REPEATING IS IN EVERY ONE:

A DISCOURSE AND LITERARY ANALYSIS OF REPETITION

IN

GERTRUDE STEIN'S THREE LIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

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The book Three Lives, Gertrude Stein's first published work, marks the beginning of her truly experimental writing. Characterized by a simplified vocabulary, a lack of traditional narrative line, a focus on characterization and the consistent use of repetition throughout, Three Lives has received either praise or condemnation during the seventy-odd years since its first printing, and although most critics have touched upon Stein's use of repetition, none has focused on it directly.

Stein considered repetition to be her key stylistic feature, and used repetition deliberately to embody her theories of determinism and the idea that life is repetition and repetition is life. Through a consistent repetition of both linguistic and literary features -- words, phrases, themes, actions and emotional states -- Stein painted the psychological portraits of three women who were victimized by fate and by the manipulations of others.

Until now there has been no general theory with which to analyze repetition in literary text. Therefore, using theories of textlinguistics, cohesiveness in English and the phenomenological and

transactional theories of reading, I have developed a model for the analysis of repetition.

Based on this theory, my interpretation of Stein is very different from previous interpretations. This model does not isolate certain repetitions from the text and derive an interpretation of the entire text based upon a part. Rather, it seeks to classify all repetitions according to form and function and then demonstrate how these repetitions work together in the reader's mind during the evoking of the text to arrive at a new and more complete reading.

To Ken

with love affection

and gratitude

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To my parents who set the example for the highest of standards.

And to my husband, who sat alone more evenings than I care to remember, who thinks a Ph.D. is a "Poor Husband Deal," and, through it all, provided my main cheering section.

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INTRODUCTION

To say that Gertrude Stein is repetitious is to be redundant. This is a given. Repetition has become her trademark; in fact, she is better known for "A rose is a rose is a rose" than any other single work; repetition with variations is a practice she employed consistently throughout her writing career. No reader can proceed through a Stein work without being confronted, possibly confused, or even confounded by this technique; no critic can write in any depth about her style without commenting on it.

Her writing is also difficult, which has led to a great deal of misunderstanding of most, if not all of her work, and, consequently, of Stein herself. Cynthia Secor writes that "as is so often the case with a major woman writer, critics have been slow to read her thoroughly and carefully, quick to trivialize her effort and even when entirely sympathetic and impressed, baffled as to how best to explain her achievement."[1] Secor goes on to state that two aspects of Stein are problematic: how she means and what she means. There are no plots in her portraits, no rhyme schemes or meter to her poems, no traditional narrative line to works such as Three Lives or The Making of Americans. Thus traditional literary criticism has made only limited progress in illuminating Stein's work. As a result, more recently, critics have gone further afield and delved into art history, stylistics, phenomenology, linguistics, and Jamesian psychology, etc.[2] However,

although recently there have been a number of significant studies of Stein's works, no major critic has yet tackled the issue of repetition.

This is, I believe, a serious error. Repetition is so pervasive in Stein's work and so fundamental to her philosophy of both writing and of life that lack of attention to this stylistic technique has lead to a critical lack of understanding of what her works are all about, and ultimately, what they mean. Although the new approaches have all contributed significantly to understanding her style, I believe that focusing on such matters as Jamesian influences, cubism, antipatriarchalism, etc. without taking into account the repetition which is central to her work has led to incomplete and even distorted interpretations.

In the past some critics have implied that Stein's use of repetition was either arbitrary or capricious, with little purpose other than her own whim. It is my contention that her use of repetition is neither; that repetition is instead a masterful employment of words, the fundamental "how", which, in turn, determines the "what" of her writing. I argue that repetition is the key to unravelling many of the secrets of her works, and to settling many old arguments as to her meaning. I believe that a systematic analysis of repetition in one of her texts can provide insight into all her works and further understanding of what she meant by what she did.

A study of Stein's employment of repetition, since it encompasses the entire range and scope of her writing, would, of necessity, be an enormous undertaking, impossible to achieve within the bounds of a single volume. Therefore, it is appropriate to limit the focus to one particular work. From there, once the foundations of study of her use

of repetition have been laid, one can proceed to study other texts. It is also appropriate to start from the beginning, to focus on Stein's first published work, Three Lives.

Although Q.E.D. was written first, Three Lives marks the beginning of Stein's truly experimental writing. Three Lives represents the first consistent use of repetition as a stylistic device. Three Lives also clearly documents the evolution of her style as she gradually moves to more and more complex repetition. Beginning with "The Good Anna," and increasingly through "The Gentle Lena" and "Melanctha" she employed repetition and experimented with language more and more consciously and consistently.[3]

It is also appropriate to study Three Lives simply because it is relatively easier to arrive at an interpretation of a work when there is still a clear storyline and some semblance of a plot. After Three Lives Stein moved into her more radical stages of experimentation in which she abandoned narrative altogether and eventually even syntax.

There are several possible reasons why critics have been reluctant to tackle the problem of Stein's repetition. This reluctance is partly due, I believe, to the complexity of the repetition in even more traditional works such as Three Lives which are more open to traditional analytical approaches. Even in this small book of three novellas Stein employs a great variety of repetition at both linguistic and literary levels.

