



**HAL**  
open science

## **Alienating the Written Word: Gertrude Stein's (Un)familiar Languages**

Chloé Thomas

► **To cite this version:**

Chloé Thomas. Alienating the Written Word: Gertrude Stein's (Un)familiar Languages. *Modernism/modernity*, 2019, 26 (1), pp.67-86. 10.1353/mod.2019.0003 . hal-03821694

**HAL Id: hal-03821694**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03821694>**

Submitted on 21 Oct 2022

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

---

# Alienating the Written Word: Gertrude Stein's (Un)familiar Languages

Chloé Thomas

Article published in *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 26, n°1, January 2019, pp. 67-86.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2019.0003>

Gertrude Stein often insisted that English was her one and only language; and she answered recurring accusations of obscurity by asserting that the words she used did belong to the English lexicon. Although she spent her early childhood in Vienna and Paris, and lived in France most of her adult life, she consistently pretended that she did not care much for French or German, which she dismissed as not her own. Stein's partner Alice Toklas remembered in her (own) autobiography *What Is Remembered*: "She did not like to read or speak anything but English although she knew German and French."<sup>1</sup> This distaste for half-known, half-forgotten idioms may be more significant than it has seemed. If French is often taken into account in commenting on Stein's poems, as a lexical key or as the source of puns and wordplay, German has been largely overlooked, whereas in fact it may well act as a structural, more or less unconscious shadow to Stein's grammar; both foreign languages seem to have had the effect of estranging her English from the comfort of familiarity, thus enabling the emergence of the idiosyncratic grammar for which Stein became famous, derided, and praised. This article questions the exocentric quality of her English, the value of the familiar and her original use of translation.

## Hearing French and German, Writing in English

Stein was twenty-nine when she moved to Paris, living first with her brother, then with her American partner. Many of her friends there were Anglophone as well. Yet a number of recollections in her autobiographies, as well as some pieces of trivial correspondence, serve as evidence that she did speak French when necessary, to servants, friends and visitors, to neighbors in Bilignin, her country home, or in Paris. Most importantly, French was her common language of conversation with her Spanish friend Pablo Picasso; their letters testify to the broken yet carefree French they shared. Unlike Picasso, however,

Stein had had the opportunity to learn the language before she came to France as an adult. She had spent a little less than a year in Paris when she was four and was, during that time, educated in French. She insisted on having spoken it as a child (“I was only four years old when I first was in Paris and talked French there”), and in her autobiographical works she very often depicts herself in conversations with friends or street encounters in that language.<sup>2</sup>

As for German, it was part of her environment beginning in late 1874 (Stein had been born in February of that year), when the Steins settled in Austria, where her father wanted to start a new business with his brother. During the family’s Viennese years, Gertrude Stein, like her siblings, learned both English and German, and her father reportedly called her a “little *schnatterer*” (chatterbox), a typical lexical importation of native slang into English.<sup>3</sup> It is, however, doubtful that Stein spoke German with her parents: her father, Daniel Stein, was born in Bavaria but had emigrated as a child; his wife, Amelia Keyser, was born in the United States of a German father and a Dutch mother. Both of them were more likely to use American English when they were living in the United States. Nonetheless Stein seems to have remembered enough German to be able to converse, if somewhat imperfectly, with speakers of German dialects. Toklas, a Californian who herself came from a German-speaking family and had been educated in German and English, describes in *What Is Remembered* an episode during World War I, when she and Stein were volunteering for the American Fund for French Wounded in the South of France:

A wire from Mrs. Lathrop asked if we spoke German. If we did, we should close up the depot at once and return to Paris to prepare to open a depot for civilian relief in Alsace. There was no hesitation in my reply. We both spoke German and would be in Paris as quickly as possible. (*What Is Remembered*, 109)

Toklas then adds:

Gertrude spoke a fluent incorrect German which the Alsatians understood. I tried to remember the correct German which I had been taught. I heard an Alsatian woman who was waiting to give me her list say to her neighbour, She is a Prussian. Gertrude was delighted. (111)<sup>4</sup>

What Toklas means here by “incorrect German” may refer either to a grammatically problematic German, typical of early but incomplete acquisition, or point to the fact that what Stein spoke was not standard High German (which Toklas herself had probably been taught at school) but rather an Austro-Bavarian dialect (close to Alsatian), possibly mixed with Yiddish.<sup>5</sup>

It is then undeniable that Stein did remember something of her childhood languages, and was able, in her adult life, to switch from English to French to German when necessary. Yet it is just as clear that her relationship to these was firmly as spoken, not written, languages. She explains (using the third person) in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*:

Her father having taken his children to Europe so that they might have the benefit of a European education now insisted that they should forget their French and German so that their American English would be pure. Gertrude Stein had prattled in German and then in French but she had never read until she read English. As she says eyes to her were more important than ears and it happened then as always that English was her only language. Her bookish life commenced at this time.<sup>6</sup>

Her bookish life, then, unfolded in English, and she was adamant that it should stay that way. Although she could read French, she avoided it. English was her literary realm:

When I first knew Gertrude Stein in Paris I was surprised never to see a French book on her table, although there were always plenty of English ones, there were even no French newspapers. But do you never read French, I as well as many other people asked her. No, she replied, you see I feel with my eyes and it does not make any difference to me what language I hear, I don't hear a language, I hear tones of voice and rhythms, but with my eyes I see words and sentences and there is for me only one language and that is English. (Stein, *Writings 1903–1932*, 729)<sup>7</sup>

Stein's proposed partition between heard and read languages is as fundamental as it is ambiguous. To her, it seems, spoken words are for daily, ordinary, conversational use, no matter from which idiom they are taken; written words on the contrary are for literary use, which is only natural. The rejection of ordinary (for instance, daily, conversational) language as un-literary is also something that emerged in contemporary discourses on literature, at a time when the distinction between poetry and prose was losing some of its importance while the main question became that of the circumscription of literature itself. One of the best-known instances appears in Viktor Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose* (1925); in the seminal first chapter, "Art as Device," the author defines literary language as one opposing automatization, habit, familiarity.<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.<sup>9</sup>

Among the possible devices of enstrangement (*ostranenie*), Shklovsky explicitly refers to the use of foreign idioms:<sup>10</sup>

According to Aristotle, poetic language ought to have the character of something foreign, something outlandish about it. In practice, such language is often quite literally foreign: just as Sumerian might have been regarded as a "poetic language" by an Assyrian, so Latin was considered poetic by many in medieval Europe. (*Theory of Prose*, 12)

The *foreignness* of poetic (that is, literary) language does not have to be *literal*; but the strangeness called for by Shklovsky can indeed find an obvious expression in

linguistic interplay. Stein, by rejecting French and German in her writing, seems to operate counter to this: foreign words are for daily, non-literary use, familiar ones for literary use. And Stein insisted not only on writing in English, but on using a common form of English—the language of a community. In his introduction to the posthumously published *Four in America*, Thornton Wilder mentions an anecdote about a friend of Stein’s who declined to read her poems, saying “But you forget that I don’t understand examples of your extremer styles,” to which Stein unapologetically answered: “But what’s the difficulty? Just read the words on paper. They’re in English. Just read them.”<sup>11</sup> At first glance, this seems like a negation of Shklovsky’s call for estrangement. Yet the friend’s puzzlement, which he or she still shares with many a reader, is evidence that analyzing Stein’s English in terms of strangeness is not completely irrelevant. Moreover, Stein’s focus on “words” in her answer seems slightly disingenuous. Her word stock can indeed be traced back to any simple English dictionary; her sentences, however, can find no equivalent in grammar textbooks. Although her writings can still be read as demonstrating a form of grammar, with a meaningful structure, rather than as the negation of the very existence of a linguistic structure, it is undeniable that she does not abide by classical rules and that she feels perfectly free, in the stream of her contemplative meditation, to switch from one object or word to the next, to follow rhythmic and sound patterns rather than the expected diagram of the sentence or paragraph. Familiar English turns strange. It could then be argued that Stein grounded the liberty she took, on the one hand, in the defamiliarization process undergone by her English through living in a non-English-speaking country, and, on the other hand, in the stream of German and French underlying her grammar.

### Writing in French

But before we move to look more closely at the strangeness within Stein’s English, it has to be acknowledged that her claim that English was always her only literary language is not entirely true. Especially towards the end of her life, and more specifically during wartime (probably because she felt a particular attachment to her adoptive country in moments when it was most threatened; and more simply, because she had, by that time, attained a greater familiarity with the language, having spent more than half her life in France), she wrote some pieces in French. Among them are the correspondence with Picasso and the 1938 portrait of him, as well as “Film. Deux soeurs qui ne sont pas soeurs” in *Operas and Plays* (1932), whose argument is taken up, in English, in *Ida*, and was probably inspired by Alfred de Musset’s *Il faut qu’une porte soit ouverte ou fermée*.<sup>12</sup> More examples are to be found among the “unpublished manuscripts and fragments” at the Beinecke Library, for instance a short piece entitled “Beurre et Rose”—“Butter and Rose”:

Beurre et roses  
Sont des choses

Quelle [sic] propose  
 Pour sa dose [?]  
 Pour mon anniversaire.  
 Rose et beurre  
 N'ayez pas peur  
 Sont à mon cœur  
 Pour mon anniversaire  
 Rose et beurre beurre et Rose  
 Sont des choses sont des choses  
 Que j'expose avec joie  
 Ici et la [sic]  
 Vu dedans vu dehors  
 mais ils sont tous dans mon cœur dehors ou dedans, dedans dans mon entourai [?] et  
 dans mon cœur. Roses et beurre, beurre et Rose délicieux [sic] choses.<sup>13</sup>

Stein displays here a certain mastery of French rhyme and of a typical ternary rhythm. Curiously, this poem, with its very hackneyed rhyming of “rose” and “chose,” sounds much more conventional, in its syntax and in its themes, than most of Stein’s English pieces. The case argues once again for a reversed familiarity: English being the language of strangeness, French that of the ordinary. In keeping with this, Stein seems to have addressed her dog in French as well. She wrote a poem entitled “Pissez mon chien” (Pee my dog), also unpublished, and in *How to Write* one finds the sentence “Qu’est-ce que c’est que cette comédie d’un chien” (What is this comedy of a dog, or What a tantrum is this dog throwing).

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Stein wrote at least two pieces directly in French and addressing her relationship to the language and the country. Among the “unpublished manuscripts and fragments” at the Beinecke, one finds a short autobiographical sketch. The untitled four-page typescript is written in rather fluent French, in which grammatical mistakes are often due to the transcription of oral sounds (for instance, the common confusion between the infinitive form, spelt –er, and the past participle, spelt –é, which are pronounced exactly the same). Similarly, Stein tends to omit part of the negation (“Nous étions pas héroïques” instead of “nous n’étions pas”), which is once again the way the sentence would be *spoken*. Such errors tend to confirm that Stein was familiar with French as an oral rather than as a written language. The typescript has been corrected by an unknown hand, not Stein’s, and probably not that of a native speaker, as some correct elements are mistakenly changed to incorrect ones. The piece is a good example of the way Stein wrote French. But its content is even more revealing. Indeed, Stein begins by stating her intimacy with France, which she dates back to her childhood years: “After all, if one has had in one’s nose the smell of a city when one was three, it gives one a feeling of intimacy with this city that one will never lose.”<sup>14</sup> She goes on:

After that there was a long interval during which I became fully American. . . . Finally in 1904, having finished my university studies in America, I settled in Paris and here I am and here I am staying.

In Paris I started to write; I was very much influenced by Cezanne. I had a very nice Cezanne and in front of that painting I meditated a lot and the result of these meditations

were my first books, among which one was translated into French, *The Making of Americans*.<sup>15</sup>

In this piece, Stein makes clear her refusal to leave France with an assertive “j’y suis, j’y reste” (Here I am and here I am staying), a phrase attributed to General MacMahon during the Crimean War. This sentiment may be one of the reasons why she decided to write this in French: although the piece is undated, it was probably written in 1938 (Stein refers to the London premiere of *A Wedding Bouquet*, which took place in 1937, as an event from “last year”), when rumors of war were being heard and when her elder brother Michael decided to return to the United States, a move which Stein herself refused to make even after France was occupied by Nazi Germany. Stein also here identifies the conjunction of her moving abroad and her starting to write. The scene of meditation in front of the Cezanne is widely known to Stein scholars; it had already appeared in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. However, in this earlier rendition, Cezanne is associated with another influence—Flaubert—and the meditation produces only one book, *Three Lives*. A few years later, Stein adds *The Making of Americans* to it. According to the 1925 first edition of *The Making of Americans*, the book was composed between 1906 and 1908; in *The Autobiography* as well as in the 1934 lecture “The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans,” Stein still takes 1906 as the starting point of her work on this long book. Since the work of Leon Katz on the manuscripts of *The Making of Americans*, however, the 1906 composition date has been questioned; Katz suggests that Stein started working on the book as early as 1903.<sup>16</sup> And in fact Stein had written at least two other texts *before* she moved to Paris, *Fernhurst* and *Q.E.D.* Yet, at the end of her literary career, Stein is adamant that that career began in Paris, as if the “interval” in which she became “fully American,” between her early childhood and her new removal to Europe, were a mere unproductive parenthesis. Stein clearly wanted to present France as the only country where she ever wrote—thus arguing against her leaving it, despite the many warnings she received from friends and American officials.

A few years later, Stein wrote, again directly in French, an article entitled “La langue française” (“The French Language”), which was published in a Vichy magazine, *Patrie*, in August 1941.<sup>17</sup> In it she delivered an original analysis of what was to her the specificity and beauty of the French language. The piece was quite obviously commissioned as a celebration of patriotism and other Pétainist tropes, and does deliver the expected glorification of the peasantry and the countryside. Beyond its political content, however, the short article is built on the consistent dichotomy between written and spoken language, an opposition that, according to Stein, had tended to disappear in American English but was maintained thoroughly by the French:

It is very curious and interesting that, in the last century, while there was a tendency to deny the existence of the struggle between male and female, there was at the same time an attempt at denying the difference between written language and spoken language.

Writers said they wrote like they spoke, just like men and women said that comradeship had replaced the struggle between male and female.

But the French knew well that it was wrong. I remember having been so struck by the fact that people in France said very honestly “No, I do not know the French language,” when they were people who spoke, to our American ears, good French. Maybe they meant that the regional dialect was still present in their language when they spoke. But I think it was a deeper thing. The French, having always been absolutely civilized and logical, could not deny a truth, and the truth was that the spoken language is not the same as the written language.

So the French did not deny this truth, and the result was that they remained capable of constructing sentences so deep and true when they spoke that they were truly written sentences. It sounds like a paradox but it is not.

The written language is the language devoid of actuality, and that is its deepest feature. And the French people being always in close contact with the land can from time to time speak a written language. Even quite often. But they don't mistake one for the other. They always know the difference between the two. . . .

As the French never lost the deep sense of the difference between written language and spoken language, the French language always had this logic which means that it is not something to be learned for ordinary use, it is something that consists in a deep knowledge of the differences between a written language and a spoken language, these differences which make the truth of civilisation which other languages very often forget. The French language does not: it always remains the language of logic and understanding, a language that understands the vital difference between a written language and a spoken language.<sup>18</sup>

Stein refers here to the still common idea that in French, not only are there things that can be said but not written, but also things that can be written but are never said. The difference Stein is trying to point out is not so much a pragmatic one, related to orality, but a stylistic and ontological one, which essentially redoubles the difference between literary and non-literary language. Interestingly, although she could praise the literary quality of French in the context of a propaganda piece, she was not so well acquainted with that very quality, and it was precisely when she came across instances of literary French that she was able to put aside her principle of not allowing anything but English in her writings (through translating, corresponding with poets, or, in a few instances, writing directly in French). Her stance in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* amounts to a confinement of non-English languages to orality, as opposed to literature. Yet the hearing “of tones of voice and rhythms,” as she described her experience of living in a foreign country, is not to be dismissed as an utterly un-literary activity. Her past and present conversational languages could not help but play a part in her written compositions. And indeed, they pulse behind her English as lexical, grammatical and tonal reminiscences, thus “making it strange.”

### **Experiments in Dialects**

It should be noted that *Patrie* was not only a Vichy magazine, but one published in Algiers and meant to be circulated in the French colonies—its subtitle was “the monthly illustrated magazine of the Empire.” Its publisher, Henri Baconnier, born in Lyons, had moved to Algeria as a child in 1881 and was a prominent member of the pied-noir community. In the introduction to “La langue française,” Stein is presented

by *Patrie* editors as an American painter who came to France for its genial climate and turned from painting to poetry in the process. This somewhat ill-informed portrait involuntarily embraces Stein's own story telling about becoming a poet in Paris. More importantly, it provides a defense of the French language in a colonial context, destined for a community whose mother tongue was French but who practiced it with a dialectal twang. Stein's insistence on the difference between written and spoken French goes beyond that between what she calls "the regional dialect" (in French "patois," somewhat derogatory), which is never meant to be written, and a more standard, Parisian French, which, in a certain form, can be; but the dialect provides, in any case, a first insight into this difference between spoken and written language.

In fact, Stein's first published work, *Three Lives*, made explicit use of dialectal forms of English, which in a way was a first incursion into the possibilities of defamiliarization. The three protagonists of the novellas are African American (Melanctha) or German American (Anna and Lena), and their language, as it appears in dialogue, has something dissonant about it, which then pervades the whole of the text. Writers such as Nella Larsen and Richard Wright praised Stein's rendition of African American English in "Melanctha"—though other Harlem Renaissance poets have justly pointed out the stereotyped vision of the black community conveyed by the story.<sup>19</sup> But, as Michael North has demonstrated, Stein's use of what he calls (following Henry Louis Gates and Benedict Anderson) "a mask of dialect" is not naturalistic, but is meant to produce strangeness:<sup>20</sup>

Thus the paradox on which Stein constructs the peculiar dialect of "Melanctha." A patois with a very restricted vocabulary and a repetitious, looping sentence structure, it seems on the surface to correspond to [Richard] Bridgman's description of a kind of speech that sticks almost superstitiously to the known and familiar. And yet the more Stein's speakers reiterate the few simple words allotted to them, the more unstable those words become. (*Dialect of Modernism*, 74)

Stein's own history with languages—the fact that she grew up in a non-English-speaking environment, and that her family descended from German-speaking immigrants—may have fostered her interest in dialects and non-standard English. In *Monolingualism Of The Other*, Jacques Derrida tells of his childhood in French Algeria and of the *strange* nature of his own mother's tongue, leading him to the conclusion: "I have only one language; it is not mine."<sup>21</sup> The same does not go for any speaker; it is rather the motto of those who are provincial, colonial, exocentric speakers of their own language. Stein, when she moved back to the United States as a child, and when she moved to Paris as an adult, could very well have experienced the same feeling of being a stranger in her own tongue. It can be argued that this feeling of oddity could have encouraged Stein's exploration of other forms of strangeness in her early writings. More generally, Peter Quartermain has argued that Stein's experimental writing had to do with an American form of resistance to Anglocentric standards, in that American English was spoken by immigrants who had often learned it as their second language.<sup>22</sup> But the insistence with which Stein argued for the

Englishness of her texts suggests that these have to be read not so much against English, but with it, as it is fed and made richer by foreign imports.

In *Three Lives*, the dialectal aspect provides a model for a pervading strangeness, but also remains associated with a social and/or racial alterity. However, when Stein moved from prose narrations to descriptive poetry, the displacements of her language took new roads, in which foreign undercurrents are less explicit but, in many ways, more productive of strangeness. This is precisely when Stein's languages transcend the models of political, racial, and sexual otherness to provide a purely poetic kind of strangeness.

### **A Case Study: *Tender Buttons***

Stein's more difficult texts have more often been tested for their inter-linguistic qualities, perhaps in the hope that this might render "meaning" to what resists making sense. In illustrating the subtle presence of French and German in Stein's poetry, *Tender Buttons* in particular provides fertile ground, ground that has been extensively tilled by critics. Interestingly, Stein's first experiments with description, which led to these prose-poems bearing the names of familiar things, corresponded to a moment of reassertion of her fidelity to English words: an explicit refusal of lexical creation. She writes in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* about the period in which *Tender Buttons* emerged:

She tried a bit inventing words but she soon gave that up. The english language was her medium and with the english language the task was to be achieved, the problem solved. The use of fabricated words offended her, it was an escape into imitative emotionalism. (Stein, *Writings 1903–1932*, 782)

Stein's experiments in *Tender Buttons* remain *on* words rather than *in* words, and it is in this sense that her English is defamiliarized, to the point that one of her biographers, James Mellow, felt that in Spain, where she began the exercises in description which led to *Tender Buttons*, "she had in a sense perfected a 'foreign' language of her own."<sup>23</sup> *Tender Buttons* has indeed often been seen as a conundrum in which words do not mean what they usually mean—or do not mean at all—and in which foreign imports can appear as keys. And although the poems should not be regarded as strictly encoded, there are indeed many instances in which foreign words and structures sneak into the text, and illuminate—rather than explain—a phrase, a sentence which, so far, remained obscure. In "Roast Potatoes" for example, Stein famously plays with the bilingual polysemy of "four," both a number and French for "oven." According to Marjorie Perloff,

"For" puns on "four" (i.e., four potatoes, with the further echo of the well-known children's counting game, "One potato, two potato, three potato, four . . ."). A second pun brings in the language of Stein's adopted nation: *four* is French for "oven." *Pommes de terre au four*. Where else would one expect to find roast potatoes? And further: there is a buried pun on "fore": roast potatoes before the salad, perhaps. Or before they get cold.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, in “Orange in,” we find “pain soup,” in which pain is also probably an echo of the French for bread: *soupe de pain*.<sup>25</sup> William Gass argues that “This is this dress, aider,” bears obvious traces of the French *aider* (help), which could also be read as “aid her,” as well as being a creative spelling of “Ada,” Stein’s pet name for Toklas (*The World Within the Word*, 102). In each of these cases, Stein always uses English words, but these are likely to mean something as well, simultaneously, in another language; they are not foreign words, but familiar words with an added double-entendre—and a double-entendre that is indeed about *entendre*, hearing: while the written word is fixed by its spelling in the English language, it *sounds* as another, non-English word.

The French in *Tender Buttons* seems to dwell mostly on a lexical level, prolonging the Steinian promenade between sounds and ideas. French grammar, however, did not fashion Stein’s linguistic inventions to the same extent.<sup>26</sup> The relative grammatical proximity between French and English may have made possible interferences invisible. It could also be that French, having been spoken much less by Stein in her childhood, did not reach the level of familiarity that German did for her, even if superficially forgotten. Lexical (as opposed to grammatical) plays between German and English are, nevertheless, not completely absent from this text and are still worth mentioning: in particular, Stein’s recurrent use of the adjective “red,” which often comes into play with the past participle “read,” could also be understood as a stress on *Rede*, German for discourse, speech. It is no accident that the post-war writer Helmut Heissenbüttel, who claimed to have been very much swayed by Stein’s style, rewrote her famous rose sentence by replacing its core pattern by “eine Rede”: “Eine Rede ist eine Rede. Eine Rede ist eine Rede heisst eine geredete Rede das heisst sie must geredet das heisst gehalten werden” (“A speech is a speech. A speech is a speech means a spoken speech, that is it must be spoken that is delivered”).<sup>27</sup> The rose is not only red (or read), it is also *Rede* (speech); thus in *Tender Buttons* the wordplay on “red” may be understood as tridimensional, bridging the color (surface—in English, superficially Stein’s native language), the written word (that which is read—in English again, Stein’s choice for reading and writing), and the spoken word (speech, a German echo, that is, an echo of a language only heard and spoken, but not, for Stein, written). This seemingly lexical pun, by being already metatextual (which is not so much the case with French-related wordplays), opens the way for a Germanic-leaning interpretation of a number of Steinian grammatical features.

Stein’s widespread and sometimes not quite legitimate use, in *Tender Buttons*, of the suffix “er” is one striking characteristic that is worth submitting to such an analysis. The suffix “er” can mark a comparative form (e.g. easier), but also a derivation from a verb to a noun (e.g. a maker), among others. Stein enjoys rhyming these together, which sometimes leads her to make a comparative use of “er” in places where correctness would command the use of the “more + adjective” form. In *Tender Buttons* are to be found, for instance, “distincter,” “pleasanter,” “oftener,” “to be older and ageder,” all of which make sense in the pattern of the poems (5, 26, 21, 23). Unlike Lewis Carroll’s Alice, who indulges in the amusing phrase “curiouser and curiouser,” yet in departing from the rule, only makes it more visible (“she was so

much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English”), Stein quite consciously transforms a grammatical structure for poetry’s sake, without ever leaving comprehensibility behind, and may be liberated, in so doing, by her subconscious knowledge of German features.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, while English has two ways of forming comparatives, depending on the length of the adjective (adding the suffix “er” or using “more”), German systematically adds “er” to the compared element, regardless of its length. In that sense, “pleasanter” can be regarded as displaying a Germanic feature, which did not bother Stein precisely because it wore the garment of a long-forgotten automatism.

Another example can be found in the sometimes unclear grammatical function of words that appear at first sight to be adjectives. In “A little called Pauline,” Stein uses the adjective “little” as if it were a noun, an operation of nominalization which is quite frequent in English (“a little,” meaning “a little bit of”) but incorrect in that case (Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 15). However, such nominalization is very frequent both in French (*une petite*, meaning “a little girl”) and in German (*eine Kleine*). The title remains quite clear, as a slight modification of “A little girl (or a little one) called Pauline,” but it gains strangeness through an import from foreign grammar. Similarly, in the piece “A Carafe, That Is A Blind Glass,” the adjective “ordinary” might be given an adverbial value: “All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading” (3).

In German, the distinction between adjectives and adverbs is much less clear than in English and the same word can be used for either function without undergoing morphological modifications. This flexibility supports the openness of a text that maintains the reading process in a permanent present, in which pivotal words may switch nature between the moment the sentence begins and the moment it ends, all recollections of its beginning having lost their validity in between.

This German stream seems to act as a liberating force in Stein’s English. The poet uses her feeling for this other idiom as a springboard for her experimentations in what she assertively defines as her poetic language. Beyond these—perhaps too circumstantial—examples, German, more generally, as the hermeneutic idiom par excellence, could account for Stein’s philological drive. She delves into the structure of words, spelling composites by separating their parts (“any one,” “some body,” etc.) as if to display their compositional nature, thus approaching the transparency of German word composition, in which the etymology is displayed rather than hidden.<sup>29</sup> Her plays on grammatical words become evidence of her fascination for the structure of grammar itself, beyond referential items. Stein often reflects, in her English, the typically German accumulation of particles and non-lexical words, which cannot be syntactically correct, but whose value lies in the very fact of pointing to grammar itself.

### **English and Alterity**

By embracing French and German, Stein’s English thus leaves the realm of habit to become prone to the enstrangement called for by Shklovsky, and that she herself

insisted upon in the defense of poetry she gave in answer to a student asking for an “explanation”:

Now the poet has to work in the excitingness of pure being; he has to get back that intensity into the language. We all know that it’s hard to write poetry in a late age; and we know you have to put some strangeness, something unexpected, into the structure of the sentence in order to bring back the vitality to the noun. Now it’s not enough to be bizarre; the strangeness in the sentence structure has to come from the poetic gift, too.<sup>30</sup>

The problem raised by Stein’s mode of making-it-strange in relation to her familiar and foreign languages is that it is unclear which of these are situated by her in the realm of habit and which are not. German grammar can be made use of precisely because it corresponds to an old, if repressed, habit; English words are familiar and common but treated as if they were not. Here the distinction made by Virginia Woolf between “forgotten” and “known” languages, in her 1929 essay “On Not Knowing French,” can help us understand the reversal at stake in Stein’s linguistic system. Woolf argues that

[T]o know a language one must have forgotten it, and that is a stage that one cannot reach without having absorbed words unconsciously as a child. In reading a language that is not one’s own, consciousness is awake, and keeps us aware of the surface glitter of the words; but it never suffers them to sink into that region of the mind where old habits and instincts roll them round and shape them a body rather different from their faces. Thus a foreigner with what is called a perfect command of English may write grammatical English and musical English—he will, indeed, like Henry James, often write a more elaborate English than the native—but never such unconscious English that we feel the past of the word in it, its associations, its attachments. There is an oddity in every page that Conrad wrote. Right in themselves, the words come together somehow incongruously.<sup>31</sup>

With this essay, Woolf opened the door—far beyond the common-sense statement that a language learned in adulthood will always remain foreign, no matter how solid a command one can acquire of it—to a positive understanding of the essential unfamiliarity taking place in reading or writing in another language. That unfamiliarity, the otherness within the most familiar, is in itself creative, poetic, to the point that “in reading French prose even, it is curious how far out one finds one’s self, looking for poetry where poetry is not, finding it absurdly where nothing of the sort was intended” (Woolf, “On Not Knowing French,” 6).

This poetic strangeness may well be, in Stein’s case, precisely what Woolf described as the poetic unfamiliarity of a language that stands out from soporific habits, except that it derives not from another language as such, but rather from a reversal of what, in her English, depends on unconscious (or forgotten) habit and what belongs to conscious structures. Stein, unlike Conrad, was not writing in a language unfamiliar to her, and unlike Henry James, she was not trying to britannicize her English. Yet in her imperfect polyglossia, German and French may be regarded as Stein’s “forgotten”—that is, better known, habitual—languages. They are, in other

words, even more forgotten than her English, insofar as the use she makes of them is mostly habitual, automatic. Her English, on the other hand, becomes more conscious, and its structures more obvious, gaining poetic value in the process. The underlying presence of a linguistic otherness, as we have seen, makes English leave the realm of unconscious habit, enabling a play between obvious (remembered, self-conscious) and hidden (forgotten) grammar(s).

That her English was liberated, or at least rendered more supple by the confrontation with another, forgotten, linguistic structure, is confirmed by Stein herself when commenting on being an American expatriate in France. She writes in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*:

One of the things that I have liked all these years is to be surrounded by people who know no english. It has left me more intensely alone with my eyes and my english. I do not know if it would have been possible to have english be so all in all to me otherwise. And they none of them could read a word I wrote, most of them did not even know that I did write. No, I like living with so very many people and being all alone with english and myself. (Stein, *Writings 1903–1932*, 730)

English, the “native” language, is also the most unfamiliar: a foreign language in the home country. Through the experience of expatriation, Stein could evolve a form of English that was more self-conscious, no longer the “forgotten” idiom that Woolf defines as a person’s mother tongue, but a remembered, and “membered again” (in which “members”—the grammatical components—become visible again as such) language. Perloff, herself an Austrian-American, draws a comparison between Stein’s and Wittgenstein’s exile experience, seeing in it the source of their questioning of grammar:

In both cases . . . grammar, taken for granted by most writers who are “at home” in their own language and hence are likely to pay more attention to image and metaphor, to figures of heightening, embellishment, and transformation, becomes a contested site. (*Wittgenstein’s Ladder*, 87)

Discussing English prose, Woolf suggests in “On Not Knowing French” that “habit” in the language makes it dull (“Habit has made English—the ordinary daily English of which most books are made—as colourless, as tasteless as water”) whereas the most daily words, when not English, become fascinating (4). Stein’s English, precisely because it is unfamiliar, can gain this strangeness that makes foreign languages exciting. It becomes to her a habit suddenly remembered, and one that is displayed and studied as such, in the same way as she studied general psychological habits to map out human natures and characters; in other words, language itself, to her, is repetition turned into insistence.

In Stein’s linguistic system, habits are understood as habits of the mouth and of the ear: habitual languages are those that are or were spoken and heard. In being happily left “intensely alone with [her] eyes and [her] English,” she could write poetry—that essentially alienating process. What she does to French and German in her writing can

now be understood as a reverse estrangement: not only do these foreign imports alienate her English, but they are in turn alienated by the writing process, in a final twist of translation.

### Translation / Transposition

Many modernist writers, among them a number of Stein's friends, looked for inspiration in translation. They played with other tongues, which they sometimes did not master, to renew their English. In his study of modernist translation culture, Steven Yao argues that modernism was a moment of radical redefinition of this art, which was turned into a practice for which a perfect knowledge of the source language, or indeed any knowledge at all, was no longer deemed necessary.<sup>32</sup> Thus Ezra Pound, Louis Zukofsky, Woolf, H.D., and Marianne Moore delved into ancient Greek, Chinese, or Russian. Stein, however, displayed comparatively little interest in translation. She famously told of her endeavor to render Flaubert's *Trois Contes* in English, an exercise which she presented as an important thematic inspiration for *Three Lives*; she also collaborated with Georges Hugnet on an aborted English edition of his poetry, and worked during the war on a project of translating Marshal Pétain's speeches, which unsurprisingly later garnered her much criticism. The Flaubert translation, if it ever actually existed, is lost; the Pétain ones, however, offer interesting insight into her understanding of the process. Whatever Stein was thinking when she took on rendering Pétain's speeches in English, scholars who worked on these manuscripts were struck by how literal Stein was, translating word for word without heeding English particularities of vocabulary or syntax. Barbara Will notes:

Stein completely ignores questions of idiom or style: "Telle est, aujourd'hui, Français, la tache à laquelle je vous convie" becomes "This is today french people the task to which I urge you." An idiomatic phrase such as "Le 17 juin 1940, il y a aujourd'hui une année" becomes "On the seventeenth of June 1940 it is a year today." "Ils se méprendront les uns et les autres"—a speech denouncing Pétain's critics—is translated "But they are mistaken the ones and the others." Syntax is distorted: a speech describing the refugees from the Lorraine notes the abandonment of "le cimetière où dorment leurs ancêtres"; Stein translates this as "their cemeteries where sleep their ancestors." Even the term "speech" is avoided: "Discours du 8 juillet" becomes "Discourse of the 8 July."<sup>33</sup>

Comparing the literalness of Stein's Pétain translations to her creative response to Hugnet's poem "Enfances," which she first thought of as a translation before affirming herself as the author of a *new* text, Will has argued that this "slavishly literal" attitude had to do with Stein's submission to the Vichy regime ("Lost in Translation," 657).<sup>34</sup> Yet a very similar effect can be found in Stein's less politically problematic published prose, most strikingly when she translates conversations originally held in French, but also when she renders ideas that, it seems, were thought in a mixed language, typical of expatriates. Marie-Claire Pasquier, who herself has translated Stein into French, gives a number of examples from *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* ("We were very content," "We consoled him," as well as examples from

reported speech, in which the source language is left as obvious as its translation permits).<sup>35</sup> The same can be said of the few cases when Stein translated herself, first writing in French, then in English: in a manuscript about her friend the painter Francis Rose, she first writes “Francis Rose peint leur peinture et moi j’aime ça,” which she then renders as “Francis Rose paints their painting and I I like that.”<sup>36</sup> She decided to stick to the pronominal mistake (“leur” instead of “sa” is translated as “their” instead of “his”); and the double I, though terribly awkward in English, translates very directly the typically Gallic “moi je.”

Interestingly, there is one example of a reverse translation (from English to French), to be found among Stein’s unpublished material at the Beinecke. It is a manuscript of Stein’s portrait of Erik Satie (written in 1922 and first published in *Portraits and Prayers*), followed by a French translation in the same hand.<sup>37</sup> The translation is almost word for word, except for the first line: “Erik Satie benignly” becomes “Erik Satie était assis bénévolement.” It actually translates “Erik Satie sat benignly”—thus revealing a pun that could have been overlooked in English. In that particular case, the translation unfolds something that is concentrated in the original (“sat” being kept *within* “Satie” and not repeated). I should add that “bénévollement” does not exist in French but is a neologism that is easily understandable (“bénin” exists as an adjective, and Stein proceeds to a most banal adverbial derivation). In these few lines, then, one observes, first, the general Steinian mode of translating in the most literal manner, thus making the translation sound strange; and second, an explanation of the strangeness of the original (the concentration of “Erik Satie benignly” where at first sight the verb seems to be missing, while the translation reveals that it is here, within the very name of the musician), which both diminishes the strangeness, and simultaneously reveals the way it operates (that is, as this case makes clear, not necessarily in relation to other languages, but through monolingual puns).

The point here is not to demonstrate that Stein was a poor translator (though by academic standards she probably was), but that her practice of translation—which is not a theory of it—has to do with a complex interplay of orality and writing, a process that takes on its full meaning in her poetry. Indeed, in keeping as close as possible to the syntax and lexicon of the idioms she heard and transcribed, Stein seemed to want to keep the sound of the original language in her written English, so that her translating is primarily a transposition from an auditory code to a written one, and only secondarily (and consequently) a transposition from one linguistic system to another. Foreign languages had to do, for her, with orality, while only English made sense to her as scripture; hence this digestion of foreign sounds into English spelling, rather than into idiomatic English grammar. The device becomes even more puzzling in Stein’s poetic texts, when she puts on paper a series of English words that looks nonsensical, yet sounds meaningful in another language. The most famous example is probably the first line of the “Guillaume Apollinaire” poem, “Give known or pin ware,” which can actually be read as a transcription of the name of the poet. Ulla Dydo writes in the introduction to the poem in her *Stein Reader*,

The four English-looking words turn into two French-sounding words, a name written as Stein heard it, transliterating and translating it separately into English sounds and words. As if she had never seen the name in writing, she put down the foreign sounds in the

nearest English equivalent. Yet she knew Apollinaire, as her original title in manuscript, “Guillaume,” shows in its familiar first-name form. It all sounds like a baby learning to talk.<sup>38</sup>

Where Dydo sees “a baby learning to talk,” one could instead see a native speaker of English mimicking French without the necessary phonological skills, or trying to make sense of odd, foreign sounds by comparing them to their closest equivalents in her own language. Stein’s play is very conscious and self-reflexive, as if she enjoyed the possibilities of meaning created by this transliteration. The idea of such wordplay may have been suggested to her by William James, who, as Jonathan Levin points out, proposed something similar in his *Principles of Psychology*, comparing the apparently meaningless combination of French words “Pas de lieu Rhône que nous” to the sounds that make up the English “paddle your own canoe”:<sup>39</sup>

As we seize the English meaning the sound itself appears to change. Verbal sounds are usually perceived with their meaning at the moment of being heard. Sometimes, however, the associative irradiations are inhibited for a few moments (the mind being preoccupied with other thoughts) whilst the words linger on the ear as mere echoes of acoustic sensations. Then, usually, their interpretation suddenly occurs. But at that moment one may often surprise a change in the very *feel* of the word. Our own language would sound very different to us if we heard it without understanding, as we hear a foreign tongue.<sup>40</sup>

James was then working on the sensations provoked by spoken and heard words, and was not interested in their transcription as such. Stein goes further in exploring the possibilities of English words that certainly mimic others, but also mean for themselves and carry their own denotations and connotations. By transcribing French sounds into English letters, Stein creates a double alienation: her English is contaminated with foreign imports, and her other languages are forcibly transcribed in a written code designed for another idiom. It leads Stein to what the Russian and polyglot poet Marina Tsvetayeva called, in her correspondence with the not less polyglot Rainer Maria Rilke, “the mother tongue” of poets, one that is beyond familiarity or strangeness.<sup>41</sup>

It has become a modernist commonplace to define poetry as always already a translation, in translation; this feature is also what makes poetry essentially untranslatable. In fact, when one looks back at Shklovsky’s essay, his call for strangeness is meant to clarify the distinction, not so much between poetry and prose, but between “ordinary” and “literary” language. But, at a time when poetry was losing its formal specificities, the definitions that were given of it (as demonstrating a form of oddity by comparison with “ordinary language,” as being focused on the signifier as much as, or more than, on the signified), became more or less the same as those that were used to distinguish between literary and un-literary prose. Stein, who was adamant that prose and poetry were to be distinguished in her work, tried to evolve other definitions. But, as we have seen regarding her use of dialect in her early prose works and her use of foreign grammars in *Tender Buttons*, the difference between poetry and prose may also be said to lie in the *obviousness*, or not, of foreign

imports—making ultimately the difference between (literary) prose and poetry one of degree rather than one of essence.

## Notes

1. Alice Babette Toklas, *What Is Remembered: An Autobiography* (London: Cardinal, 1989), 28.
2. Gertrude Stein, *Paris France* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1940), 1.
3. William Howard Gass, *The World Within the Word: Essays* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1978), 69.
4. Michaela Giesenkirchen, in an article on Stein's piece "Accents in Alsace," also commented on these passages ("Where English Speaks More than One Language: Accents in Gertrude Stein's 'Accents in Alsace,'" *The Massachusetts Review* 34, no. 1 [1993]: 45–62, 53).
5. Stein's poem "Yet Dish" is often read as a nod to the family's Jewish identity.
6. Gertrude Stein, *Writings 1903–1932* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 735.
7. The Yale collection of Stein papers, which includes the volumes on her bookshelves by the time of her death, confirms that she owned very few works in French. These include her copy of Flaubert's *Trois Contes*, which she attempted to translate, other works of the same author, an edition of *Les Mille et une Nuits* (*Arabian Nights*) and George Sand's *Histoire de ma vie*. See Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, YCAL MSS 77, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.
8. Stein expressed her interest in Russian formalism but whether she read Shklovsky is unknown. His seminal article, in any case, had not yet been written by the time she published *Tender Buttons*.
9. Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 12.
10. "Enstrangement" is the translation proposed by Benjamin Sher, who justifies its oddness by the fact that the Russian word is itself not only a neologism but one that looks like a misspelling.
11. Gertrude Stein, *Four in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1947), v.
12. Indeed, one finds in *Ida* a direct translation of Musset's title, and the scene of *Film*, with a maid carrying a package, is to be found in Musset's play.
13. "Butter and rose / Are things / Which she offers / For her dose [?] / For my birthday. / Rose and butter / Don't be afraid / Belong to my heart [or: to my darling] / For my birthday. / Rose and butter butter and Rose / Are things are things / Which I present with joy / Here and there / Seen inside seen outside / But they are all in my heart inside or outside, inside in my surroundings [?] and in my heart.  
Roses and butter, butter and Rose delicious things" (my translation).
14. "Après tout, si on a eu dans le nez les odeurs d'une ville quand on a trois ans, on a une émotion d'intimité avec cette ville que l'on ne perdra jamais" (Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, folder 1595, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library).
15. "Après cela il y avait une longue intervalle, pendant que je suis devenue complètement americaine . . . Enfin en 1904, ayant termine mes etudes inuversitaires [sic] en Amerique, je me suis installee a Paris et j'y suis et j'y reste.  
Installee a Paris, je commencai a ecrire; j'étais tres influence par Cezanne. J'avais un tres beaux Cezanne et devant ce tableau j'ai beaucoup medite et le resultat de ces meditations etait mes premiers livres, dont un traduit en francais, AMERICAINS D'AMERIQUE."  
In this translation of Stein's French, I did not render her awkwardness or mistakes, for understandability's sake.
16. Leon Katz, "The First Making of the *Making of Americans*" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1963).
17. The manuscript kept at the Beinecke Library was indeed written in broken French by Stein herself, and the many grammar, spelling and gender mistakes were corrected by an unknown hand.

See Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, folder 645, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.

18. “Il est très curieux et très intéressant de noter que, dans le dernier siècle, alors qu’on avait partout une tendance à nier la lutte entre mâle et femelle, en même temps on ait essayé de nier la différence entre la langue écrite et la langue parlée.

Les écrivains disaient qu’ils écrivaient comme ils parlaient, comme les hommes et les femmes disaient que la camaraderie a remplacé la lutte entre mâle et femelle.

Mais, les Français savaient bien que cela était faux. Je me rappelle avoir été tellement frappée par le fait que le peuple en France disait très honnêtement: ‘Non, je ne connais pas la langue française,’ mais quand il s’agissait de gens parlant, pour nos oreilles américaines, bien français. Peut-être voulaient-ils dire que le patois régional était encore présent dans leur langue quand ils parlaient. Mais je crois que la chose était plus profonde. Les Français, ayant toujours été tout à fait civilisés et logiques, ne pouvaient pas nier une vérité, et la vérité est que la langue parlée n’est pas la même que la langue écrite.

Donc, les Français ne niaient pas cette vérité, et le résultat était qu’ils continuaient à être capables de faire en parlant des phrases tellement profondes et vraies que c’était vraiment des phrases écrites. Ceci a l’air d’un paradoxe, mais ce n’en est pas un.

La langue écrite est la langue dénuée d’actualité, c’est là sa caractéristique la plus profonde. Et le peuple de France étant toujours en contact étroit avec la terre, peut de temps en temps parler une langue écrite. Même assez souvent. Mais il ne confond pas. Il est toujours profondément conscient de la différence entre les deux. . . .

Comme les Français n’ont jamais perdu le sens profond de la différence entre la langue écrite et la langue parlée, la langue française a toujours cette logique qui fait que ce n’est pas quelque chose à apprendre pour les usages ordinaires, c’est quelque chose qui consiste dans une connaissance profonde des différences entre une langue écrite et une langue parlée, différences qui font la vérité de la civilisation que les autres langues très souvent oublient. Les autres langues peuvent devenir la langue des actualités, la langue de la rhétorique. Non pas la langue française: elle reste toujours la langue de la logique et de la compréhension, une langue qui comprend la différence vitale entre une langue écrite et une langue parlée” (Gertrude Stein, “La langue française,” *Patrie, Revue mensuelle illustrée de l’empire*, no. 2 [1941], 36–37, my translation).

19. Regarding the reception of “Melanctha” among African American writers, see Eugene E. Miller, “Richard Wright and Gertrude Stein,” *Black American Literature Forum* 16, no. 3 (1982), 107–12.

20. See Henry Louis Gates, *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the “Racial” Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 169, 171; and Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 129–31, 144, 149–51; both referenced by Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 72.

21. Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other Or The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

22. Peter Quartermain, *Disjunctive Poetics: From Gertrude Stein and Louis Zukofsky to Susan Howe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 42.

23. James Robert Mellow, *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein and Company* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 164.

24. Marjorie Perloff, *Wittgenstein’s Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 85.

25. Perloff gives one example in which she feels that English grammar is being questioned through the French: the sentence “I wish matches” (from “Pink Melon Joy”), which sounds odd as such but makes sense if we consider it as a free, perhaps unconscious, rendering of the French “Je désire des allumettes,” considering that “desire” can translate both as “want” and “wish” (*Wittgenstein’s Ladder*, 88). This example, however, is what we would call lexical rather than grammatical, in that it does not deal with structure, but with isolated words and their common use.

26. Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997), 38.

27. Acceptance speech for the reception of the Georg-Büchner prize, 1969, quoted by Charlotte Melin, “Gertrude Stein and German Letters: Received, Recovered, Revised,” *Comparative*

*Literature Studies* 22, no. 4 (1985): 497–515, 497. Heissenbüttel acknowledged Stein's influence on his own poetry, notably in his article "Reduzierte Sprache, Über ein Stück von Gertrude Stein" (Helmut Heissenbüttel, *Über Literatur, "Texte und Dokumente zur Literatur"* [Olten Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1966]). However, he did not say whether he had made out any trace of German in her poetry.

28. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1993), 44.

29. Perloff also notes Stein's predilection for "this one" and "one" and sees in it a trace of her childhood German (Marjorie Perloff, "'Living in the Same Place': The Old Mononationalism and the New Comparative Literature," *World Literature Today* 69, no. 2 [1995]: 249–55).

30. Quoted by Thornton Wilder in his introduction to Stein's *Four in America*, vi.

31. Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Stuart Nelson Clarke, vol. 5, 1929–1932 (London: The Hogarth Press, 2009), 3.

32. Steven G. Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

33. Barbara Will, "Lost in Translation: Stein's Vichy Collaboration," *Modernism/modernity* 11, no. 4 (2004): 651–68, 653. Will quotes from Le Maréchal Pétain, *Paroles aux français; messages et écrits 1934–1941* (Lyon: H. Lardanchet, 1941), 100. All translations hers.

34. It would go far beyond the scope of this paper to discuss Will's argument about Stein's war years. However, the dossier edited by Charles Bernstein in 2012 offers necessary counterpoints; see Charles Bernstein, "Gertrude Stein's War Years: Setting the Record Straight," *Jacket 2* (2012), [jacket2.org/feature/gertrude-steins-war-years-setting-record-straight](http://jacket2.org/feature/gertrude-steins-war-years-setting-record-straight).

35. Marie-Claire Pasquier, "A Propos de Gertrude Stein: La Traduction Rêvée," *Revue Française D'études Américaines* 18 (1983): 487–99.

36. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, folder 1637, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.

37. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, folder 1613, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.

38. *A Stein Reader*, ed. Ulla E. Dydo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 278.

39. See Jonathan Levin, *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism, and American Literary Modernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 151.

40. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 80.

41. Tsvetayeva to Rilke, July 6, 1926, *Letters: Summer 1926—Boris Pasternak, Marina Tsvetayeva, Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. Yevgeny Pasternak, Yelena Pasternak, and Konstantin M. Azadovsky (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), 221.

