, see Adele Oppenheimer’s letter to Stein, 19 August 1895, joking about the attempts of friends the Kohns to aggrandize their name; ‘aristocratic name isn’t it? That “K” at the beginning looks so pretty’ (YCAL).

⁹⁵ Higham 1984, comments on dirtiness as a Jewish stereotype, op. cit., 121. See Klein, *Foreigners* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 27, on perceptions (by, among others, Jacob Riis in *How the Other Half Lives*) of Jewish immigrant children as dirty.

This parable about the conflict of faiths and parental/pedagogical disillusionment is the sort of anecdote that could be found in any Jewish story of assimilation, if you changed the word 'priest' to 'Rabbi'.⁹⁶

In a sense, because Stein's Jewish family are made to 'pass', to assimilate, the 'Jewish experiments in identity formation' (in Toews's phrase) which she is describing, and the strong tradition of which she is relying on, are universalized. Under the influence of Weininger too, and an increasingly abstract notion of race itself, *MA* deals implicitly with 'the problems of constructing a home and a temporal identity (in generational continuity with parents and children) in a world in which such homes and identities are no longer simply natural'.⁹⁷ In other words, the 'Jewish problem' is a problem which is shared by all America. If Jewishness was a 'religion of endeavour', as Stein claimed in her early forensic, so were all other identities, in every country, climate, and civilization.⁹⁸

DEMOCRATIC AMERICAN EDUCATION

American education is dealt with in detail in the novel, as it is in most immigration stories. 'Mr Hersland believed in independence for his children, in democratic schooling for them, in having a governess in the house with them for their education, in healthy out of door living' (405). Democracy and Rooseveltian healthy living are espoused; Hersland wants his children to be 'individual and independent' (408), yet he places restrictions on Martha's liberty.⁹⁹

The governess is employed to give Martha an American education, but she also remains under the jurisdiction of the father. 'He tried to make her over' (408) and induces 'nervous confusion from the changing' in her education (410). As Martha grows older it is not the differences in their present existences but in their futures which further separates her from the children around her. Although Mr Hersland has 'no sense of social distinction, they were poor men and he was a rich one, he never wanted then his children to have any position' (408) 'the natural future for her was then separating'

⁹⁶ Antin's narrative re-enacts childhood's need for answers, for intelligible proof, and its scepticism about inherited law. She records her childhood experiments into the omniscience of God (123-4). Religion is drawn as a scheme of bondage and barriers, representing the insuperable difficulties of bringing faith into the modern world.

⁹⁷ Toews, 'Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism, 1900-1914,' *Modernism/Modernity* 4.1 (Jan.1997), 49.

⁹⁸ See *MA* 493.

Martha from her poorer friends (413). The question of what the word 'natural' really means here is deliberately skirted; it is ironically left unloaded, whereas Stein is devoting the entire novel to finding a way of discovering exactly what each person's 'nature' is.

One feature of Martha's earlier life, spoken almost under the narrator's breath, reminds the reader of a moment in Antin's *The Promised Land*; Mr Hersland makes his way to his daughter's school, just as Antin's father does, 'her father had been there to talk about her, to explain about her, to arrange about her' (MA 418). Both fathers make an elaborate point of stressing education, 'democratic schooling' (405) for their daughters as the most powerful force in the process of Americanization.¹⁰⁰ This ties in with the discussion of the father's conflicting demands on the daughter, and what a woman should be (422-3). These are stories in which Jewish women, though liberated, still find themselves forced to conform to traditional types.¹⁰¹ They may question the correctness of religious dogma - and in the notebooks the 'religious breaking away'¹⁰² had been a more explicit part of the story - but they must still conform to their father's rules.¹⁰³ He is an overpowering father reminiscent of all those coming of age stories, the difference being that Martha never overcomes him; she goes back to him - and although this is a highly significant moment, in the narrative itself it is not even acknowledged or undergone as something particularly traumatic.

Stein's text is naturally full of allusions to boundaries and enclosures. At one point she dwells on the fact that the Hissen father shuts his children up in the family home:

Until they were all really grown men and women, until the women each found a husband to control them and the men went into a business and were independent of him, until they were in this sense grown men and women, until he died the father always wanted and succeeded in shutting them all up to be always with him (59-60).

This 'shutting up' seems to be related to the father's religion, which he forces upon the family. Stein's point about patriarchal influences could hardly be clearer than when, as

⁹⁹ See also discussions of education, MA 241.

¹⁰⁰ See Antin, op. cit., 202. Boelhower refers to 'the topos of the public school' in immigrant writing, 'The Making of Ethnic Autobiography in the United States', *American Autobiography*, ed. Eakin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 129.

¹⁰¹ As Dearborn indicates, Stein elevates the same father figures traditionally revered by immigrant women writers (1986, op. cit., 174-5). Such men dominate her idea of heroism until the end of her career, when her play about Susan B. Anthony, *The Mother of Us All*, brings her full circle in an echo of one of the types she inherits from Weininger, the 'mother of all.'

¹⁰² NB MA-20.

¹⁰³ See Antin, op. cit., 70.

we have seen, Fanny Hissen experiences 'a very great division' between her husband's beliefs and 'her father's ways as she had learned to have them inside her when she with all her sisters and brothers were living shut up with him' (61).

We have seen the strong suggestion of feminine colonization and matriarchal influence over the various branches of the family in *MA*; the mothers literally carry the children into the new world (3-4). The four mothers listed at the beginning, however, turn out to be nothing more than shadows; the fathers are the ones held in awe by the children, and the women take the cue from the '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' (4).¹⁰⁴

MA is also about the achievement of masculinity, individuality and Americanness, and the movement away from family. It tries to promote that masculine sensibility; it begins with the voice of the 'good son',¹⁰⁵ and it also begins with an articulation of the masculine conflict necessary for the attainment of maturity; the opening anecdote represents the very origin of culture and community as based on a masculine precedent of relations between father and son. Stein is engaged at the same time in working out these identities for herself as well as presenting them in narrative form, and the text ends up expressing its own 'Jewishness', tinged with the femininity of the family form; Stein does not return to 'that awful America place'.¹⁰⁶

SINGULARITY

Katz has shown that Stein used her aunt Beatrice Keyser's friends 'for her portraits of large scale American-Jewish bourgeois matrons',¹⁰⁷ in the notebooks she describes these Jewish ladies in order, partly, to demonstrate that she is not one of their sort of bourgeois.¹⁰⁸ Stein's struggle between her 'bourgeois' background and her aspirations to exceptionality is articulated in the novel, which opens with Stein's praise of 'middle class' values, as well as a professed attraction to 'singularity', which of course could

¹⁰⁴ Dearborn states that 'the first-generation Jewish mother was severely oppressed' (op. cit., 1989, 109). Higham points out that 'the mother in many an immigrant novel is a doomed figure' (op. cit, 1984, 85). Compare the mother in the notebooks, who had lots of 'very little' children to maintain a bourgeois equilibrium. 'They lived and died in mildness and contentment' because 'she had swept out all the sorrow for her children' NB-MA.

¹⁰⁵ Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 57.

¹⁰⁶ GS to Mabel Weeks, July 10 1901.

¹⁰⁷ See also Katz, op. cit., 101.

¹⁰⁸ NB 11.12.

also be connected to a collective ideal of individuality: as Dearborn phrases it, a sense of the 'shared difference' of Americans.¹⁰⁹

For Stein there are tensions between inherited and acquired identity that are particularly exemplified by the Jew in America; tensions between being a Jew, a stranger, and becoming an American, part of the community. Stein's characters repeat variations, or 'mixtures' of their parents' dispositions, to reinforce their sense of themselves. Forging an individuated self is not easy in the shadow of one's family, and even less so in an America which is turning more and more to mass production and its inherent urge to conformity. Early in *MA*, Stein links America with mass production:

Yes real singularity we have not made enough of yet so that any other one can really know it. I say vital singularity is as yet an unknown product with us, we who in our habits, dress-suit cases, clothes and hats and ways of thinking, walking, making money, talking, having simple lines in decorating, in ways of reforming, all with a metallic clicking like the type-writing which is our only way of thinking, our way of educating, our way of learning, all always the same way of doing, all the way down as far as there is any way down inside to us. We are all the same all through us, we never have it to be free inside us. No brother singulars, it is sad here for us, there is no place in an adolescent world for anything eccentric like us, machine making does not turn out queer things like us, they can never make a world to let us be free each one inside us (47).¹¹⁰

There are powerful contradictions in Stein's use of the pronoun 'we' to express her sense of 'singularity'.

In *MA*, more generally, Stein seems to turn back on the assertion of a distinct Jewish identity expressed in her college essay.¹¹¹ But Stein's distress at homogeneity in the passages which refer to 'singularity' presents Americanization in opposition to freedom and diversity. Katz quotes a passage from the notebooks: 'In sixty years we moderns must create a complete tradition and live in it for we cannot do not follow teaching. Hence our art and ourselves and he who runs may read the dreadful

¹⁰⁹ Dearborn (1986, op. cit.), 3.

¹¹⁰ Kallen, in 'Democracy versus the Melting Pot' (1915), on 'standardization' in American life is strikingly similar to Stein here: 'In these days of ready-made clothes, factory-made goods, refrigerating plants, it is almost impossible that the mass of the inhabitants of this country should wear other than uniform clothes, use other than uniform furniture or utensils, or eat anything but the same kind of food'; *Theories of Ethnicity* (op. cit.), 74. Kallen uses this to demonstrate an inevitable classlessness in American society. As Higham relates, the development of mass production and mass culture in America depended on the immigrant classes, op. cit. (1984), 23-26.

¹¹¹ This belief had been similar to Kallen's drive to 'Judaize the Jew' in his 1906 paper on 'The Ethics of Zionism', in which a Jew always remains a Jew, or Bourne's concept of 'transnationalism', in which regions and ethnicities are encouraged to prosper and to differentiate themselves.

failures.’¹¹² Katz elaborates the point that the tradition Stein is writing about in this first version of *MA* is

the Jewish middle class immigrant’s way of life in America. The “teaching” her contemporaries were following uneasily was not only German-American middle class, but specifically Jewish; and the “fever” to be an Anglo-Saxon and a gentleman merely reflected the anxiety of her generation to assimilate into Protestant America as rapidly and as completely as possible.¹¹³

Importantly, in the passage from the notebooks ‘modern’ means the modern Jew; an unspoken link between the state of being a modern and the state of being a modern Jew does exist. Also importantly Stein here makes a link between creating ‘our art and ourselves’ which would resurface thematically throughout *MA* - constructing a modern text is metaphorically linked with constructing a modern identity - and expresses the apprehension of failure which would cast a shadow across the novel. Becoming an American and making an American text are fraught with the same difficulties.¹¹⁴

Early in the novel, Stein uses the apostrophizing voice that we have encountered in her college essay on Jewish isolationism:

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 young woman can ever 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 up 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 themselves 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 attraction (*MA*, 21).

This paragraph is interesting for its overt discussion of race and class. Remembering that ‘middle class’ here also means Jewish, Stein’s statement that the ‘middle class young woman’ (herself) cannot quite achieve the ‘distinction of the truly noble’ is ominous.¹¹⁵ ‘The danger of being mixed up’ by a combination of singularity and tradition suggests the painfulness of assimilation. The passage is also interesting

¹¹² NB-2, 7.

¹¹³ Katz, op. cit., 203-04.

¹¹⁴ In *Four in America* (1931-34, published 1947) Stein was to categorized George Washington as a novelist because he began the great American novel - America itself is a novel.

¹¹⁵ See Jacobson, op. cit., 106 for the common perception in Yiddish fiction of ‘Americanization as nobility’.

because Stein is also writing in what might be described as a 'Jewish voice' here; for the first time not in direct desire to imitate dialogue or in indirect free speech but as part of the narrative itself, if we can be so definite about the distinction. When she had written *Three Lives* the unconventional syntax was part of an attempt to convey the speech patterns of Anna, Melanctha and Lena. Here, the narrative voice begins to take on a Jewish diction not to demonstrate its characters' points of view but to put across its own; it becomes the immigrant speaker. Identifying in a more radical way with the immigrant, it takes on the dual singularity and collectivity of the immigrant experience.

The important term in these passages is singularity, as pitted against normality; and yet in democratic America there is confusion between normality and deviancy ('diversity' when it 'goes further'); singularity itself becomes a widespread characteristic.¹¹⁶ For nineteenth-century hereditary theory, rising democracy was the harbinger of an all-pervasive mediocrity at which Frances Galton, for example, was appalled:

the ordinary genealogical course of a race consists in a constant outgrowth from its centre, a constant dying away at its margins, and a tendency of the scanty remnants of all exceptional stock to revert to that mediocrity, whence the majority of their ancestors sprang.¹¹⁷

The thing to be fought against here, above all else, is mediocrity. In a well remarked upon but, in context, paradoxical passage towards the beginning of *MA*, Stein describes a collective movement from America to Europe, in terms of intellectual exodus.¹¹⁸ Having stressed that America needs 'to breed vital singularity' (the 'exceptional stock' referred to by Galton) through 'time and certainty of place and means', she sadly observes of the current generation:

We flee ... 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 to 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 (21).

Phrases such as 'Our noble order' and 'such forms' hold biological significance. We can sense in Stein's passage the same concern as Galton's, although this is not how the

¹¹⁶ Damon states that Stein's confusion of normality and deviancy in this passage suggests 'the powerful otherness of being a gay Jewish women writer'; 'Women, Dogs and Jews', *The Dark End of the Street* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 230.

¹¹⁷ 'Typical Laws of Heredity', 1875-76, quoted in Depew and Weber, *Darwinism Evolving* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), 198.

¹¹⁸ In connection with this passage where the bourgeois are the Jews, Stein's notebook comment that 'The bourgeois always to flee them the other bourgeois' (1-36) appears sardonic.

passage has usually been read. The passage suggests the same double bind of wanting to promote an intellectual normality for everyone, yet fearing that reversion to the same standard for everyone will constitute intellectual mediocrity. This connection with the theory behind eugenics suggests that in Stein's America, a fearful stage of degeneration had been reached.

Stein's answer, like that of the eugenicists, was to posit the genius as a messianic figure. Definitions of exceptionality - singularity - in Stein's passage depend on oneness, apartness, independence of the community: the individual apart. In *MA* this must be reconciled with an urge to representativeness, community, and the possibility of identification. The idea of 'universal Jewishness' may explain the apparently paradoxical belief in uniqueness and strangeness in these passages. Damon takes this as an affirmative stance, suggesting that Jews like Freud and, it is implied, Stein, identify 'Jewish' characteristics in order to disseminate and universalize them; nevertheless after the acceptance there remains the problem that in the urge to universalize, the differences are ironed out.

An insistence on universal similarities partly disguises Stein's own sense of difference. The Jew is a stranger in the land, yet when all are subject to the same 'crisis of subjective autonomy and communal identity', the outcast becomes the hero; America becomes defined by inhabitants - immigrants or women - in a state of transition.¹¹⁹

'MY COUNTRY'

From the opening page, where the act of telling the real story of the immigrants is expressed as a pressing need, the implication of racial integration is important to the scheme of *MA*. In *The Promised Land*, Mary Antin points out that the act of saying 'my country' is a collective aspiration and effort; both Stein and Antin frequently use the first person plural (we or us) to emphasize the collectivity of these needs.¹²⁰ The word America itself implies a collective identity, as Michaels states; these narratives struggle

¹¹⁹ Will, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of 'Genius'* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000): 'In reading herself through Weininger, Stein imagined herself able to shed the ties of both race and gender and to assert the universality of her own type' (37). But Weininger argues for the persistence of racial characteristics despite adaptation; *Sex and Character*, 308.

¹²⁰ Stein writes of Martha Hersland's bond of allegiance to people other than those amongst whom she was born; the 'we' the narrator uses applies to this new generational bond among New Americans, 'the new people made out of the old' (*MA* 3).

therefore with what it means to be an individual American within that collectivity.¹²¹ In *MA* as in *The Promised Land*, there is a desire to chronicle everything, for Stein to tell the history of everyone who ever is or was or will be living. Statistics are not enough, but there is a statistical urge to both narratives.

Antin's narrative reaches its climax with her discovery of America as the pinnacle of modern civilization; Stein begins with this premise, which she then starts to question and subvert; she comes to write of the 'unharmonious unreality' (30) of the fusion of old and new worlds. The unsettling experience of the immigrant becomes a metaphor for Stein's struggle to create the new.

'It has always seemed to me a rare privilege, this, of being an American, a real American, one whose tradition it has taken scarcely sixty years to create' (3). At the beginning of her novel, Stein is undoubtedly attracted to the patriotic formula, the romance of the outcast becoming the privileged citizen, a member of Washington's family, and at one level she buys into its mythology, tingling with patriotism like Antin at the events of ordinary life, giving her characters popular American names instead of obscure European ones, allowing them to discuss modern 'improvements' and the value of American education, exalting the freedom of American girls to choose their own husbands, dismissing the old fashioned fear of the father's displeasure as an outdated principle.

Both texts begin by presenting the family as the focus of American life and their American texts; Antin, like Stein, often uses the words 'family', 'American' and 'progress' in conjunction with each other. But by the end of her story, Antin is forced to admit that the disruptions of new ways of life frequently cause the immigrant family to fall apart, and Stein's final chapter on the family is a pessimistic meditation on death, practically enacting this very breakdown. The family is inadequate, torn apart, sacrificed to the progress of the individual.

In a paradoxical way Stein's adoption of dialect voices and her attempt to remove memory from the historical process in *MA* may help to loosen the bonds of family at the same time as she is showing concern to investigate one family's progress as a template for the rise of a people, a nation. Amid the 'general sense of cultural decline'¹²² her project of writing a 'progress' seems to be flying in the face of concerns about new

¹²¹ Michaels, op. cit., 103.

¹²² Bauer, *Edith Wharton's Brave New Politics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 177.

threats of class and race infiltration to which she herself had alluded in 'Degeneration in American Women'.¹²³

Essential to the conversion experience described in *The Promised Land* is its disarming earnestness. Antin only uses ironic statement when writing about the old world. Her descriptions of America have the reverence of prayer.¹²⁴ Stein's mimicry is not entirely straightforward as she picks up and plays with, almost exploits, this naive voice. To begin with, the short declarative sentences reflect the values of the honest, hardworking, decent people she eulogizes, and her characters speak in a recognizable immigrant idiom. The flatness deliberately evades irony: 'all altogether there they all always led a pleasant family life' (12). But what Lutz calls Henry Dehning's 'slapstick'¹²⁵ immigrant speak seems an incorrect term here. Stein's use of 'dialect' does not seek to make fun of the speaker. The following is a remarkable evocation of a memory of transportation:

...we left home to come and make our way here. We did not have much money so all the family could not come over on the same ship together, and I remember how lonesome Adolph and I were when we went away from home alone together. I remember too while we were waiting in a big bare room for them to give us tickets, I remember we heard some one say our father's name, some man in the same room with us. We did not dare speak to the men near us and we did not know which man it was that knew us, but it made us feel a little better (MA, 10-11).¹²⁶

The clarity, the lack of irony, in this passage sounds more like Antin than it does the rest of *MA*. Infant immigration becomes for Stein a paradigmatic scenario; the bare room and the voice calling his family name that Henry Dehning recalls are reminiscent of Antin's descriptions of transportation, and also of Antin's first memory, of death, in a dark room.

Antin's earliest memory is of a darkened room containing the corpse of her grandfather, around which her childhood self is inquisitively walking. Antin fully accepts the possibility that she may have made this up, noticing the extreme usefulness of this paradigmatic scenario. The scene may be taken to represent memory itself, the process of examining the old world and the nineteenth century, with a sense that it is

¹²³ For suggestive exploration of these concerns see Lears, *No Place of Grace* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

¹²⁴ However, see Sollors, Introduction to *The Promised Land* (London: Penguin, 1997), for a reading of the nuances of Antin's prose.

¹²⁵ Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991) 278.

obsolete and yet essential. Both writers admit, even rely on, the unreliability of memory, noticing how easily it achieves the status of family myth. Their narratives attempt to find a place for both individual and collective pasts.

In *MA* the children hear the story of their father's arrival in America so often that it gains a mythical status, so simple and familiar that it comes across like a collective memory, like Antin's version of immigration as a kind of cosmological rebirth. Yeziarska records that her own arrival in America is already a family myth. The difference between *MA* and other immigration narratives is that it incorporates these processes rather than simply describing them. Remembering or discovering one's origins is like a slow process of awakening from deep sleep as buried characteristics as well as literal memories return to consciousness (*MA* 5). Wald has written that 'In the cross-cultural experience of immigrants, Stein could extend her exploration of the disruptions in the habits of attention', using it to represent an in-between state of consciousness, spatially and culturally.¹²⁷

After the first hundred pages or so, the immigration plot disintegrates in the welter of Stein's experimental prose style. It might be easy to assume that Stein's immigrant voices also dissolve, just as the hardships of beginning life in the new world are barely touched on. Stein appears to show ambivalence towards her subject as the traditional immigration story is undercut by modernist paradoxes. The sense of being 'foreign' even seems to take on a pejorative meaning. But this is an emulation of the same pride with which Antin throws off the mantle of her past, willing herself to be 'made over' in defiance of the old codes. Indeed Stein has made provision for this in stating at the outset the outline of the story that she *means* to tell, not necessarily the one she will be able to; she recognizes that there are disruptions to be overcome, and in describing 'what makes an American' she may be forced to put these old habits to one side. An American is a specific achievement, not just a description but an ambition, as Michaels says.¹²⁸ The same might be said of the Great American Novel, which also eventually strives to leave regionality behind. Stein's narrative enacts precisely the difficulties and distancings which even Antin in all her idealism identifies as the pitfalls of arrival in

¹²⁶ The transatlantic crossing, particularly in relation to memory and rebirth, is clearly a resonant theme in American immigrant fiction; see Sollors, 'Literature and Ethnicity', *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Thernstrom (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 649.

¹²⁷ Wald, op. cit., 238.

¹²⁸ Michaels, op. cit., 3.

America. Later on, instead of reporting conversations, Stein allows her distressed narrative voice itself to take on the shifting syntax, the hesitations, stutterings and repetitions of immigrant speech, as if she is indeed learning to speak her own new language. *MA* contains no vivid depiction of slums or ghettos, but it expresses a deep understanding of the position of outsider extended to the Jews.

Both narratives describe the Jews wandering over the new land; writing about this experience seems to be a way of claiming possession of America. 'Wandering', the distinctive movement of *MA* (and of 'Melantha'), is both an American and a Jewish trope, as Stein shows in the image of the peddler who serves to spark off the memory of the old world in the Dehning father. This situation is not ideal, however: the wanderers, disinherited in the old world, remain as strangers, out of place and time.

Antin makes the rhetorical point that the Jew is thousands of years old, unlike the American; time scales are painfully compressed within the individual. Stein claims that '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' (21). Even Stein's narrator, the supposed chronicler of the new America, is still a stranger in the land.

In her Introduction Antin has an optimistic vision of the two worlds hand in hand, marching side by side into the future, which is far preferable to this lonely wandering of the outsider, but at the time of her writing the assimilation has not been fully effected.¹²⁹ Stein seems to question whether it can be.

One of the usual concerns of immigration narratives is the generational conflict. In these stories, fathers are disciplinarians, and they are also more or less unreliable custodians of the old religion. The narratives of Stein, Cahan and Antin also strongly emphasize the breaking of boundaries. They all mention moments where communication between parents and children becomes impossible, and also discuss the role reversals involved as the children have to teach the new ways to their intransigent parents. All this has obvious reverberations concerning obedience to patriarchal law. Antin dampens these radical claims by introducing a Spencerian evolutionary concept of upheaval before repose, a sacrifice now for more perfect equilibrium later.¹³⁰ Stein in her opening anecdote about the ritual dragging of a father round his own orchard by his

¹²⁹ Antin, op. cit., xxi.

¹³⁰ Cahan, as we have seen, also relied on Spencerian concepts.

son also sees violence and upheaval as ultimately beneficial, provided they are confined within certain traditional bounds.

Antin's story describes small failures on the way to the fulfilment of the ultimate success story; by the end her family are the proud possessors of their own house with a fence around it, their own plot of American land. Stein's story begins at a point in history when that success is already attained, with her descriptions of the Hersland family home and grounds, fenced in with a hedge of roses. Both writers suggest that in America fences and boundaries are the signifiers of freedom, instead of the constraints and obligations of the old world. But as Stein's narrative progresses she allows various stories of both success and failure in the new world to infiltrate the supposed 'progress' of her family. To an extent she is suggesting the hollowness of the idealism attached to the American home.

Repetition, in Stein's text, represents the memory process of her characters while at the same time creating a memory of the image for the reader. In *Bread Givers*, *The Promised Land* and *MA* the American idyll is represented as a walled garden. 'Dover Street was my fairest garden of girlhood, a gate of paradise, a window facing on a broad avenue of life', Antin claims (286). Sara Smolinsky of *Bread Givers* recalls a trip to suburbia:

Each house had its own green grass in front, its own free space all around, and it faced the street with the calm security of being owned for generations, and not rented by the month from a landlord ... So these are the real Americans, I thought, thrilled by the lean, straight bearing of the passers-by ... There was in them that sure, settled look of those who belong in the world in which they were born.¹³¹

Each house has its boundaries, but also represents freedom. In the 'real' America, fences and walls do not imprison, (like the boundaries which make Polotzk a prison for Antin); they provide security and denote position (like the 'stronger wall' of the Jewish faith in Polotzk). When Antin comes to discuss the reliability of memory in her writing, she uses the example of her grandfather's garden, which is one of her first memories. She vividly remembers that there were Dahlias in the garden, but she has since been told that there were none. Nevertheless, she persists in arranging the garden exactly the way she remembers and loves it; her own version, which she has added to and played with in her

¹³¹ Yeziarska, op. cit., 210. Compare with James's perspective, in *The American Scene*, on the 'unmitigated publicity' and 'outward show' of New Jersey houses belonging to the nouveau riche 'German Jewry': 'each on its little square of brightly-green carpet', with 'extraordinarily exposed windows', and without the protection of garden walls (op. cit., 10-11).

mind for years, is the more truthful one. Similarly, in the early part of the novel Stein lovingly reconstructs her own childhood garden through many permutations, returning to the same phrases about 'the ten acre place in that part of Gossols where no other rich people were living' (132) until the reader's memory is in turn activated by them, and the process of recollection involved in reading, as well as composition, is made explicit.

COMPOSITION

Stein's own lack of faith leads her, in *MA*, to express a fear of her own mortality, and of the insignificance of her work. This is what lies behind the urge to catalogue all possible variations of human life; she needs to leave a legacy to future generations, and nothing will do other than knowing everything and always being right. In turn this explains why the state of childhood is so disconcerting to her; babies are little and helpless and they know nothing, she claims, and when a person realizes that they once were only a baby, it paralyses them, 'kills everything in them'. Still more she shudders at the possibility of never having existed at all, were it not for the chance coupling of two other people. It seems that thinking about generations inspires this kind of reflection on chance and mortality; Antin has a rather more optimistic take on the question when she describes how an old woman tried to stop her father and mother from marrying:

It is right that I should pick my words most carefully, and meditate over every comma ... If I had died after my first breath, my history would still be worth recording - for before I could lie on my mother's breast, the earth had to be prepared and the stars had to take their places; a million races had to die, testing the laws of life; ... I was millions of years on the way, and I came through the seas of chance, over the fiery mountain of law, by the zigzag path of human possibility. Multitudes were pushed back into the abyss of non-existence, that I should have way to creep into being. And at the last, when I stood at the gate of life, a weazen-faced fishwife, who had not wit enough to support herself, came near to shutting me out.¹³²

Antin is fairly explicit about the Darwinian struggle implied in her methods. For Antin as well as for Stein, meditation over birth and mortality converts itself into meditation over composition. In *MA* the adult cannot contemplate the discrepancy between himself and himself as a baby. Walker suggests that 'Stein's celebration of repetition is an attempt to repair this breach', trying perhaps to create a continuum, through composition, for herself as much as her characters.¹³³

¹³² Antin, op. cit., 58.

¹³³ *The Making of a Modernist* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 198.

Stein forthrightly privileges the present in this scheme, unwilling to project herself into old age; she is denying not just the past but the whole process of aging, attempting through repetition to create a continuum which is beyond time and death. Similarly Antin offers only grudging nods to future generations. Both see themselves as the fully grown adults of America, the possessors of the past, the heirs to ages of evolution, in an attempt to mythologize their pioneering newness. Their narratives enact the supplanting of age and permanence by youth and possibility or uncertainty. The growth and change of the nation and the individual are both dictated by the arrival of the new generation. 'America is the youngest of the nations, and inherits all that went before in history. And I am the youngest of America's children, and into my hands is given all her priceless heritage...' ¹³⁴

Yes it is easy to think ourselves and our friends, all our lives as young grown men and women, indeed it is hard for us to feel even when we talk it long, that we are old like old men and women or little as a baby or as children. Such parts of our living are never really there to us as present, to our feeling (*MA*, 5).

Each of these texts has two plots; the story of the progress of its characters and the story of the development of its own composition, expressed in authorial digressions. In each a continuity with the past becomes dubious. Both Stein and Antin explicitly try to cope with the hopelessness of writing and remembering. 'Can this be I?' asks Antin, describing the stranger who is her childhood self; ¹³⁵ she envisages memory as a painful compression within a body which she has outgrown:

I want to forget - sometimes I long to forget. I think I have thoroughly assimilated my past - I have done its bidding - I want now to be of today. It is painful to be consciously of two worlds. The wandering Jew in me seeks forgetfulness. I am not afraid to live on and on, if only I do not have to remember too much. ¹³⁶

Henry Dehning, as we have seen, had also found it hard to recognize his past incarnation as a penniless Jewish peddler as the same man that he is in the novel's present, the successful American merchant. ¹³⁷ Stein uncompromisingly stresses the impossibility of envisioning oneself as a child without irreparable damage to one's self image; the slow awakening from deep sleep that is remembering childhood is a disconcerting experience. Both these approaches carry the suggestion of collective memory. The uncanny awareness of separate selves within the present self is consciously linked to an

¹³⁴ Antin, op. cit., 364.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 79.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, xiv.

awareness of the removal to America as an almost literal rebirth.¹³⁸ Antin's opening makes this explicit:

I was born, I have lived, and I have been made over. Is it not time to write my life's story? I am just as much out of the way as if I were dead, for I am absolutely other than the person whose story I have to tell. Physical continuity with my earlier self is no disadvantage ... My life I have still to live; her life ended when mine began.¹³⁹

Beginning in a new world is likened to beginning a text, filled with the same trepidations, stops and starts, and anxieties. This is implied in the tension between making and being made involved in Stein's title; Antin repeatedly refers to having been 'made over' as an American. Both Stein and Antin fill their texts with multiple beginnings; Antin states that each person is born several times over in painful ways, Stein suggests the pain of the recovery of previous and distant selves. Time schemes are frequently compressed or elongated in memory. Antin calls the fortnight in quarantine anticipating her arrival in America 'an epoch, divisible into eras, periods, events'.¹⁴⁰

Relating the story of how she wrote a poem about George Washington for the local paper, Antin remarks that 'composing' is not the right word for writing, since it is such a discomposing process. Stein is similarly disconcerted. 'I am writing for myself and strangers' (289) she declares, and while it has been suggested that it was gracious but unnecessary of her to include the strangers, the importance of this statement is that it implies an attitude of otherness within herself. When Antin describes seeing her own name in the paper she exclaims 'Was that really I?' in an echo of the dissociation she felt on contemplating her childhood self.¹⁴¹ Along with an awareness of audience, or lack of one in Stein's case, comes a building up of layers of dissociation within the self.

Boelhower has stated that 'one of the informing conventions of ethnic autobiography [is] the procedure of appealing to a double audience or, more specifically, to a structurally insecure American self',¹⁴² an appeal, in other words, to 'myself and strangers.' Stein and Antin's perception of another person inside themselves is a double consciousness of the American and the Jew, acquired and inherited characteristics,

¹³⁷ See Katz, op. cit., 162.

¹³⁸ Sollors states that 'otherness in ourselves' is a common theme of American autobiographical conversion stories (*Beyond Ethnicity*, op. cit., 31). Boelhower calls the divided immigrant 'hyphenated' self 'an anticipation of the serial self of modernism' *Autobiographical Transactions in Modernist America* (Trieste: Del Bianco Editore, 1992), 16-17.

¹³⁹ Antin, op. cit., xi.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 177.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, 213.

¹⁴² Eakin 1991, op.cit., 136.

identity and heredity - what Sollors refers to as 'consent and descent'. In a later autobiography, Stein would write 'you are of course never yourself'.¹⁴³

Antin recognizes that 'It is painful to be consciously of two worlds',¹⁴⁴ but she optimistically transcends that pain, whereas Stein descends to inhabit that borderline, obsessed with the process of 'living down the tempers we are born with'. Ultimately, that process is seen as a liberating one; part of America's mythology suggests that people need not be defined by heredity.¹⁴⁵

Importantly, both authors incorporate parts of older texts within these narratives: Antin her own translation of an original piece she had written in Yiddish, Stein part of a story, *Fernhurst*, which she had composed years before. Neither writer can resist drawing attention to the nature of these insertions and actively criticizing them, so that their own words seem to be returning to disrupt their narratives. Like memories of the old world or descriptions of grandparents they must be included if the whole story is to be told. The immigrant experience provides an image of the universal formation of identity; the displacement and difference within himself that each person has to overcome.

STEIN'S DIALECT

Although Stein is often seen, by admirers as well as detractors, as writing out of a vaguely non-English language tradition, of course this was not literally true.¹⁴⁶ English was her first language but she deliberately alienated herself from formal correctness as if coming to English as a second language.

Even early in the novel's reception, *MA* had been classed as culturally indeterminate: the *Springfield Report*, for example, suggested that 'The ideas are fairly clear, even if expressed with the cumbersomeness of a writer using a language not native to him.'¹⁴⁷ Several of its first readers thought the style was 'naive';¹⁴⁸ almost as if it were a piece of local colour writing. However, readers also claimed that it was not tied

¹⁴³ *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 68.

¹⁴⁴ Antin, op. cit., xiv.

¹⁴⁵ See Sollors on Barrett Wendell, who 'saw at the core of "the American national character" a denial of legitimacy and privilege based exclusively on descent', *Beyond Ethnicity*, op. cit., 4.

¹⁴⁶ See Dearborn 1986, op. cit., 161. Playing on this fact, journalists found the suggestion that she wrote 'Steinese' an irresistible joke. Other reference to Stein's language play often regarded it with suspicion as 'double talk', e.g. Ben Burns, 'Double-Talk Prose; Common Sense Talk', *Chicago Defender* (27 October, 1945).

¹⁴⁷ Clipping, YCAL MSS Box 52, folder 925, n.d.

to any particular region; Katherine Anne Porter thought Stein 'very free from ... prejudice'.¹⁴⁹ One reviewer claimed:

The book is a new departure in that it indicates the imitation of speech cadences rather than those of written prose ... the practice seems less a manner than a method. A mental classification by a person acquainted with many ways of life and society. There is throughout the book not the slightest provinciality or prejudice. To Miss Stein, character is rated by intelligence rather than by geography.¹⁵⁰

On the publication of the abridged edition in 1934 Kate Buss described it as 'a textbook of American character',¹⁵¹ 'one woman's theory of national character.' This, however, was seen by others as deeply ironic:

an expatriate American, writing a language all but hermetic, poles removed from the common people and from their problems and interests, addicted to snobbery (the Alice B. Toklas is one of the most snobbish documents printed in this century, and perhaps in any other), suddenly is catapulted into the democracy of popularity. And she loves it.¹⁵²

This appraisal signals the ultimate discrepancy in Stein's public image, the naive or primitive writer and the effete 'genius'. Stein herself in *Alice B. Toklas* related with some pride the anecdote about the publisher who suggested grammatical corrections to *Three Lives* because he thought she was a non-native writer of English.¹⁵³ On the other hand, an article carried in *Better English* magazine had seriously compared her diction to other totalitarian forms of speech, such as that of Hitler and Father Divine, as if she was some sort of literary dictator. The author claimed that Stein was the originator of 'Dictator's English', and that Hitler had 'borrowed consciously ... or developed independently' the same 'primitive, childlike' style.¹⁵⁴ Stein certainly played with this image; Stephen Spender recalled his enjoyment of her definition of democracy: if you treat everyone equally anyone will do anything for you.¹⁵⁵

While Wilder was perplexed at the novel's quietness about Jewishness, other critics assumed that it was Jewish on the basis that the author was. Edmund Wilson, for

¹⁴⁸ *Daily Oklahoman* (25 Feb 1934).

¹⁴⁹ 'Everybody Is a Real One', *The Days Before* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1953), 39; in *New York Herald Tribune* (January 16, 1927), 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Daily Oklahoman* (25 Feb 1934).

¹⁵¹ Kate Buss, 'Gertrude Stein As A Writer and A Personality', *Boston Evening Transcript* (April 21, 1928).

¹⁵² Isaac Goldberg, 'A Stein on the Table', *Panorama* (Boston, Mass., April 1934).

¹⁵³ (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 76.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in 'Professor Says Father Divine Is Using "Dictator's English"', clipping from *World Telegram* (YCAL).

¹⁵⁵ 'Three Lives Make One', *New York Times Book Review* (March 24, 1957), 38.

example, summed it up, among comments on the ‘soporific rigmaroles, ... echolaliac incantations, ... half-witted-sounding catalogues’, as follows:

some ruminative self-hypnosis, some progressive slowing-up of the mind, has begun to affect Miss Stein’s style. Where, in “Three Lives,” her recurring repetitions ... were useful in producing the effect of the speech of slow-minded people (even in the later book, she is quite successful with the patient and brooding repetitiousness of the German-Jewish Americans of the first and second generations); in “The Making of Americans,” her repetitions begin to suggest some technique of mesmerism.¹⁵⁶

Here Wilson obliquely connects Stein’s Jewishness with her experiments in automatic writing (her ‘self-hypnosis’), and with the idea of another self. His idea of ‘slow-minded people’ betrays a derogatory racial reading of her stylistic innovations, particularly in connection with the perceived ‘slowing-up’ of Stein’s own mind.

Stein’s most celebrated use of ‘dialect’ was in *Three Lives*. North suggests a consideration of ‘the way black roles eased assimilation for American Jews, who, unlike Stein, stayed in America’ as a possible line of research.¹⁵⁷ So Stein’s ‘blackface’ becomes part of her generational drama, accentuating her difference from her own origins in an attempt to disconnect herself from her past and, in North’s terms, enact a defection from the bourgeois. The contention is that modernists were freed of their pasts, or collective past, and offered another home in another sort of language.¹⁵⁸ But the ties that bind Stein to America are not necessarily ones which she wants to dissolve. Stein has moments of pride in her Jewish roots. Looked at another way, ‘Stein’s interrogation of identity through language play (as well as thematically) could itself be seen as a strong current in the Jewish intellectual tradition.’¹⁵⁹

Perloff argues that Stein’s ‘whole linguistic strategy is to produce this tension between two quite different kinds of language’¹⁶⁰ and this can be related to the polarities of gender and nationality being reconfigured under modernism. Examining the outer reaches of intelligibility through language play, retrieving dialect from the realms of

¹⁵⁶ ‘Gertrude Stein’ (Review of *MA, Composition as Explanation and Three Lives*), *New Republic*, April 13, 1927, 228-9.

¹⁵⁷ North, op. cit., 216, n.36.

¹⁵⁸ Weinstein reports that generational changes ‘are revealed both linguistically and syntactically. Julia Hersland does not speak like Henry Dehning, who in turn does not sound like his grandfather.’ He sees this as the origin of the change from conventional syntax to ‘asyntactic patterns’ at the end (op. cit., 40). Similarly, Bridgman states that Stein’s repetition originates in imitation of colloquial speech, *Colloquial Style in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 179-82, and Schmitz uses the phrase “double talk” of Stein’s dialect - linking race and gender in the position of the linguistic or literary outsider, *Of Huck and Alice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

¹⁵⁹ Damon 1996, op. cit., 490.

nonsense and emptiness can be seen as liberating in more than one way. It is a form of defamiliarization, a break with the past, but it also makes use of Jewish tradition. The black mask is also perhaps an oblique way of approaching notions of miscegenation, of diaspora, of assimilation or pluralism, of race and its connection to geography which are not specific to African America.¹⁶¹

Stein did not speak Yiddish, but she was familiar with the puns and deceptions which formed an important part of a closely related Jewish dialect.¹⁶² On the level of ordinary communication Yiddish speech and writing was often identified, by Jewish writers as well as hostile parodists of the Yiddish idiom, with the use of shifting verbal emphasis in order to imply shifting meaning, often producing a comic result, and frequently involving an interrogative effect. Being perceived as the language of the lower orders, it was relegated to the status of nonsense, and Americans were often ashamed to read Yiddish.

Shalom Aleichem produced a lexicon of execrations based around single words, for example, if the word was 'eat' the improvisational terms of abuse might begin with 'worms should eat you'. Much other Jewish writing was reliant on a fairly austere, Old Testament style 'as if, in being recipients of the divine word, Jews felt under some obligation to emulate the divine style'.¹⁶³

Stein's use of similar tactics in order to fill a form of language seen as an 'empty vessel' has several outcomes. The use of questioning effects and the repetitive variations on a single word in order to interrogate its possible meanings are allied to the incantatory, prayer-like moments brought about by Stein's repetition. At the aural level, the pidgin English which she falls into in her correspondence and which filters into her published writing also has deliberate nuances of American Jewish patois. The use of the present participle at the end of *MA* may be intended to emulate the speech patterns of German immigrants; the idiom of her German relatives when they spoke English was itself also based around the present participle.¹⁶⁴ Then there is the 'Old Testament' style which Stein explicitly urged as the necessary medium of experimental American

¹⁶⁰ North, op. cit., 76, summarizing Perloff's argument in *The Poetics of Indeterminacy* (Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 67-108.

¹⁶¹ See Will 2000, 'sandwiched between two non-Jewish German-immigrant stories ... 'Melanctha' is the story that could be said to supply the "racial" term missing from the German context'; op. cit., 38.

¹⁶² See Damon 1993, op. cit. Damon claims that in the early stories and novels 'Stein Yiddishizes English' (219).

¹⁶³ See Bermant, *What's the Joke?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 106.

writing, as she moved towards a definition of the Great American Novel.¹⁶⁵ These are some of the most important elements of which Stein's idiolect is composed.

There is a possible connection to be made between Stein's interest in the characters or voices of the child, the servant, the ethnic outsider and the woman, each of which could be seen by psychoanalytic theory of the time as interacting with the primitive; they are also supposedly prone to styles of speech which encourage play of language. (Harking back to the primitive and the indulgence of childish play are two of the key terms of Freud's concept of creativity.) If in 'Melanctha' Stein is substituting 'negroes' for women, as might be generally inferred from the displacement of middle-class women's roles in *QED* onto the black characters of 'Melanctha', this suggests an interchangeability in her concepts of ethnic and feminine roles similar to the beliefs which Weininger espoused. North identifies a traditional perception of the 'effeminacy' of foreign dialect as pitted against the virility of Anglo Saxon.

Damon mentions the well-known autobiographical moment from *QED* as proof of Stein's acknowledgement of her own 'tribal' linguistic exuberance: 'I have the failing of my tribe. I believe in the sacred rites of conversation even when it is a monologue.'¹⁶⁶ Stein's use of the word 'tribe' here draws a fairly explicit link between the primitive and the creative, the same link found in contemporary psychoanalysis.¹⁶⁷ There is also a link, which Weininger would have approved of and which one of his direct influences, the Italian psychologist Lombroso, specifically located, between the stereotypical ideas of Jews and women as excessively loquacious.¹⁶⁸ Stein proudly owns up to this, though the compulsion to tell one's experiences is a common trait linking neurosis with creativity in psychoanalytical theory. In Weininger, the creativity of Jews is linked to their instability of mind (stemming from a traditional anti-Semitic linking of Jewish creativity, or genius, and madness). Here is more evidence of the traditional yoking of Jews and women, not necessarily, but usually, to the detriment of both. For Weininger the talk of women and Jews is linked to their faulty, or non-transcendent, sense of

¹⁶⁴ See Doane, *Silence and Narrative* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 138.

¹⁶⁵ See 'Lecture II - Narration' (1935), Allen and Tallman, eds, *The Poetics of the New American Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1973), 106-113.

¹⁶⁶ Fernhurst, *QED and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), 57.

¹⁶⁷ There is also the sense of Pound's 'tale of the tribe', the phrase used in *Guide to Kulchur* to describe the *Cantos*.

¹⁶⁸ Showalter discusses the use of this literary commonplace of women as voluble talkers in James's *The Bostonians*; *Sexual Anarchy* (London: Virago, 1992), 29.

humour. For Freud, humour is one of the empowering facilities of creativity.¹⁶⁹ Stein seems deliberately to assume the mantle of these prejudices.

North posits one way in which issues of creativity in modernism are transformed into racial issues; with reference to *Three Lives*, he states that 'linguistic mimicry and racial masquerade were not just shallow fads but strategies without which modernism could not have arisen.' He continues:

The real attraction of the black voice to writers like Stein and Eliot was its technical distinction, its insurrectionary opposition to the known and familiar in language. For them *the artist occupied the role of racial outsider* because he or she spoke a language opposed to the standard. Modernism, that is to say, mimicked the strategies of dialect and aspired to become a dialect itself. (My italics.)¹⁷⁰

If this is true of Stein's appropriation of the 'black' voice, what are we to make of her relation to the dialect of Jewish immigrants? Surely taking on the voice of the immigrant reinforces her position as 'racial outsider', without involving much masquerade on her part, as she really was part of a recently immigrated Jewish family. The complexities of Stein's status as insider and outsider, and the ways in which it might affect her role as artist, her use of language and the intelligibility of her dialect, are hinted at by North, but, he concludes, 'whether Stein's Jewish heritage played a role here is a question too large to be answered at this time.'¹⁷¹ We might remember Stein's facetious comment, in 1904 or 1905, when trying to decide if Leo's picture of her looked like her or 'like a nigger', that it 'certainly comes to the same thing'.¹⁷²

CONCLUSION

MA's great concern with breeding, its discussion of how to keep the family pure, and a sort of Jewish act of 'passing' for Gentile, seem to be asking how racial categories can be re-instituted, and the unity of America rediscovered.

Miscegenation threatens a nationality which is based on family. In 'Melanctha' Stein had used the threatening figure of the mulatto to express strong opinions, whether her own or not, on intermarriage - Melanctha's community see her as reprehensible partly because her very existence transgresses the colour line; an image of the atavism which threatens the unity/racial purity of America was employed in the characteristics of

¹⁶⁹ *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* [1905] (London: Hogarth Press, 1995), 111.

¹⁷⁰ North, op. cit., Preface.

¹⁷¹ North, op.cit., 216, n.36.

¹⁷² Quoted in Wineapple, op. cit., 235.

each of *QED*'s women, whose miscellaneous heritages seem to contribute to the dissolution of American 'aristocracy'; her vehement concern in her Radcliffe forensic, where she decries intermarriage, was to retain racial purity, unlike contemporaries such as Zangwill.

In *MA*, as we have seen, Stein prefers not to refer to the racial discourse surrounding the concept of 'blood', using instead the sexual 'substances' (which, nevertheless, have the same effect as they are found in the genital organs and are therefore linked to the continuance of the race.)¹⁷³ She joins in the twentieth century substitution of nobility and blood with science and sex.¹⁷⁴ However, at the beginning of the David Hersland section she introduces some insinuating questions:¹⁷⁵

I would ask every one, I do not ask some because I am quite certain that they would not like me to ask it, ... if they would mind it if they found out that they did not have the name they had then ... if they had been born illegitimate. ... I would ask every one only I am quite certain very many would not like to have me ask if they would like it, if they would very much dislike it, if they would make a tragedy of it, if they would make a joke of it, *if they found they had blood in them of some kind of a being that was a low kind to them* (723, my italics).

Horace Kallen had written that people 'cannot change their grandfathers'¹⁷⁶ - perhaps Stein 'assertively appropriates' this terminology in the opening pages of *MA*, where she denies the urge to aboriginality; 'We need only realise our parents, remember our grandparents and know ourselves and our history is complete' (3). But just as Kallen suggests that a person is nothing without his racial heritage, if you stop being a Jew, Pole, or Anglo Saxon you stop *being*, Stein seems to be asking what exactly is left without those relational identities. She is asking, in other words, the same race conscious question, implying the 'race suicide' we have seen her discuss in earlier compositions.

More than a mere acknowledgement of ancestry, the encroachment of the past upon the present becomes perhaps the major disruptive force in *MA*. Antin in her less experimental work refers to her own writing as 'a charm which should release me from the folds of my clinging past'.¹⁷⁷ Eventually Stein tries to escape history altogether through the use of the 'continuous present'. Both writers, then, are attempting to tell the

¹⁷³ Although Mellow states that in later years Stein was known for asking people when she first met them, 'what is your blood?' (op. cit., 15).

¹⁷⁴ See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (New York: Vintage, 1990).

¹⁷⁵ See Wald, op. cit., 257-8 for another reading of this passage.

¹⁷⁶ 'Democracy versus the Melting-Pot' [1915], *Theories of Ethnicity*, ed. Sollors, op. cit., 91.

¹⁷⁷ Antin, op. cit., xiv.

past in order to be rid of it. 'The wandering Jew in me seeks forgetfulness', says Antin. 'I am not afraid to live on and on, if only I do not have to remember too much'.¹⁷⁸ But whereas Antin seems able to accomplish this healthy exorcism, for Stein the disruption is delayed and fundamentally linked to misgivings about her own position as author.

An important part of the effect of *MA* is derived from its bulk, its totality; its parts are assimilated into a democratic whole. Michaels observes the same thing of Willa Cather's much shorter *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, but whereas in that case parts of the narrative could easily become separate wholes, in *MA* this is specifically not the case.¹⁷⁹ The 1934 abridged version was a concession to her wider audience which goes against the principle of the work.¹⁸⁰ It gives the sense of being organic, changing through repetition; disconnection although it may be the effect is not the ultimate point. There *is* the possibility of moving away from the past, it just takes a very long time, and it is achieved not through pluralism but unity. The unity of the American text forces her into this position; pluralism, as Michaels points out, specifically denies the possibility of one race, such as American, rising up in dominance over others,¹⁸¹ therefore to advocate the making of one particular race, the 'race' of Americans, is to demand this unity. Although diaspora might be a good image for the text, the intention of *MA* is not fragmentation but unity.

On the face of it *MA* refutes this political stance, but then why all the failures? The dig at the gaucheness of the uncultured merchant family's house seems to represent an image of an uncultured and unsuccessfully assimilated state. The number of unnaturalized immigrants also points to an unsatisfactory, incomplete situation. The death which forms the culmination of the plot and the method of its representation cannot only be taken as a personal death; it is linked to cultural changes that imply a series of racial deaths. In her Radcliffe forensic the important question of allegiance was discussed - the position there was that 'The modern Jew who has given up the faith of his fathers can reasonably and consistently believe in isolation'; in *MA* the emphasis has changed - every one is being made American, whether they believe in it or not. *MA* was

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ See Michaels, *op. cit.*, 82.

¹⁸⁰ Harcourt Brace, 1934.

¹⁸¹ Michaels, *op. cit.*, 111.

written at a time when the project of assimilation and Americanization was being increasingly questioned.¹⁸²

This distinguishes *MA* as an image of America itself, an American novel, whether great or otherwise, magnificent in its failures - as Katz dolefully remarks,

one cannot avoid regretting that Gertrude persisted in her exploration of the problem of consistency between her "way of seeing" and her "way of saying." If she had not bothered, her novel would unquestionably have been accepted by general readers as one of the greatest of the twentieth century.¹⁸³

Paradoxically, she has become feted despite this, through an attempt to exonerate her from early criticisms which after all had a certain amount of truth. As Stein herself remarked of Cezanne, 'When he could not make a thing, he turned aside from it and left it alone. He insisted on showing his inability; he exposed his failure to succeed; to show what he could not do, became an obsession with him.'¹⁸⁴ The final way in which this novel establishes itself as part of the new 'American' literature, in the sense of the 'pure' literature of which William Carlos Williams would write¹⁸⁵ is its gradual recognition of the fact that the only thing it embodies is itself.

¹⁸² See Boelhower on the failure of Americanization (Eakin 1991, op. cit., 135). Higham states that 'In the late nineteenth century ... pride in America's receptive mission dimmed' (1984, op. cit., 74). Wald also argues that Stein draws attention to 'the impossibility of a fully successful conversion' (op. cit., 243).

¹⁸³ Katz, op. cit., 223.

¹⁸⁴ Stein, Catalogue, Riba-Rovira Exhibition, Galerie Roquepine, Paris, 1945, quoted by Lamont Moore in *Pictures for a Picture of Gertrude Stein* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), 18.

¹⁸⁵ *The Embodiment of Knowledge*, (New York: New Directions, 1974), 120. (See Michaels, op. cit., 84).

CONCLUSION

‘It is fairly certain that if the genius comes, he will find expression in a prosperous country. He won’t be successful, because being ahead of his time is what makes him a genius ... Nobody likes not being appreciated and being misunderstood, but between the two, if anybody asks you what you would rather have, there is not much doubt ... One must decide his own fate. If you are going to fail, you will fail anywhere. The surroundings for failure are pleasanter in Paris!’¹

NARRATIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

When Michael Hoffman wrote in 1965 that ‘In discussing *The Making of Americans*, then, we shall make no distinction between the narrator and Miss Stein’,² he unwittingly drew on a tradition that had coloured the popular perception of Stein during her lifetime, that of confusing the author with her work. Reporters were frequently stunned that she actually ‘made sense’ when she spoke to them; Stein replied that if they asked Keats a question, they would not expect him to respond with ‘Ode to a Nightingale’.³ Hoffman also set the tone for much criticism of *MA* which implicitly harbours this erroneous assumption that Stein is interchangeable with the narrator - she is not, even though she uses a deeply personal voice.⁴ This assumption is a way of not giving Stein credit for the consciousness of her own effects. Just as any autobiography is a construction, not simply re portage, we should recognize, for instance, that when the narrator is crying, Stein herself is not.

This is a tricky point, but a crucial one to keep in mind, particularly relevant to *MA* because part of the novel’s subject is the method of Stein’s writing itself. It displays, in fact, an extraordinary self-consciousness about the act of writing. The novel is not a moment by moment record of her thoughts and feelings - it is a calculated literary construct. The immediacy, the personal feel, is an authorial tactic, a deliberate one.

¹ GS interviewed in ‘Gertrude Stein’s “Making of Americans” Is a New Year Offering of 1,000 Pages’ by Sadie Hope Sternberg, in *New York Herald* (Paris, Dec 27, 1925).

² *The Development of Abstractionism in the Writings of Gertrude Stein* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), 115.

³ Quoted in Hobhouse, *Everybody Who Was Anybody* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 192.

⁴ Although presumably most critics do not actually believe this, it colours their perception of many aspects of *MA* - we have seen an example in the way critics are reluctant to see the Fernhurst episode as anything other than an accident.

What the narrator says or does may often be ironic. Stein states that her narrator is crying in order to achieve an effect. That effect is to scrutinize and ironize the narrative voice itself, in a dissection of the narrative process. As Meyer has written, 'The narrator of *The Making of Americans* is as much a creation of Stein's as is Melanctha'.⁵

The implication that Stein *is* the narrator is also behind a lack of appreciation for her awareness of context.⁶ The apparent absence of references does not mean her influences are not deeply imbedded in the conception of *MA*. In 1963 Katz isolated several of the contexts I have discussed here. He also suggested the importance to Stein of Lyly's *Euphues*, of Richardson's *Clarissa*, and of Russian and French realist novels.⁷ As we have seen, Darwin and Spencer, Kipling, contemporary autobiography, and economic and statistical theory may all also be useful avenues for a study of influences on *MA*.

The way in which Stein absorbs and also reflects the social criteria of her time is a key to what has been seen as her ideological embrace of bourgeois banality, contiguous with stylistic avant-gardism. Stein's technique is to take the concerns of the writers I have discussed here further, by transposing them into style.

For instance, Stein converts the question of the certainty of knowledge and its disturbance into a major aspect of her style. Stein answers Hodder's call for someone to master the 'language distinct from that of all generations preceding, the power of which was still a mystery to the generation at the moment in possession' (NA 339). Hodder was unable to record that voice - Stein attempts to do so with a kind of 'new language'.

To take another example, whereas Gilman addresses the decline of the family, Stein enacts it, giving it dramatic expression through the novel's gradually increasing disinterest in family matters. She also converts the general theme of the ironies of progress into part of her style. Social progress, in the texts which are her sources, faces various impediments, and so does that of her novel - the longed for future state of completion is continually evoked and continually evaded.

Stein takes autobiographical self-consciousness about the act of writing to an extreme in *MA*. She is perhaps also using 'scientific' procedure as a metaphor for the

⁵ Introduction to *MA*, xxvii. One of Stein's early titles for the novel was 'The Making of an author', as Meyer notes (xxvi).

⁶ Later in her career, Stein's use of the naive voice in such works as *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* would also lead to a certain underappreciation of the skill and self-consciousness of her effects.

⁷ *The First Making of The Making of Americans* (Columbia University, PhD., 1963), 39, 99.

‘artistic’ process of writing a novel. After the overwhelming impact on the narrative of the ‘scientific’ elucidation of types, doubt and self-reflexive distance infiltrate the project; *MA* enacts a deliberation over the feasibility of the scientific gaze as a proper tool for the creative artist. As Bush states, Stein parodies the several voices at work in *MA*.⁸ ‘Feminine’ outpourings of emotion that were at first excluded begin to encroach; the narrative becomes emotional about its own composition, but this too causes a disturbance. The work’s textual unity is threatened - yet even this may be explained within the overall scheme; an uncertainty about completeness is central to this novel’s form.

THE POWER OF COMPLETION

All the works discussed in the thesis have in common the ideological goal of wholeness, and express different ways of achieving it, and different senses of whether it is possible. *MA* is in part the story of its own telling; it is itself a discussion of the ‘power of completion’ (472). Its own wholeness or incompleteness is eventually reflected by these different discussions of wholeness or incompleteness - those of Gilman, Hodder, Weininger, and the assimilationists.

The immigration stories I discussed in chapter 4 (in which traditionally ‘American’ themes collaborate with the experience of the new immigrant and the themes of assimilationist and anti-assimilationist discourse) are often stories of failure: disconcerted identities, and failure for the family. In Stein’s interpretation, they also suggest the failure of a ‘whole’ America. In her final chapter she enacts this breakdown. She appropriates the idea of transitions being undergone, whether these are sexual or ethnic, and presents a people in a transitional stage - because they are women, immigrants or just because they are Americans; the conjunction of the three in *MA* suggests that America is intrinsically like the female or immigrant experience.

Stein is very conscious of perceptions of the difference between Europe and America as between old and new worlds. However, in *MA* it becomes questionable whether America is able to sustain the ideological expectations with which it was endowed by the period’s nationalistic literature, and whether the distinctions Stein initially endorses, and the elevation of middle-class family life, can be justified.

⁸ *Halfway to Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 353.

In modeling the artist, in the character of David Hersland, as male and a genius, Stein projects her own ambitions for artistic individuation. But the uses to which he is put are conflicted; although his manifest destiny is to be a 'genius', he does not, eventually, fulfil it. Stein's denial of his success casts a shadow of failure over her own work. The narrator herself wonders whether the novel is finished or not, or will ever be.

These failures were instructive in the limits of the novel, as was the ultimate failure of the realistic mode which Stein came to realize in the novel. Perversely Hodder, who did belong to the old world but wanted to be part of the new, led Stein to a disruption of old words through emulation of him, followed by rejection of a code which he himself was never really comfortable with as she was forced to reconsider her 'masculine' literary role.

Stein becomes anxious to know how people, particularly writers - she is explicit about this point - can have certainty (e.g. 449). Dwelling on these subjects gives the narrator a 'despairing feeling'; yet she continues to repeat, and to make repetition itself the subject of her repetitions, in an attempt to accrue knowledge and power within her own text, to reach a state of certainty and completeness (454-5). Proving just how open to thwarting by her own subjectivity her scheme is liable to be, the narrator admits that perhaps none of her schemes are right: 'I am really almost despairing, I have really in me a very very melancholy feeling, a very melancholy being, I am really then despairing' (459).

As the narrative wanders into various pairs of classifications, while describing its characters' 'state of continual nervous agitation' (460), one cannot wonder at the words of one reviewer of *MA*, who characterized Stein, rather than one of those characters, as 'a lady badly in need of a good rest.'⁹ Stein's writing was often flippantly seen as 'emotional'; but in fact she was deliberately trying to emulate the process by which emotion, and, more fundamentally, feeling, becomes known to us. We should remember that Stein makes *MA* laborious reading on purpose. Allowing herself to become more of a writerly writer, playing less to an audience of readerly readers, she becomes less constricted by the style of other authors. She changes fundamentally the way she writes the sentence, with a new emphasis on making the reader work; this may involve a deliberate distancing of herself from chronology and culture, in the belief that by doing

⁹ Clipping from The Detroit Free Press, Feb 18, 1934, YCAL.

she can exceed novelistic time scales, but it does not change the fact that the roots of her meaning in *MA* lay in her own reading.

Somehow Stein converts her own conventional failure into a success. The narrative of *MA* expresses changes in her perception of her own authorial persona. A new Stein emerges after *MA* with a new way of processing perceptions;¹⁰ it might be seen as a necessary purgative fire. She gave it to be known that she stopped writing simply by deciding one day to 'kill' her hero, but the process of completion was in fact an agonizing one.

If the process of finishing *MA* was difficult, many years later Stein described beginning it: 'After all I was a natural believer in republics a natural believer in science a natural believer in progress and I began to write'.¹¹ In reality the process of beginning to write was much more complex, as the novel's serial beginnings attest. It was a building up and stripping away of context; a confrontation with everything she had read, and a deliberate attempt to 'make it new', not just to divest it of what looked like a deliberate reference to anything that had come before, but to remove the referential aspects of the words themselves.

The relativism of Stein's own style would become a source of concern in the narrator's descriptions of style in *MA*:

I may know very well the meaning of a word and yet it has not for me completely entirely existing being. ... In talking I use many more of them of words ... in talking one can be saying mostly anything, often then I am using many words I never could be using in writing. In writing a word must be for me really an existing thing, it has a place for me as living, this is the way I feel about me writing (*MA* 540).

We have seen how these anxieties were reinforced by Weininger's idea of art as transcending feminine subjectivity and moving into an immaculate masculine objectivity, and his view of artistic progress as a conflict between attachment to relations between people and to the relation between mind and world. For Weininger, Jewishness represented the feminine, slavish side of western culture. Its polarity, the cultural embodiment of masculinity, and freedom, was America (*SC* 337).¹²

¹⁰ In fact towards the end of *MA*'s composition Stein was also writing portraits as well as *A Long Gay Book*.

¹¹ *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 243.

¹² See also Birkin, *Consuming Desire* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988) for an explanation of ideas of progress as movement from east to west, and the 'virilization' of the West.

But to an extent the problems that Weininger had expressed were simply the same problems that confront any novelist - the problems of how to achieve autonomous expression within the confines of a world distracted by the contingencies of time, space and relational identity (historical influences, connections to place and to character within a work of fiction) - and one of modernism's challenges was to deal with these disputes. Part of the question for Stein was indeed how to 'rise above' one's surroundings and origins, one's racial and sexual identity, but at the same time her narrative was to find a way of stylistically embodying these disputes. By taking them to their logical conclusions, she converts the ideas of all the writers I have discussed here into form and structure. Categorization, difference, making, delay, disturbance of certainty, even failure itself, are all part of the narrative - a narrative which is about itself, and yet which reflects and throws a strange new light on the context in which it was written.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CONSULTED

The Bibliography is divided into the following sections:

I. Primary Sources

i. Published Works by Gertrude Stein; ii. Manuscript Material; iii. Published Collections of Stein's letters; iv. Other Works (by various authors).

II. Secondary Sources

i. Stein Bibliographies; ii. Critical/Biographical Works about Stein; iii. Other Works.

I. Primary Sources

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