More problematic still is the fact that there is no adequate theory of repetition either in linguistics or literature, much less a theory which could cross lines between the two. Discussions of repetition have tended to be incorporated into other linguistic theories, such as Halliday and Hasan's and Gutwinski's theories of

cohesion.[4] Less helpful have been statements about repetition which tell us what repetition does without telling us how. J. Hillis Miller, for instance, asserts that repetitions within a text generate meaning. According to Miller, a text is interpreted in part by the reader's noticing recurrences. They also inhibit the too easy determination of meaning based merely on the linear sequence of the story. The reader may identify these repetitions at a more or less conscious level, deliberately or not. What is important, states Miller, is that "what is said two or more times may not be true, but the reader is fairly safe in assuming that it is significant."[5] These statements are not particularly helpful because although they tell us about the <u>what</u>: that a writer is foregrounding certain things by repeatedly placing them in front of the reader's eyes and therefore his consciousness, they do not tell us <u>how: how</u> the reader notices them and what this observation does to generate meaning.

Another major critical problem in developing a theory of Stein's use of repetition is due to her evolution of style over the years. Randa Dubnick and Marianne DeKoven have both documented the progression of her style over the years. In each stage, Stein's notions of language and consequently her style differed. Thus, a theory one might develop for <u>Three Lives</u> might not obtain for the portraits; a theory of repetition in her narratives might not hold for her poetry. In the past, writers have referred to her repetition as if it were the same throughout her work. Therefore, one must develop a tentative model based upon what Stein does in one work, and then modify it accordingly, in response to her change in style and focus. It is to be hoped that some of the basic tenets set forth here will hold throughout Stein's

writings, but this is a matter which will be settled only by close examination of each period in her evolution of style.

Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is essentially three-fold. First, it is written in an attempt to increase, through a discussion of her repetition, an understanding of Stein's work.

Second, I will attempt to develop a theory of repetition which draws upon discourse analysis, text-linguistics and reading theory. In developing a theory it is necessary to examine not only current theories on the use of repetition, but also what Stein wrote on the subject. Stein was a writer with an overt interest in language and it was this interest which led her to experiment with words. Stein had her own theories of repetition, and she used them consciously throughout her career. Thus, her theories of repetition will influence any conclusions made about her use of it. I will then use this theory to provide insight into her use of repetition.

Last, I hope to produce a study which demonstrates that the techniques of linguistic analysis can serve to illuminate the literary content of a text. Hopefully, it will be fruitful to build one small bridge over the chasm which has developed between stylists and literary critics over the past few years. Both approaches to literature have merit, both can contribute to one's understanding of a piece of writing. By examining content, linguistic structures and strategies employed by Stein in Three Lives and noticing the ways these forms and structures work to achieve meaning and advance the aesthetic qualities of the stories, one can more effectively read the sometimes difficult texts.

In this dissertation I will analyze Three Lives as discourse as well as literature. Approaching the text from a discourse point of view

is an important theoretical standpoint, one which has not previously been taken. This approach views literature as a type of communication, and the author as a person having communicative intent, i.e. a message which he or she intends to communicate through writing to a reader. Brown and Yule, in Discourse Analysis, insist that it is the speaker/writer who is at the center of the process of communication. They assert that it is "people who communicate and people who interpret. It is speakers/writers who have topics, presuppositions, who assign information structure and who make reference. It is hearers/readers who interpret and who draw inferences." Theirs is primarily a functional viewpoint - an interactive model - which "seeks to describe linguistic form, not as a static object, but as a dynamic means of expressing intended meaning... [It] is opposed to the study of these issues in terms of sentences considered in isolation from communicative contexts."[6] Thus this approach views text as 'process' instead of 'product' -- language expressed in dynamic instead of static terms.

In this study I will be viewing repetition as a device employed by Stein to communicate meaning to be interpreted within the larger context of the work of Three Lives. Using linguistic theory and textlinguistics I will show the ways repetition is a cohesive device used to foreground certain elements which Stein considered significant and wished her reader to perceive as such. Using the phenomenological and transactional views of the reading process I will demonstrate the way this repetition is perceived in the mind of the reader during the act of reading and the way this perception drastically alters the interpretation of Three Lives.

This view of text as process and the perception of repetition within the reading of the text is an important distinction to make where Stein's work is concerned. As I will demonstrate, this approach sheds new light on Stein's use of repetition. From a functional standpoint we can answer the questions: What does she do? How does she do it? Why does she do it? and What effect does this technique have upon her reader, the recipient of her message?

At the outset we must make the assumption that all discourse produced by Stein was intended to be meaningful. Whether it is intelligible is another question altogether. In many cases it is not. It does have meaning, if the reader is willing to work hard enough to find it. We can also assume that it was very possible - if not probable - that in many instances she failed in communicating.

Three Lives is a work in which she particularly succeeds. In this study I will examine each of the three stories in turn. In Chapter One I will develop a theory of repetition. In Chapter Two I will examine "The Good Anna." Although "The Gentle Lena" is placed last in the text, it was written first, therefore I will examine it before "Melanctha" as the next step in Stein's evolution of style. "Melanctha," because of its length and complexity will be divided into two chapters, Four and Five. In the final chapter I will draw together the different types of repetition and show how they work across the three stories to make the work a cohesive whole.

CHAPTER 1

THEORIES OF REPETITION AND READING

One of the fundamental postulates we must make about repetitions in literary texts is that they are intentional. They have a definite artistic purpose; the writer has used repetition for a specific reason to achieve a specific effect. Thus, according to Calvin S. Brown, one of the few authors who has treated repetition at length, the reader is supposed to recognize repetitions and take them into account.[1]

But how does one know whether or not repetitions are significant? And how does one recognize them and apply meaning to them? In order to address this question we must first lay some theoretical groundwork and to do that, we need to and define several terms.

First we must define 'text'. Because Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion in English is by far the most comprehensive treatment of the subject of cohesion and is considered the standard text in this area, and because I will be relying extensively upon their theories, I propose to use their definitions, supplemented by further insights from other textlinguists. Halliday and Hasan define a text as "not just a string of sentences... [It] is best thought of not as a grammatical unit at all, but rather as a unit of a different kind: a semantic unit. The unity that it has is a unity of meaning in context, a texture that expresses the fact that it relates as a whole to the environment in which it is placed. Being a semantic unit, a text is REALIZED in the

form of sentences... the expression of the semantic unity of the text lies in the cohesion among the sentences of which it is composed."[2] In other words, a text is a set of sentences which have coherence and sense, and are related in some way such that a participant - a reader or listener perceives that taken together, they constitute a whole which achieves closure. From a discourse point of view a text is a unit of communication with the unity and integrity which result from the unity of the author's communicative intention. It is a single actualized organized entity with all its diverse parts linked.[3]

A text must have both coherence and cohesion. Although in many discussions these words have been used interchangeably, a useful distinction has been made (Halliday & Hasan, Gutwinski, Levy, Ellis). Both words refer to the 'connectivity' of discourse. Both coherence and cohesion mean "hanging together," and both work to make a series of sentences hang together to achieve closure, but closure is achieved at different levels. Coherence in this case means, as specified by Levy, 'comprehensible.' "Where cohesion refers to the particular mechanism of structural binding, coherence connotes the mental processes that allow a discourse to be sensible and understood by the participants."[4] Mayordomo further elucidates this notion when he writes, "In order that a linguistic product have the character of a text, coherence must be evident in the surface linear manifestation by means of the surface mechanisms of cohesion."[5] A discourse may be coherent with respect to a particular theme. Mayordomo asserts that a text is characterized by having a topic underlying it. "Every sentence of a discourse has an underlying proposition, every sequence also has an underlying proposition of which those sentences partake... a text topic is the common denominator of the topics of the sequences.... [thus] a

succession of sentences without coherence and sense lacks text topic."[6] Coherence, then, is a matter of consistency, relevancy and order.

Coherence is realized in cohesion. Coherence, according to Ellis, "refers to the mental processes that allow a discourse to be sensible and understood by the participants, [while] cohesion refers to the particular mechanisms of structural binding."[7] Cohesion relates to the relationships obtaining among the sentences and clauses within the text. Halliday and Hasan state that cohesion occurs "where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens a relation of cohesion is set up."[8] Cohesion ties a text together. A network, patterns of meaning, is formed by certain features of the text corresponding with or presupposing other features. Much of our interpretation of what happens in a text depends on the continuity of what went before. Cohesion provides, "for the text... the sort of continuity which is achieved in units at the grammatical level...the cohesive relations themselves are relations in meaning, and the continuity which they bring about is a semantic continuity. This is what makes it possible for cohesive patterns to play the part they do in processing of text by listener or a reader, not merely signaling the presence and extent of text, but actually enabling him to interpret and determining how he does so."[9] To give a very simple example, we can see that the pair of sentences: "Bob´s mother is an alcoholic. He doesn´t take the dogs out in the rain," could be classified as cohesive, because the "he" anaphorically relates to "Bob." But the two component sentences are not truly coherent because the second does not logically

follow the first.

This important distinction must be made in studying Stein. Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory, in The Reader, The Text, The Poem agrees with these theories of text when she writes, "As one decodes the opening lines or sentences and pages of a text, one begins to develop a tentative sense of a framework within which to place what will follow. Underlying this is the assumption that this body of words, set forth in certain patterns and sequences on the page, bears the potentiality for a reasonably unified or integrated or at the very least, coherent, experience."[10] With Stein, however, there is no such assurance. One cannot automatically assume that the text will be either. Stein deliberately violates the rules of appropriateness in creating many of her works.[11] There are times when she is both coherent and cohesive: "The tradesmen of Bridgepoint learned to dread the sound of 'Miss Mathilda', for with that name the good Anna always conquered" (TGA, 17). At other times Stein can be cohesive but not particularly coherent: ""Very many are certainly being ones being living and are being ones going on in being living and certainly this is frightening to some one."[12] Then further into her obscure style, although she displays syntactic and phonological cohesion, she is not coherent at all: "Drinks pups drinks pups lease a sash hold, see it shine and a bobolink has pins. It shows a nail."[13] At her most obscure it is difficult to see either coherence or cohesion: "a no, a no since, a no since when, a no since when since, a no since when since a no since when since..."[14] Thus, in the absence of either cohesion or coherence the reader must resort to different strategies to reach some type of satisfactory reading. One such effective method is to look for certain points of continuity in the text as points of reference to hold the

text together.

Gutwinski and Halliday & Hasan have outlined a taxonomy of types of cohesive relationships which can be formally established within a text, providing the cohesive ties which bind a text together. They attempt to place cohesion within a theoretical framework of language organization. Cohesion "has not been treated as a collection of unrelated grammatical categories but rather [as a] related and integrated part of the total structure of language."[15] Repetition, according to this categorization, is one form of lexical cohesion. Consistently repeating words or phrases is one method of linking parts of text together. Words themselves are not necessarily cohesive. Particular lexical items do not always have a cohesive function. But Halliday and Hasan note that "every lexical item MAY enter into a cohesive relation, but by itself it carries no indication whether it is functioning cohesively or not. That can be established only by reference to the text."[16] A word is only cohesive in the context of what came before and what is coming afterwards. And, as Gutwinski notes, not every word, when it is repeated, can be considered cohesive. The reader needs to distinguish between what we might call "motivated recurrences" and "trivial recurrences."[17]

Gutwinski suggests that one way of distinguishing between whether repetitions are motivated and trivial is by noting whether or not these words are "high frequency" words, words that have a high overall frequency in the language, such as "look," "see," "get," "put." A word such as "say" is not a cohesive repetition in a story which employs a great deal of dialogue. On the other hand, low frequency words easily qualify as nontrivial. For instance, the word "wander" occurs a total

of forty-six times in "Melanctha." This word cannot be considered a high frequency word, and the fact that Stein employs it continuously renders it cohesive. This question of "frequency," notes Gutwinski, is a relative one, and depends on the kind of text in which the item occurs.

However, "high frequency" words can also be cohesive, if they are reinforced by other factors. One of these is the overall frequency of the word within the whole of the text. "Good," one of the most prominent repetitions within all three stories of Three Lives could be considered a "high frequency" word in the English language, but the sheer number of times it is repeated in these three stories also renders it cohesive.

Another factor can be the "density" of repetitions. Note, for example, this paragraph from "The Gentle Lena":

> Lena was a brown and pleasant creature, brown as blonde races often have them brown, brown, not with the yellow or the red or the chocolate brown of sun burned countries, but brown with the clear color laid flat on the light toned skin beneath, the plain, spare brown that makes it right to have been made with hazel eyes, and not too abundant straight, brown hair, hair that only later deepens itself into brown from the straw yellow of a german childhood (240).

Synonyms can also be cohesive. For instance, Stein uses the adjectives "bad," "evil" and "wicked" to describe the behavior of Anna's dogs. Words do not necessarily have to be the same morphological form to be considered cohesive. Therefore, "blacken black" (TGA, 50) and "Rose was never joyous with the earthborn, boundless joy of

negroes" (M, 86), can be considered cohesive, as can "Melanctha's wanderings after wisdom she always had to do in secret...and so though Melanctha wandered widely, she was really very safe with all the wandering" (M, 97). In order to be cohesive, lexical items do not necessarily have to be the same exact words; words formed from the same root can display cohesive properties similar to those of synonyms. For example, the words "marry," "marriage," and "matrimony" can be cohesive.

The clearest instance of lexical cohesion occurs when the same word is found in succession, such as "She did it all, all of the housework," (TGA, 28) or "Not stupid like our Sallie, Sallie would never learn to do a thing" (TGA, 19). In Stein a lexical item can be introduced in one sentence and then repeated in the immediately adjacent sentence. For example, "She wondered, often, how she could go on living when she was so blue. Melanctha told Rose one day how a woman whom she knew had killed herself because she was so blue" (M, 87).

Lexical cohesion can also result when a word is repeated in two or more sentences which, although they are not adjacent, are in close proximity. Stein's characteristic lexical cohesion depends on the introduction of a lexical item or phrase in one sentence or clause and then the repetition of the same item or phrase throughout the text. Thus her cohesion does not simply exist on the local level, but the "universal" level - the text in its entirety.

In Three Lives key words or phrases often appear sporadically in the text before they achieve any significance which alters interpretation. But these occurrences are not always close enough

together to warrant attention and often the words display many of their different meanings. For example, the word "good" appears throughout the stories in many ways which do not relate to the central meaning which it achieves through its use in regards to Anna and other major characters.

> "Well Molly then try and do better," answered Miss Mathilda, keeping a good stern front... (TGA, 16).
>
> "... that tired crew who loved the good things Anna made to eat (TGA, 23).
>
> She had a fair, soft, regular, good-looking face (TGA, 29).
>
> Anna heard a good deal of this (TGA, 56)
>
> This place Lena had found very good (GL, 239).
>
> Lena had good hard work all morning (GL, 239).
>
> Lena had sucked a good deal of the green paint from her finger (GL, 241).
>
> Sam... got good wages (M, 88).
>
> Melanctha... had had a good chance to live with horses (M, 91).

Stein's tactic of using words in several of their meanings often creates a lag between the time the word is introduced and the time the reader perceives that it is significant. However, when Stein is using the word for emphasis, the repetitions are closely grouped and literally hammered into the reader's consciousness so that there is often no chance of missing them.

A very real question which must be addressed is: how far apart can a lexical item be and still be said to display lexical cohesion? Gutwinski notes that the cohesive range of an item, whether this be

grammatical or lexical, can vary from two adjacent sentences through three or more to several non-adjacent sentences or groups, but whether this range can be extended any farther is an empirical question. The reader´s ability to remember a word and then associate it with a recurrence of the same word later on in the text in part has to do with the frequency of the recurrences. In the larger units of repetition, such as phrases, clauses or sentences, we could postulate that exactness of repetition is a significant factor in its cohesive force. Stein uses a great many sentential repetitions. For instance, in "The Good Anna," the sentence "Anna led an arduous and troubled life," is repeated three times within the space of eleven pages. The first repetition occurs three pages after the initial sentence. The exactness of the repetition (with the addition of "You see...") immediately brings the sentence to the reader´s attention.

This discussion of lexical cohesion should not be taken as isolating the lexicon from discourse as a whole. It is to be studied within the realm of discourse. All language consists of simultaneously occurring subsystems - phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Stein employs repetition in each of these subsystems consistently. However, although I will mention repetition at the grammatical and syntactic level etc. in my discussions of the three stories I will largely limit my linguistic discussion to repetition at the semantic level. This is not to say that focusing on any or each is less interesting or less revealing, but these are beyond the scope of my study.

But it is not enough to merely isolate the types of cohesion available in a text. Geoffrey Leech in his study of poetry writes that

"in studying cohesion we pick out the patterns of meaning running through the text and arrive at some sort of linguistic account of what the text is "about." In addition to types of cohesion we can also speak of "cohesion of foregrounding," in which certain foregrounded features that have been identified in isolation are related to one another and to the text in its entirety. He writes, "If a single scheme extends over the whole text, it can itself be regarded as a form of cohesion."[18] The words, phrases, themes and patterns which are repeated, i.e. foregrounded by Stein, work to unify the text, and must be examined within the context of their use. Therefore, repetition is a form of cohesion which unifies and integrates the total structure of the text.

Cohesion by repetition can also be studied on a larger scale than simply lexicon. At this time, very little has been done to investigate repetition at the higher level, such as theme and plot, although Gutwinski refers to this problem briefly in his study of cohesion in James and Hemingway. As I will demonstrate, Stein employs repetition of not only words, phrases, and sentences, but also themes, actions, patterns of behavior and life situations within and across the three stories in Three Lives. These all work together to form a cohesive "whole," a densely woven intricate pattern of repetitions that create three vivid renderings of three women caught in their own repetitious patterns of life from which they cannot escape.

However, the issue of the reader's ability to remember and make associations is a question in itself.

Theories of Reading

Statements made by textlinguists concerning the ways a text is

perceived are very similar to the phenomenological theory of reading set forth by Wolfgang Iser and Rosenblatt's transactional model of reading. Halliday and Hasan write, "In reading or listening to text, we process continuously and therefore by the time any given lexical item is taken in, its context has already been prepared; and the preceding lexical environment is perhaps the most significant component of this context.... the lexical environment of any item includes, naturally, not only the words that are in some way or other related to it... but also all other words in the preceding passage, and all of these contribute to its specific interpret in the given instance. But it is the occurrence of the item IN THE CONTEXT OF RELATED LEXICAL ITEMS that provides cohesion and gives to the passage the quality of text."[19]

Iser defines reading as an interaction between a reader and a text, a text being " an array of sign impulses (signifiers) which are received by the reader."[20] This interaction is by nature a dynamic process which has the character of an event. The reader, by the act of reading, realizes the text, brings it into being and responds to it aesthetically. Reading causes a literary work to "unfold."

Because a text is realized both temporally and spatially, the whole text can never be perceived at any one time. But neither is this perception at any one moment of reading isolated and unconnected to what has been read and what is yet to come. It does not just flow forward smoothly, unhindered and unchanged. Memory and expectations play a profound role in the process of selecting, synthesizing and organizing. The reader approaches the text with certain expectations. These expectations are verified, modified, or contradicted by what he or she reads. As the reader proceeds memories of what has been read are

also modified because of the unfolding of the text. Each new moment in reading stands out against the old, projected against what the reader expects to come. Thus, Iser states, "the past will remain as a background to the present, exerting influence on it, and at the same time, itself being modified by the present... [so that] throughout the reading process there is a continual interplay between modified expectations and transformed memories."[21] He goes on to state "every reading moment sends out stimuli into the memory and what is recalled can activate perspectives in such a way that they continually modify and so individualize one another... recalled segments also have a retroactive effect, with the present transforming the past. .. the present retention of a past perspective qualifies both past and present. It also qualifies the future, because whatever modifications it has brought about will immediately affect the nature of our expectations."[22]

For example, the word "good" in the title "The Good Anna" leads us to expect that Anna is a good woman. Upon reading the story, however, the reader gradually realizes that she is not: Anna is far from good. The reader´s initial acceptance of the word "good" without question must be modified by repeated encounters where the meaning does not hold true in the context of the situation, and thus his/her expectations concerning the word will be modified also. One is led then to suspect possible irony in the use of the word and the characters Stein refers to as being "good" as the word is encountered in the rest of the story, and on through "The Gentle Lena" and "Melanctha."

Through this evocation of the text in time and space, the reader forms a ´gestalt´ of the text, in which he/she groups together all the different aspects of the text, or synthesizes the various parts into a

'whole' or a structure which is a work of art. Iser stresses that a reader is always in search of consistent pattern, that he or she requires it. "If we cannot find (or impose) this consistency, sooner or later we will put the text down."[23]

If, as Iser, Rosenblatt and others assert, the meaning of the text unfolds during the reading and the processing of a text results in an interpretation of the text, we can logically extend this theory to assert that the realizing of a text will also profoundly affect the meanings of the words in the text.

Ballmer, in Petofi, writes, "It is a fact that controlled by longer texts, the meanings of words, phrases and sentences can be modified considerably with respect to primary, lexicon meanings. The same referential phrase may have quite different reference a meaning if the text in which it occurs is accordingly different. It depends very much on what has been said before (and sometimes on what is going to be said afterwards) how an expression in a text is interpreted... the details of interpretation may depend crucially on the extralinguistic context."[24]

This is a point of critical importance to be made in regards to repetition in Stein. As I will demonstrate in the course of the chapters, it is the repetitions in varying contexts which give them their full power. One cannot make a hasty decision as to what a word such as "suffering" means in "Melanctha" because it is only through the gradual accumulation of repetitions in is various contexts that the word achieves a totality of meaning. It is also through the repetition that words achieve their irony. Thus they cannot be studied in isolation, out of context.

This discussion should not be construed as arguing that these various theoreticians would agree totally on all counts. But there are enough points of contact between them and their theories of the process of reading to lead to insight into the reading of a text and the understanding of the effects of repetition on the reader. They assert that a reader approaches a text with the assumption that it will be coherent, and that during the realization of a text a reader constructs coherence cumulatively. These theorists also believe that on the linguistic and paralinguistic levels, every sentence contains a preview of the next and that what has been said before and what is going to be said next determines the interpretation of a text, in an active and retroactive way.

The reader is instrumental in activating the text and evoking a response. But this response is not entirely unlimited or unrestrained. There are restrictions and limitations upon what can be evoked which are inherent in the text. One does not read Othello and evoke Hamlet. The text itself constrains the reading by what is there. However, as Iser notes, the reader selects what he or she sees and uses what he or she selects to form a gestalt for the text. This "selection automatically involves exclusion, and that which has been excluded remains on the fringes as a potential range of connections. It is the reader who unfolds the network of possible connections, and it is the reader who then makes a selection from that network."[25] And it is the reader who arrives at an interpretation of the text. In part, it is this selection and exclusion process which leads to different readings of a text, by the reader's focusing on different elements within the text.

Repetition is, first, a cohesive device, a way of making connections which is consciously chosen by the author. This repetition

affects the reader, which in turn affects the interpretation of the text. Thus, as I will show, excluding the repetition from one's interpretation, focusing attention elsewhere, ignoring the role of repetition in Stein - and particularly in Three Lives - can lead to distorted interpretations.

In recent years, the study of literature has shifted its focus from concern for the author and/or the text to a concern for the reader. Prince, in Narratology writes, "Instead of establishing the meaning of a given text in terms of an author's intentions or a set of textual patterns, for instance, students of literature have focused more and more frequently on the ways in which readers, armed with expectations and interpretive conventions, structure a text and give it meaning. Ideal readers, vital readers, implied readers, informed readers, competent readers, experienced readers, super-readers, archreaders, average readers, and plain old readers now abound in literary criticism and we seem to have entered an age in which the writer, the writing and the written are less important than the read, the reading and the reader."[26]

This method is a reaction against the one-sided textual emphasis of the New Criticism, but its presence does not necessarily lead to anarchy in the field of criticism in which any and all responses evoked are valid, or all are equal. Nor does it in any way deny the importance of the text, nor the purpose of the author in including and/or foregrounding certain items. When one evokes and interprets a text aesthetically, and/or investigates it critically, one must look at which elements in the text are potentially important. The author can deliberately point out the direction he or she wants the reader to

take. This idea of the author's communicative purpose is an important issue, particularly when we return to focus on the premise that repetition is a deliberate stylistic choice on the part of Stein, designed to achieve a specific end.

One of the primary reasons for the use of repetition is simply to attract the reader's attention to an idea, word or theme. Repetition is a type of explicit signal, a red light as it were. The author is foregrounding, through repetition, what he or she feels is important in the text, and announcing by this foregrounding, what exactly he or she wants the reader to pay attention to. Thus, because the repetitions, when perceived, have a cumulative effect upon reader, they form a different gestalt and bring about a different interpretation of the text than when ignored. Donald Sutherland approached this idea when he wrote, "One has to give [Stein's] work word by word the deliberate attention one gives to something written in italics... the work has to be read word by word, as a succession of single meanings accumulating into a larger meaning."[27]

He goes on to say that "unhappily all our training and most of our reasons for reading are against this," and he is certainly correct. This use of repetition can backfire on the author, and in many cases it has with Stein. Iser writes "the degree to which the retaining mind will implement perspective connections inherent in the text depends on a large number of subjective factors: memory, interest, attention and mental capacity."[28] He also states that there are limits to the reader's willingness to participate and "these will be exceeded if the text makes things too clear or, on the other hand, too obscure: boredom and overstrain represent the two poles of tolerance, and in either case the reader is likely to opt ou of the game."[29]

Many readers have found both boredom and overstrain to be hazards inherent in reading Stein's texts. Many of her portraits, The Making of Americans, "Melanctha" and several other works suffer from such an overuse of repetition that often the reader becomes unwilling to proceed. In many cases, if there were any promise or indication of progress, or better yet, closure, one might be willing to continue. But often there is no sense of gaining ground.

Many readers have been plagued by the repetitions in "Melanctha," repetitions of words, phrases, passages that are so similar that progress is almost imperceptible. For instance, on page 136, we read, "It was a very uncertain time, all these months, for Jeff Campbell. He did not know very well what it was that he really wanted." Then again on page 149, we encounter the passage "Jeff was a little uncertain all this time inside him...." On page 165, another variation on this theme appears: "All these days Jeff was uncertain in him." These repetitions are interspersed with others, such as "Now for a little time there was not any kind of trouble between Jeff Campbell and Melanctha Herbert" (153) and "And now for a real long time there was no open trouble any more between Jeff Campbell and Melanctha Herbert" (161). These repetitions occur in the midst of seemingly endless repetitions of such words as "certainly" and "understand" and "think." The reader begins to feel overwhelmed. Readers who encounter such a passage the third or fourth time, think "I already read that." And yet no progress has been made. Closure or resolution seems no nearer. The temptation to skim is sometimes overpowering in a desperate attempt to find an end or at least to reach a point where the situation between Jeff and Melanctha has changed. Iser points out that texts can be more or less effective

in eliciting and holding the interest of the reader. The repetition, in this case, has made for many a hostile reader who gives up in disgust and vows "Never again." It can also lead simply to boredom and lack of interest. One's attention can only be held so long by such repartees as "I certainly do think you would have told me. I certainly do think I could make you feel it right to tell me. I certainly do think all I did wrong was to let Jane Harden tell me. I certainly do know I never did wrong, to learn what she told me. I certainly know very well Melanctha..." (152). Interest tends to fade in a hurry, and lead, in many cases, to a hasty interpretation of the entire story based on what the reader was able to focus on and maintain during the brief time when his/her attention was actually being held.

Kawin is careful to differentiate between repetitious, by which he means "when a word, percept, or experience is repeated with less impact at each recurrence; repeated to no particular end, out of a failure of invention or sloppiness of thought" and repetitive, which is "when a word, etc. is repeated with equal or greater force at each occurrence."[30] Often, readers plowing their way through a Stein text would agree that her repetition is the former, not the latter.

One can be fairly safe in asserting that even the most unitiated reader of Stein is aware of her use of repetition. Thus we approach a Stein text with the expectation that it will occur. This expectation can affect our stance toward the text even before we turn to the first page. For example, after a reader has plowed his way through "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena" he can be so tired of repetition that he will abandon any attempts to read "Melanctha", or will approach it with such a negative attitude that any response will automatically be negative if not outright hostile.

Obviously, this is not the effect Stein wanted. Because she placed so much emphasis on this repetition, she wanted a careful reader, one who would take the time to move through the undulations of each story. She was very aware of what she was doing, and wrote at length on her theory of repetitions. I am well aware of the hazards of taking what she wrote in later years and applying it - if not wholesale and without question, or even cautiously - to what she did in her early years. But Stein did have certain notions from the beginning, and although some of her styles changed, and these notions evolved, she knew the uses of repetition early.

In the course of this dissertation I hope to demonstrate that during the process of reading a Stein text, if the reader takes note of the repetitions as they occur, and allows these repetitions to guide rather than obstruct the evocation, he/she will achieve an altogether different interpretation than if he/she had not. The cumulative effect of the repetitions as they work to achieve a cohesive whole, results in a more complete reading of the text. An important side-effect, not often noted in response to reading Stein, is that when the reader notes the repetitions and appreciates their significance in the text, he/she can have a singularly satisfying and delightful reading experience.

Stein's Theories of Life and Repetition

Stein believed that repetition is a fundamental fact of life. She wrote, "Repeating then is in every one, in every one their being and their feeling and their way of realizing everything and every one comes out of them in repeating."[31] In "The Gradual Making of The Making of Americans" she documents how she began to listen to people's

conversation and take note of the repetitions in their speech and in their lives.

> I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different."[32]

Gradually this was incorporated into her philosophy of the basic nature of the individual. Michael Hoffman notes that:

> Life to Gertrude Stein is not a convenient package with a beginning middle and end as it was for the conventional novelists. It consists of all the everyday existences and of repetition not only of boring habit, but also of events whose character is dictated by the basic nature of the individual.

Stein was enormously influenced by William James and his philosophies of psychology and personality. Rejecting the idea of "epiphany" and character change, Stein believed in determinism. According to this philosophy, characters never changed. Their personalities and circumstances were fixed. There was no escape. The characters depicted in her earliest works were "personalities who (were) fixed in their modes of life and who (thought and did) everything within the context of inexorable circumstances."[34] A person who is born with

certain characteristics or personality traits will always exhibit those traits. One who is born into a certain social class will remain in that class. One is doomed to repeat the patterns and habits and actions again and again and again, without hope of changing them. As Hoffman notes, "the nature of the individual's behavior, thought, and emotions is always determined by the class of personality, national or social types to which he belongs."[35] The personality was not a tabula rasa, and did not become the sum of one's total experiences. Instead, as Weinstein has noted, "Stein follows James in seeing the personality in terms of a fixed nature, a central "core", subject to alteration by experience, but only subject to change within the limitation imposed by the entire character structure."[36]

Stein accepted the idea of characterology, that people could be classified into character types. Her two basic types were those people who need to love and those who need to be loved. These types, she believed, were innate in every person. Each character had a 'bottom nature' which was not the "secret explanation and the driving impulse of character; for character was a "system" of interrelated impulses of character, and the "bottom" was simply the range of such interrelations furthest removed from consciousness. Rather than a single force impelling behavior fundamentally, it was itself a "system" of impulses, both reflecting and reflected in all the others."[37]

By using repetition in her writing, by beginning again and again and using everything, Stein was attempting to communicate the repetition that is life. As Kawin writes, "repetition, the key to our experience, may become the key to our expression of experience."[38]

Stein understood that repetition can have a psychological effect

on the reader as well as an aesthetic one, a fact which advertisers today capitalize upon: by dominating the reader's attention repetition serves to focus, reinforce and strengthen an impression. Alfred Lee, in How to Understand Propaganda writes that "the surest way to maintain a competitive advantage is to repeat a message so often it's always fresh in the mind of the consumer... Repetition reinforces and strengthens the impression made. Each time an idea is repeated, the impression becomes stronger."[39] Once the repetition of, for example, a particular word has served to attract the reader's attention, continued use of the word can add to its impact. Continuous repetition of a statement emphasizes and drives the impression into the memory. The more repetition, the more emphasized the thing repeated. Thus, in the act of evoking a text, the repetition will have a cumulative effect. It will continually appear before the reader's eyes and his consciousness, the memory activating and reactivating perspectives, and influencing the expectations of what will come.

And yet she denied that her writing contained repetition; the term she preferred, rather, was 'insistence.'

> If this existence is this thing is actually existing there can be no repetition... Then we have insistence insistence that in its emphasis can never be repeating because insistence is always alive and if it is alive it is never saying anything in the same way because emphasis can never be the same not even when it is most the same...[40]

Repetition, then, for Stein, meant "identical recurrence with no increase in force, with none of the slight differences in composition that constitute life."[41] Instead, Stein believed in what she called

'continuous succession,' a pattern similar to the effect of changing movie frames.

> Existing as a human being, that is being listening and hearing is never repetition. It is not repetition if it is that which you are actually doing because naturally each time the emphasis is different just as the cinema has each time a slightly different thing to make it all be moving"[42]

She realized that within the flow of language, neither the word nor the reader or hearer are ever the same. As Kawin writes, "The growth of the work, even from one identical line to another, makes exact repetition impossible... Even hearing an identical phrase many times is to hear it in the changing contexts of our reception and the ongoing progress not only of the author's consciousness but also of the work."[43] Stein herself wrote "Every time I said what they were I said it so that they were this thing. Each time I said not that they were different nor that I was, but as it was not the same moment."[44] Thus when questioned about her sentence "A rose is a rose is a rose," she could reply, "Now listen! I'm no fool; but I think that in that line the rose is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years."[45]

The technique of using repetition, Stein felt, was how a tool for penetrating beneath the surface of the character:

> When you come to feel the whole of anyone from the beginning to the ending, all the kind of repeating there is in them, the different ways at different times repeating comes out of them, all the kinds of things and mixtures in each one, anyone can see then by looking hard at any one

> living near them that a history of every one must be a long one... slowly it comes out from them from their beginning to their ending, slowly you can see it in them the nature and the mixtures in them, slowly everything comes out from each one in the kind of repeating each one does in the different parts and kinds of living they have in them, slowly then any one who looks well at any one will have the history of the whole of that one. