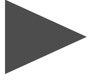

"Baptized Spanish": Gertrude Stein and the Making of a Spaniard

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ABSTRACT

As early as 1901—but especially after meeting the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso in 1905—Gertrude Stein imagined Spain as a birthplace of modernism, invoking a close American–Spanish relationship to symbolize how old traditions might be transformed into modern art. Unfortunately, the close connection between Stein and Spain has been overshadowed in literary criticism by the very categorization of Stein as chiefly an American modernist and expatriate who lived in Paris. However, the transnational trajectory of her writing career was as much American–Spanish as American–French, and the Spanish influences are much more interesting and relevant to her work. While much attention has been given to the Stein–Picasso relationship, few critics acknowledge the Spanish influence and the style that emerged thereafter—and with this, the recognition that Spain was a crucial setting of twentieth-century modernism.

KEYWORDS: *Gertrude Stein, Spain, Picasso, transnationalism, cubism*

"Americans, so Gertrude Stein says, are like spaniards [*sic*] . . . She always says that americans can understand spaniards . . . Gertrude Stein and spaniards are natural friends" (Stein [1933b] 1990, 91, 125)—so says Gertrude Stein through the persona of her lover Alice B. Toklas in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*,[1] written over the course of six weeks in 1932 and published in 1933. By the book's publication, Stein had lived well over half her life in Europe, including enough time in Spain and around Spanish influences

INTERDISCIPLINARY LITERARY STUDIES, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2016
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to envisage herself “like [a] spaniard,” a complicated thesis developed throughout her writing career to both validate and promote herself as an artist. As early as 1901—but especially after meeting the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso in 1905—Stein imagined Spain as a birthplace of modernism, invoking the close American–Spanish relationship as a symbolic demonstration of how old traditions might be transformed into modern art.

Unfortunately, the close connection between Stein and Spain has been overshadowed in literary criticism by the very categorization of Stein as chiefly an American modernist and expatriate who lived in France. Her residence in Paris during much of her writing career provides fodder for what María DeGuzmán (2005) aptly calls “the much-vaunted triangulation between New York, Paris, and London” that so characterizes modernism and literary criticism of the early twentieth century. Stein’s life and writing, with numerous references to Paris or France, DeGuzmán observes, “would seem to reinforce this map of relations” (200). In *What Are Masterpieces*, Stein claims, “America is my country and Paris is my hometown” (Stein [1940b] 1970, 70). Published that same year, *Paris France* states that “writers have to have two countries, the one where they belong and the one in which they live really. The second one is romantic, it is separate from themselves, it is not real but it is really there.” Paris “was where the twentieth century was . . . where fashions were made. To be sure there were moments when they seemed to dress better in Barcelona and in New York but not really” (Stein 1940a, 11). Together with the book’s title, the comments appear to situate Stein as an American Parisian. However, Paris was where the twentieth century was partially because she, an American and the “creative literary mind of the century” (Stein 1937, 21–22)—an unabashed self-description—resided there. For in the same breath that Stein affirms “Paris is my hometown,” she explains (in the following, typically ignored sentence) that Paris was important not for “what France gave you but what it did not take away from you” (Stein 1940a, 70)—a telling addendum that qualifies the French or Parisian imprint.

In reality, the Spanish influences on her work are much more interesting and relevant to her understanding of modernism. In her 1938 homage to Picasso, Stein explains that “Painting in the nineteenth century was only done in France and by Frenchman, apart from that, painting did not exist, *in the twentieth century it was done in France but by Spaniards*” (Stein 1970, 3, emphasis mine).[2] Paris was “where the twentieth century was” because a Spaniard invented modern art there. Looking back on the

artistic innovations that stirred twentieth-century culture and history, Stein envisioned herself a central player in the creative revolution; this is why, she continues, "America and Spain have this thing in common, that is why Spain discovered America and America Spain, in fact it is for this reason that both of them have found their moment in the twentieth century" (Stein 1970, 38). Paris is significant in uniting America with Spain, underscoring Americans and Spaniards as central actors in what is at best a triangular American–Spanish–French relationship:

> Well [Picasso] was in Paris and all painting had an influence upon him and his literary friends were a great stimulation to him. I do not mean that by all this he was less Spanish. But certainly for a short time he was more French. . . . After this first definite French influence, he became once more completely Spanish. Very soon the Spanish temperament was again very real inside in him. (Stein 1970, 11)

While French and Spanish impressions converge to create the modern artist Picasso, the modern stroke is definitively away from France and to Spain.

As narrator and storyteller, Stein becomes the American counterpart of the equation, exemplifying how cross-cultural interactions and influences are not simply one-way journeys of assimilation but transnational phenomena, comprising what Steven Vertovec describes as "sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders—businesses, non-governmental-organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests (by way of criteria such as religious beliefs, common cultural and geographic origins)" (Vertovec 2009, 3). "America and Spain have this thing in common"—not just the historical linkages—but the transnational ties of a "common cultural" and creative moment in the twentieth century. To Stein, meeting Picasso in 1905 seemed as monumental, historic, and fated as the Columbus discovery of the Americas some four centuries beforehand: in 1492, Columbus (Spain) discovered the Americas, the "new" world; in 1905, Stein (America) discovered Picasso (Spain) and "modern" art. Although separate in implication and significance, the notion of "discovery" has connected America and Spain over centuries, and for a modernist like Stein, the connection was both symbolic (through her art) and real (through her personal experiences). While much attention has been given to the Stein-Picasso relationship, few critics fully appreciate her distinctive Spanish transformation—and with this, the recognition that Spain was a crucial setting for twentieth-century modernism.

The first year of the twentieth century (1901) was also the first year Stein visited Spain, and writing to Mabel Weeks, her discovery and embrace were evident: "There is no doubt the South . . . is the land of me . . . I love the Moors so much it is almost a pain. . . . The Alhambra, and the sunshine and the brown legs and the smells are all mine all mine."[3] Soon afterward, Stein began a short novel entitled *Q.E.D.* (*Quod Erat Demonstrandum*), intending a scientific or psychological narration into human events and lives that also fictionalized her earliest of romantic appraisals. Midway through, the protagonist Adele returns from Europe and Spain to Baltimore (a trajectory Stein herself had just finished), lamenting American life: "what's the use of anything as long as it isn't Spain?" As if foreshadowing Stein's future endorsements of the country to writers like Ernest Hemingway and Richard Wright, Adele encourages her friends, "You must really go there some time" (Stein 1971, 72).[4] On the one hand, *Q.E.D.* is the very example of the "nineteenth century" (prosaic, formulated, un-modern) writing Stein would ridicule decades later. "Sitting in the court of the Alhambra watching the swallows fly in and out of the crevices of the walls, bathing in the soft air filled with the fragrance of myrtle and oleander and letting the hot sun burn her face and the palms of her hands, losing herself thus in sensuous delight" (Stein 1971, 68), Adele's reflections rather echo Washington Irving's romantic observations in *The Alhambra*. Walking toward Moorish ruins outside Seville, Irving observes the Guadaira River, "whimpering among reeds, rushes, and pondlilies, and overhung with rhododendron, eglantine, yellow myrtle, and a profusion of wild flowers and aromatic shrubs; while along its banks are groves of oranges, citrons, and pomegranates, among which we heard the early note of the nightingale." In Granada, there was "every thing to delight a southern voluptuary; fruits, flowers, fragrance, green arbors and myrtle hedges, delicate air and gushing waters" (Irving [1832] 1991, 731, 873).

Despite the nineteenth-century style, *Q.E.D.* is remarkable in foreshadowing Stein's "twentieth-century" philosophies concerning Americans and Spaniards. When a young Spanish child nears Adele, "they smiled at each other and exchanged greetings. . . . sat there side by side with a feeling of complete companionship, looking at each other with perfect comprehension, their intercourse saved from the interchange of common-places by their ignorance of each other's language." After some time, they part "as quiet friends part, and as long as they remained in sight of each other they turned again and again and signed a gentle farewell" (Stein 1971, 68). This unspoken yet powerful mutual exchange between American and Spaniard

is spontaneous, natural, and exceptional—and prefigures the sibling-like kinship that developed (and continued in fits and starts) between Stein and Picasso only a few years later. About their early years, Stein explains, "I was alone at this time in understanding him, perhaps because I was expressing the same thing in literature, perhaps because I was an American and, as I say, Spaniards and Americans have a kind of understanding of things which is the same" (Stein 1970, 23). *Q.E.D.* foretells this intuitive "kind of understanding," for within romantic Spain Adele reflects that "No it isn't just this, it's *something more, something different*. I haven't really felt it but I have caught a glimpse" (Stein 1971, 68, emphasis mine).

While critics have rightly associated *Q.E.D.* and this "glimpse" with Stein's love interests at the time (Adele later reads Dante's *Vita Nuova*, losing "herself completely in the tale of Dante and Beatrice" and "begin[s] to see something in my glimpse" [Stein 1971, 69]), they have failed to interpret this "something more, something different" within the wider context of Spain. In *AAT*, her writing literally evolves by way of Spain, including the early Granada trip described in *Q.E.D.*:

> We finally came to Granada and stayed there for some time and there Gertrude Stein worked terrifically. She was always very fond of Granada. It was there she had her first experience of Spain when still at college just after the spanishamerican war. . . . We enjoyed Granada . . . and it was there and at that time that Gertrude Stein's style gradually changed. She says hitherto she had been interested only in the insides of people, their character and what went on inside them, it was during that summer that she first felt a desire to express the rhythm of the visible world. (Stein [1933b] 1990, 118–19)

In the decade or two that followed her first trip to Spain, Stein's writing transformed from a closed process, centered inward, and reflecting the past, to one that was outward and forward, a discovery of the world around her. Although Spain and America had not been conceptualized as such intrinsic counterparts at the time of writing *Q.E.D.*, "glimpses" of the mutual exchange and sparks of discovery toward experimental modern art were present nonetheless. In fact, the *Q.E.D.* manuscript is closely linked to *AAT*, for the former was only rediscovered months before Stein began the latter.[5] The discovery and timing suggest Stein drew inspiration from the earlier manuscript to better articulate the conversion that took place between 1905 and 1906, when she met Picasso, who soon went to work on her portrait.

Despite the disputed circumstances around the initial meeting and varying reasons Picasso undertook her portrait, both Picasso and the portrait had an abrupt, life-changing effect. "Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso immediately understood each other" (Stein [1933b] 1990, 46), and while Picasso gained an ardent admirer and patron of his work, Stein gained a needed muse and the motivation and justification for experimenting with new forms of writing. Both her writing and her confidence in and understanding of herself as a writer changed. While their relationship deserves credit for this change, so does her growing understanding of Spain as a begetter of modernism, a theory developed in that relationship's wake.

Much of what is known about 1905 and 1906 comes from *AAT*, which, in the words of Donald Pizer (1996), is a "retrospective work" about Stein's transformation as an artist.

> Stein underscores not only what she has done as a promoter of modernism in painting but also how she has appropriated its underlying principles for her prose. She likens her push toward a cubist form in *Three Lives* to the work of Cézanne (33–34), she sets Picasso's breakthrough to a cubist technique while he is completing her portrait alongside her own experiments in *The Making of Americans* (56–57), and she perceives herself as united with Picasso in a joint effort to create an art based on "elemental abstraction" (64). (32, 35)

Subtly, too, there was an homage to Spain retrospectively incorporated as a sort of origins-story for both modernism and herself as a modern artist. Around the time she was finishing *Three Lives* in the winter and spring of 1906, Picasso had ended the portrait sittings, apparently having difficulty in finishing Stein's head and face.[6] Stein recalls in *AAT* how "All of a sudden one day Picasso painted out the whole head. I can't see you any longer when I look, he said irritably. And so the picture was left like that. Nobody remembers being particularly disappointed," Stein affirms: the Steins were going to Italy and Picasso and Fernande, his lover, to Spain (Stein [1933b] 1990, 53). Picasso's inability to finish was not a disappointment because Spain was not an interruption to the work but an inspiration.

The significance of the portrait and its Spanishness cannot be overstated. In *Picasso*, Stein considers it more than just art; she literally sees herself in it: "for me, it is I, and it is the only reproduction of me which is always I, for me" (Stein 1970, 14). However, while critics have not missed the portrait's place in Stein's life, literary critics have missed its Spanishness

as an influence in her writing. Visually, Picasso's color tones and rendering of Stein's attire are, in Stein's view, distinctively Spanish. In *AAT*, the Toklas narrator recalls their joint trips to Spain, with Gertrude wearing "a brown corduroy suit, jacket and skirt. . . . It is more or less this costume without the cap and the cane that Picasso has painted in his portrait of her. This costume was ideal for Spain" (Stein [1933b] 1990, 116). Remarkably, the passage implies Stein had first worn the costume in Spain, which only then Picasso had painted; but these trips did not take place until years after the portrait's completion. She was, in a sense, reconfiguring the past, making the "ideal" American–Spanish exchange appear natural and constant. The costume's dark patterns make it ideally Spanish because "one must never forget that Spain is not like other southern countries, it is not colorful, all the colors in Spain are white black silver or gold; there is not red or green, not at all" (Stein 1970, 11). Although the portrait has a reddish, textured background, like Stein's dark brown suit, it is "not colorful," emitting an overall darkened mood that centers on an unsmiling, almost brooding Stein. The portrait's dark stature was naturally drawn from a Spanish painter whose influences had derived from such a black, dark country. Years later, this same black, dark Spanish imagery was incorporated into Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, a dramatic opera set in Spain, published in 1927, and subsequently performed in 1934. Virgil Thomson, who composed the music, wrote to Stein about the rehearsals: the all-black cast was part "of a beauty incredible, with trees made out of feathers and a sea-wall made out of shells and for the procession of a baldacchino of black chiffon and branches of black ostrich plumes, just like a Spanish funeral."[7] On a more symbolic level, the portrait embedded the American–Spanish relationship by its very method, production, and inspiration. Soon after Stein's death in 1946, Toklas recalled that "there had been a strange exchange in this early creative effort that she and Picasso felt had been expressed in the portrait." Like Stein, Toklas believed "It was a mutual influence . . . [and] the painter and his model saw things differently after that winter."[8] The glimpses of "something more, something different" were conceptualized as primarily Spanish in nature, for throughout this period Picasso's "imagination remained purely Spanish. The spanish quality of ritual and abstraction had been indeed stimulated by his painting the portrait of Gertrude Stein. She had a definite impulse then and always toward elemental abstraction" (Stein [1933b] 1990, 64).

Both *The Making of Americans* and *Three Lives*—her first forays into "elemental abstraction"—must be interpreted through this "spanish quality of ritual and abstraction." Most likely early in 1905, she put away the

sketches for *The Making of Americans* to work on *Three Lives*, a work Stein later described as "the first definite step away from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in literature" ([1933b] 1990, 54). This definite step or impulse was concluded only after Picasso had returned from Spain and when she had returned to *The Making of Americans* the following summer, in 1906. That work then "changed from being a history of a family to being a history of everybody the family knew and then it became the history of every kind and of every individual human being," and "a piece of the monumental work which was the beginning, really the beginning of modern writing" ([1933b] 1990, 113, 215). As she witnessed Picasso's transformations as an artist after Spain, her own writing shifted from the inward to the outward and from the local ("history of a family") to the transnational or cosmopolitan (history of "every individual human being"). About her writing that summer and fall of 1906, she recalls,

> She came back to a Paris fairly full of excitement. In the first place she came back to her finished portrait. The day he returned from Spain Picasso sat down and out of his head painted the head in without having seen Gertrude Stein again. And when she saw it he and she were content. It is very strange but neither can remember at all what the head looked like when he painted it out. ([1933b] 1990, 57)

"Out of his head" alludes to Picasso's specifically Spanish "imagination," and "It is very strange" serves less as a transition between utterances than as a signal toward a "strange," new form of art. Linda Wagner-Martin (1995) accurately sees Picasso "drawing on techniques of Ingres, Cézanne, and African sculpture to give the face the unmatched eyes and surreal angle that distort its otherwise realistic effect. When Picasso invited the Steins to see the painting, Gertrude was pleased: it was of the new. It expressed the same kind of difference she aimed for in her writing" (73). But for Stein, this new "kind of difference" in art was less about Ingres, Cézanne, or African sculpture—for as she avers, "She was not at any time interested in african sculpture," ([1933b] 1990, 64). Her approval rather derived from the notion that, as art scholar Vincent Giroud (2007) observes, "Picasso gave Gertrude, in short, a Spanish face" (30). The newness of the artistic effort was its Spanishness, both in its "ritual" (the way it was produced) and "abstraction" (the way it was received).

To highlight, even consecrate, this modern American–Spanish union, when Stein returned to *The Making of Americans*, she renamed the fictional

town representing Oakland to Gossols, a pointed reference to the northern Spanish town of Gósol where Picasso had spent the summer.[9] *The Making of Americans* was thus becoming a narrative about the making of a Spaniard, with "Gossols" often representing a transformational space. David Hersland, originally from Bridgepoint (the fictional name for Baltimore) and father of the central family, had moved the family to Gossols where he made "his important beginning" and "his great fortune." "His fortune was just beginning" in Bridgepoint, but only "In Gossols the Herslands could be freer" (Stein [1925] 1995, 120, 43, 35, 37). Freedom and fortune were important American themes, but emphasis has shifted to the new "beginning," now expressed through a Spanish reference. To confirm this American–Spanish orientation more utterly, Stein later reworked *fortune* into her prose poem *G.M.P.* to stress the similarities between herself (Gertrude), Matisse and Picasso—all fused together in a similar movement, each "an essential side of the triangle," according to Brenda Wineapple (1997), "altering the course of modern art" (367). The initials form a one-line commemoration to those who labor creatively against the odds to achieve "fortune." "Fortune and succeeding and coming again often is all of something and that thing is creating repeating, and creating something is gaining recognition, and gaining something is expecting some one, and expecting some one is pleasing one who is succeeding."[10] What one is "creating" may not be initially "pleasing" and so offers no "recognition." But what is "disturbing" may ultimately lead to what "will have meaning" ([1933a] 1972, 203). Disturbing objects set in motion a flurry of cause-and-effect scenarios, which lead to more comprehensive discussions of art (the nature of art), thus propelling into existence the very disturbing objects as creations of art. Alongside France, Stein invokes America and Spain to explain and validate modern art's complex method, reception, and value.

Expounding on this complexity years later, Stein contends that *The Making of Americans* became "more and more complicatedly a continuous present. . . . I made almost a thousand pages of a continuous present." In both *Three Lives* and *The Making of Americans* "there was an elaboration of the complexities of using everything and of a continuous present and of beginning again and again and again" ([1940b] 1970, 31–32). The continuous present tense is a persistent beginning or rebirth, a point emphasized in the latter work through Fanny Hissen (who later marries Hersland). Although Fanny is justifiably associated with Stein's mother (Stein with Martha, Fanny's daughter), critics have overlooked a second resemblance to the Picasso–Stein relationship. "Mrs. Fanny Hersland had always had in

her the beginning of an almost important feeling which she had from being like her mother in her nature," but this feeling was never

> very real inside her while she was living in Bridgepoint . . . and it never would have come to her . . . if she had not gone to Gossols and left the family way of being behind. . . . Marrying would never have changed her from her family way of being, it was going to Gossols . . . that awoke in her a sense inside her of the almost important feeling . . . (Stein [1925] 1995, 77)

Hissen (Fanny's maiden name) emphasizes the masculine, potentially hinting the influence of the Stein brothers on Gertrude's life before Paris and Picasso. After meeting and marrying David, she becomes "Hersland" and undergoes an awakening in Gossols. Although most critics view David as the model for Stein's father, the evocation of Picasso and Spain should not be discounted: "Mr. Hersland came to the making of a large fortune out in Gossols as I was saying but as I was saying he was not in his family living living right rich american living" (Stein [1925] 1995, 613). Certainly, Stein's father had acquired riches in the American West, but the final phrase ("right rich american living") designates not place but symbolizes one's move away from traditional modes of living—or art. Fanny's "important feeling" thus dramatizes Stein's continuous present tense, or modern sensibility: married to David (Picasso) in a creative movement away from tradition, Fanny (Gertrude) is constantly reborn after Gossols (Gósol).

Seeing how summer trips to Spain had inspired Picasso, Stein embarked on her own between 1911 and 1916. She and Toklas missed only one summer, that of 1914 when they were settling the publication of *Three Lives* in England, and visited various sites, including Madrid, Cuenca, Toledo, Ávila, Granada, Ronda, and Barcelona. In April 1915, escaping Paris during the war, they traveled to Mallorca via Barcelona. Their original plans were to stay the summer, maybe a few months. However, with war on the mainland and a warm sun and comfortable lodgings on the Mediterranean island, their stay turned into over a year. Within these Spanish summers, two consecutive phases of Stein's writing emerged: a "portrait" period and a "Spanish" period. During the first phase, Stein wrote numerous "word portraits," pseudo-poems experimenting with "elemental abstraction." Describing her intentions shortly after a Spanish trip, Stein exclaimed, "Well, Pablo is doing abstract portraits in painting. I am trying to do abstract portraits in *my* medium, *words*."[11] Contrasting these two phases to her earlier work,

such as *Q.E.D.*, James R. Mellow (1974) observes that, "In Spain, it seems, she had arrived at a means of describing an experience without the usual 'interchange of common-places'—and without the necessary communicative terms of language. She had in a sense perfected a 'foreign' language of her own" (164).

Yet without obvious references, the "Spanish" effect often remains elusive, unnoticed. An early appraisal of her portraits by friend Mabel Dodge (1913) argued against criticisms of incoherency by addressing primarily method and style:

> In a portrait that she has finished recently, she has produced a coherent totality through a series of impressions which, when taken sentence by sentence, strike most people as particularly incoherent. To illustrate this, the words in the following paragraph are strenuous words—words that weigh and qualify conditions; words that are without softness yet that are not hard words—perilous abstractions they seem, containing agony and movement and conveying a vicarious livingness. (174)

While Dodge also attributes Stein's approach to Picasso's ("Gertrude Stein is doing with words what Picasso is doing with paint" [1913, 172]), any "spanish quality of ritual abstraction" goes uncredited, unobserved. In fact, portraits contain both subtle and overt references, including those for "Picasso" and Isadora Duncan. Entitled "Orta or One Dancing," the Duncan poem alludes to Picasso's 1909 trip to Horta de Ebro, where he had worked on groundbreaking modern sketches that were, in the words of Dydo (1993), his "first work defining analytic cubism" (121).[12] Like *G.M.P*, the poem fuses American and Spanish artists at the top of their craft: Duncan with dancing, Picasso with art, Stein with writing. In "Picasso," Stein attempts the abstract with rhythmic repetition, reworking a central phrase or two (such as "One whom some were following was charming" [Stein 1970, 79]) to construct, as Dodge observes, a "series of impressions." Yet these impressions mimic a Spanish-cubist style. Drawing on the word *thing* (which typically relies on surrounding words to generate meaning), Stein shifts emphasis or meaning away from the noun and toward the adjectives: "a solid thing, a charming thing, a lovely thing, a perplexing thing, a disconcerting thing, a simple thing, a clear thing, a complicated thing, an interesting thing, a disturbing thing, a repellant thing, a very pretty thing" (Stein 1970, 80). The poem is a stylistic rendering of Picasso's Spanish-inspired work, which generates meaning not

through any single stroke or line but through a playful exchange between numerous visual impressions. Less abstractly, *work* itself is a central line, or impression, of the poem, echoing Picasso's written correspondence to the Steins between 1906 and 1909: "I worked in Gosol and am working here [Paris];" "I have started to work I'm doing a still life;" "I am working hard it's going well." In August of 1909, Picasso was so adamant about demonstrating his work he suggested meeting in Spain, adding he would send photographs regardless (Picasso and Stein 2005, 17–31).[13] Thus, *work* in "Picasso"—as with *Gossols* in *The Making of Americans*—is both an explicit reference and symbolic rendering of modernism's indebtedness to Spain.

Much of this Spanish indebtedness is illustrated in *Picasso*, which concentrates around Picasso's 1906–1909 summers in Spain:

> Once again Picasso in 1909 was in Spain and he brought back with him some landscapes which were, certainly were . . . extraordinarily realistic and all the same the beginning of cubism. Picasso had by chance taken some photographs of the village that he had painted and it always amused me when every one protested against the fantasy of the pictures to make them look at the photographs which made them see that the pictures were almost exactly like the photographs. Oscar Wilde used to say that nature did nothing by copy art and really there is some truth in this and certainly the Spanish villages were as cubistic as these paintings.
>
> So Picasso was once more baptized Spanish. (Stein 1970, 14)

Rejecting photographic copies as artwork (rejecting a nineteenth-century realism, say), Picasso captured "something more, something different" and profoundly essential: a Spanish, cubist art that heralds a modern sense of realism. Stein interprets the Spanish landscapes as both "extraordinarily realistic" (a phrase rich in competing sentiments) and as a "fantasy": a picture "almost exactly like the photographs." The interpretation flips nature on its head, reversing the game, where, following the Wilde allusion, art does not copy nature but nature copies art. Spain is cubist (modern) because a Spanish painter affects cubism onto it; its Spanish or cubist essence lies in its artistic rendering. Notice, too, that the model (the village) is not even necessary. It was only "by chance" Picasso had taken photographs, and these merely challenged a viewer's conception of reality and fantasy. The village's essence lies in the artwork, not in the photographic copy or even the village itself.[14]

As she explains in *AAT* about these 1909 landscape paintings that "were the beginning of cubism," "the essential thing, the treatment of the houses was essentially spanish and therefore essentially Picasso" ([1933b] 1990, 90). Stein argues "Cubism is spanish" against this backdrop, and we learn the "essential thing" regards not just timing or artist but place: "We were very much struck, the first time Gertrude Stein and I went to Spain, which was a year or so after the beginning of cubism, to see how naturally cubism was made in Spain." Spain is understood as not just where cubism takes place but its very incarnation:

> In the shops in Barcelona instead of post cards they had square little frames and inside it was placed a cigar, a real one, a pipe, a bit of handkerchief etcetera, all absolutely the arrangement of many a cubist picture and helped out by cut paper representing other objects. That is the modern note that in Spain had been done for centuries. ([1933b] 1990, 91–92)

Seeking to do her own cubist word portraits in key with this centuries-old Spanish "modern note," "In Spain Gertrude Stein began to write the things that led to Tender Buttons" ([1933b] 1990, 115). Working through a method in these years to "describe a thing without mentioning it,"[15] there is no significant mention of Spain in *Tender Buttons* (1914). Instead, the word portraits aim for "a kind of incantation," where "in listening one feels that from the combination of repeated sounds, varied ever so little, that there emerges gradually a perception of some meaning quite other than that of the contents of the phrases" (Dodge 1913, 174). Writing an introductory preface for *Geography and Plays* in 1922, Sherwood Anderson (1922) observes how "It gives words an oddly new intimate flavor and at the same time makes familiar words seem almost like strangers" (5–8). To make the strange (foreign) familiar was her new approach, writing cubism (Spanish) for "[herself] and strangers" (Stein [1925] 1995, 289).

Stein's indebtedness to Spain has been overlooked quite possibly given the skepticism over her writing's resemblance to Picasso's art, especially cubism. Leon Katz and Edward Burns (1970), for example, have cautioned that "In her understanding, they shared an identical orientation toward the most significant problems of art, but certainly none of manner or *métier* and certainly none based on the writer's imitation of the painter's solutions" (107–16). Picasso biographer John Richardson (1996) concurs that in *Tender Buttons* "They could not be more antithetical. Gertrude comes

up with dissociative word patterns, hermetic jingles; Picasso, with a not-always-recognizable but nonetheless itemized configuration that provides us with clues as to the size, markings and texture of specific objects: clues to the nature of their formal and spatial relationships" (406). However, many critics drew comparisons of style nonetheless. Only three years after Katz and Burns's cautioning, L. T. Fitz (1973) argued for "three things which Stein's style shares with Picasso's"—the first was "a cubist approach" while the second was "a style which concentrates on what is seen rather than what is remembered." Moreover, "Like cubism, Stein's fiction lacks a focal point of action; it lacks a climax" (228–31). More recently, Jamie Hilder (2005) has suggested that "Her comparison of her work to Picasso's relies not so much on form as it does on effect," and in a careful reading from *Tender Buttons* ("THIS IS THIS DRESS, AIDER"), Hilder finds a multidimensional "visual rhyme," whose "strangeness" encourages multiple readings. Similar to my reading of "Picasso," Hilder argues that "She achieves the destabilisation of nouns in part through her parody of the dictionary format, where all words are treated as objects, as nouns, to be defined (or portrayed) by the words following them" (66–84). In Stein's own view, she was like the cubists, Picassos, or Spaniards who "express things seen not as one knows them but as they are when one sees them without remembering having looked at them" (1970, 22). Unlike other painters or practices of the nineteenth century, Picasso did not need a model—in cubism, one does not need it (Stein 1970, 3). The theories were similar to Picasso's: "We wanted to paint not what you *see* but what you *know* is there," he explained years after the fact,[16] responding, in part, to critics who complained cubist art was not real enough. For Stein especially, the explanations were justifications of both process and effect.

Despite visible differences, while initial reviews of *Tender Buttons* were less than positive, many identified Stein with cubism nonetheless. In the *Baltimore Sun*, H. L. Mencken saw it as a "Cubist Treatise," and a blurb in the *Detroit News* called Stein "the head of the Cubists and Futurists in Paris."[17] Subtle references indeed occur in even her most abstract writing of 1913–14. As Lorna J. Smedman (1996) points out, in *Bee Time Vine*—a collection of poems and small prose pieces written in 1913 (many from Spain)—Stein was keen to make "sly association[s]" with Picasso and cubism (569–88). In "Miguel (Collusion). Guimpe. Candle.", a play of words and sounds leads to "Cup up, Cube in, Cube in a sand curl," a noticeable resemblance (visibly, audibly) to "cubism." Despite no explicit comment on cubism (or Picasso, though there is a centered line that reads simply

"Paul paul" [Paul the English form of Pablo] [Stein 1953, 37]), the poem embodies the cubist approach. During her 1930s lecture tour, Stein emphasized that her portraits were like "what the cinema was doing, I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing." The cinema was an analogy for cubism (for as she even admits, "I doubt whether at that time I had ever seen a cinema"), where making many things (slides, pictures, strokes, lines, words) eventually forms but one thing ([1967] 2004, 104–5). To Marjorie Perloff (1983), these "'Cubist' deconstructions of form" mean that "One can describe a person by recording a sequence of actions, words, or gestures, but one cannot perceive another person in his or her totality" (69).

Incorporating these cubist sequences, "deconstructions of form," into her own writing, Gertrude Stein was soon "baptized Spanish," having faith that good writing should not copy nature but invent it. Meaning, likewise, became less important than sound or the music and rhythm of words. As Dodge (1913) argued in her appraisal, "so listening to Gertrude Stein's words and forgetting to try to understand what they mean, one submits to their gradual charm." The charm was in the "repetition and the rearranging of certain words over and over, so that they became adjusted into a kind of incantation, and in listening one feels that from the combination of repeated sounds, varied ever so little, that there emerges gradually a perception of some meaning quite other than that of the contents of the phrases" (174). Under the spell of this Spanish charm, Wineapple (1997) observes that "By the summer of 1911, writing portrait after portrait, Stein was moving more deliberately away from" storytelling with "'a beginning and a middle and an ending,' almost as the cubists were moving away from traditional constructions of space" (331). Along with this "portrait" period, Stein ([1967] 2004) entered what she later called her "early Spanish and *Geography and Plays* period," which "finally resulted in things like *Susie Asado* and *Preciosilla* etc. in an extraordinary melody of words and a melody of excitement in knowing that I had done this thing" (116). Indeed, poems like "A Sweet Tail (Gypsies)," "In the Grass (On Spain)," or "Mallorcan Stories" contain very few—if any—direct or photographic descriptions of what the poem's title suggests. "Susie Asado" or "The History of Belmonte" might contain the words *Susie Asado* or *Belmonte*, respectively—but the words in the poem are not meant to define them. In its style—not its subject matter per se—were the markers of its Spanishness. Defending Stein in a letter to *The Transatlantic Review* (coincidentally, parts of *The Making of Americans* were serialized in the same issue), Mina Loy (1924) compared "Sweet Tail" to

"George Borrow's gyspy classic," arguing that "Cubistically she first sees the planes of the scene. Then she breaks them up into their detail. Gypsies of various ages using ladders for the construction of . . . something" (305–9). The references to cubism and Borrow—who wrote numerous tracts about Spain—indirectly demonstrate that interpreting Stein's work through a Spanish lens is not only possible but necessary. Ultimately, the "melodies" continued even after certain members of the orchestra faded, and Stein developed these Spanish-cubist portraitures (of Cézanne, Hemingway, Eliot, Man Ray, Van Vechten, among others) well into the 1920s, even as her trips to Spain and relationship with Picasso had faded. In a sense, she no longer needed a model.

After World War I, Stein spent the next twenty years writing new material and, in reference to Spain, reworking previous experiences in such texts as *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, *Everybody's Autobiography*, and *Picasso*. One notable development, however, was a friendship with Juan Gris, another Spanish artist whose cubism of the 1910s and 1920s "exalted" the form into modern history. As Stein ([1933b] 1990) explains in *AAT*,

> cubism is a purely spanish conception and only spaniards can be cubists and that the only real cubism is that of Picasso and Juan Gris. Picasso created it and Juan Gris permeated it with his clarity and his exaltation. To understand this one has only to read the life and death of Juan Gris by Gertrude Stein, written upon the death of one of her two dearest friends, Picasso and Juan Gris, both Spaniards. (91)

That "only spaniards can be cubists" reaffirms just how much Stein had been "baptized Spanish." But with Gris, Stein also suggests her conversion was not entirely because of Picasso. Generally, "Spaniards and Americans have a kind of understanding of things which is the same." When Gris died in 1927, Stein wrote a short commemoration (the 700-word portrait bluntly affirms "This is the history of Juan Gris"),[18] and although Gris often spoke of "Spanish ways which strangely enough he never liked," the portrait argues how "As a Spaniard he knew cubism and had stepped through into it. He had stepped through it. There was beside this perfection. To have it shown you." The portrait likewise illustrates how Spanish artists are the "measuring" sticks of modernism: Gris "made something that is to be measured. And that is something. Therein Juan Gris is not anything but more than anything. He made that thing. He made the thing. He made a thing to be measured" (Stein 1993, 536–37).

That same year, to pay further homage to Spain and Gris, Stein collaborated with Virgil Thomson (who had already composed musical scores for "Susie Asado" and "Preciosilla") to produce *Four Saints in Three Acts*, one of the few Stein efforts well-ascribed to Spain. In *AAT*, we learn not only that the "two saints whom [Stein] had always liked better than any others" were Spaniards "Theresa of Avila and Ignatius Loyola" (with Theresa a "heroine" of her youth) but that "In the opera Four Saints . . . she describes the landscape that so profoundly moved me [Toklas]" ([1933b] 1990, 229, 116). Eulalia Piñero Gil (2003) concurs that Stein's theater is one of "landscapes more than action," noting specifically that with Theresa, Stein found a Spanish "protofeminist" resembling her own efforts (68, 71, my translation). In effect, Stein's Spanish "heroine" was someone much like herself, in both (feminist) spirit and as a prominent literary figure within an artistic renaissance (of the sixteenth-century Spanish golden age for Theresa, of twentieth-century modernism for Stein). Dydo and Rice (2003) conclude that, "By the most serious play on words entered with extraordinary freedom of imagination, Stein shaped into the libretto the verbal interaction between Spain, the saints, and herself. . . . Spain and Gris and mortality and visions and art and singing—it all comes simply and essentially together" (182). Unlike *G.M.P.* or "Isadora Duncan," this essential configuration was mainly between herself and Spaniards. That "Thomson's settings may have taken her back to Spain" (Dydo and Rice 2003, 177) also allowed Stein to revisit an influential space creatively if not physically. Thus emerged in the 1930s the more autobiographical and "retrospective" works that call attention to how a life began and what shaped it. Picasso was there, but so was Spain, subtly drawn out as an origins-story, which warranted her continual praise, convincing others, especially young artists and writers, to go in her wake. In *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway ([1932] 2003) credits her as an early influence regarding bullfighting and Spain (1–2), and decades later, shortly before her death in 1946, Richard Wright remembers her urging, "Dick, you ought to go to Spain. . . . You'll see the past there. You'll see what the Western world is made of. Spain is primitive, but lovely. And the people! There are no people such as the Spanish anywhere. I've spent days in Spain that I'll never forget. See those bullfights, see that wonderful landscape" (Wright [1957] 2008, 4). "What the Western world is made of" is a cue toward "the modern note that in Spain had been done for centuries," the modernism origins-story. Through such artists as Picasso and Gris, as well as her own excursions in Spain, Stein witnessed this transformational phenomenon for herself. Much of her life and writing is an exhibition of

this modern transnationalism, which ultimately proved instructive when mentoring others: as Spain had done for her, so might Spain do for them.

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NOTES

1. Hereafter often referenced as *AAT*.
2. *Gertrude Stein on Picasso* is a posthumously edited collection that includes: Stein's "portrait" of Picasso (written in 1909), a "Completed Portrait" (1923), her novella *Picasso* (1938), and selections "From the Notebooks" housed at Yale University Library (photos of Picasso's paintings also accompany much of the prose). While the volume is cited, respective works are referenced in the text.
3. Second ellipsis mine. See Brenda Wineapple (1997), 14.
4. *Fernhurst, Q.E.D., and Other Early Writings* (1971) is a posthumously edited collection that includes the earliest of Stein's writings, including excerpts of *The Making of Americans*. While the volume is cited, respective works are referenced in the text.
5. See Dydo and Rice 2003, Chapters 9–10.
6. Using modern X-ray technology, contemporary art critics have been able to better map out Picasso's laboring of the portrait. Like many artists, Picasso was prone to make noticeable if not significant changes and adjustments to a single canvas / work; however, there seems to be an added element of uncertainty or dissatisfaction with the initial attempts at Stein's head. Originally, he had positioned the head and face in profile, but swung it gradually pointing forward; ultimately, he gave up on the head, only returning to it after an immensely productive trip to Spain in the summer of 1906. See Vincent Giroud (2007) and Lucy Belloli (1999).
7. See Tirza True Latimer (2010), 574.
8. See Gary Tinterow and Susan Alyson Stein (2010), 108.
9. Mellow (1974) characterizes the name change as "an early, unconscious example of her affiliation of Spain with America" (116), but the act seems far from unconscious given the surrounding context. Stein was keen to emphasize the town's place in Picasso's development. Fernande Olivier (2001), who traveled with Picasso to Gósol, observed in her journal, "The atmosphere of his own country seems to inspire him, and there is much stronger emotion and sensitivity in these drawings than anything he has done in Paris" (184).
10. See Gertrude Stein ([1933a] 1972), 203. Originally entitled "The New Book," the 1933 edition read "Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein" and included "two shorter stories," which were "A Long Gay Book" and "Many Many Women." All

three stories were written between 1909 and 1912, some from Spain. See also Dydo (1993) and Robert Bartlett Haas and Donald Clifford Gallup (1971).

11. See Arnold Rönneback (2000), 270–74.
12. The Spanish summer of 1909 was pivotal for Picasso as he worked on the Horta landscapes, pushing the bounds of cubism. Gertrude, Alice, and Leo had planned a rendezvous with Picasso and Olivier that was eventually cancelled. Regardless, Olivier and Picasso wrote numerous letters to the Steins informing them of the trip. See "Letters from Spain" in Olivier (2001).
13. "Picasso" was first published in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work* in August 1912 and reprinted in *Portraits and Prayers* in 1934. See Laurence Madeline in Picasso and Stein (2005).
14. One only wonders how Gertrude might have responded to the following Olivier postscript: "Do the photos of the village make you long to see it" (Picasso and Stein 2005, 55).
15. See Virgil Thomson in Stein (1953), 35.
16. See Richardson (1962).
17. See Curnutt (2000), 14. The trend has continued for recent volumes of Stein's work. See Laura Bonds and Shawn Conners (2011): "The page was her canvas, and as the Cubist painters of her time treated their subjects, Stein re-assembled words in an abstracted form to present them in a greater context, a context un-tethered by a singular viewpoint" (i).
18. Dydo (1993) observes that the portrait was also Stein's only elegy (535).

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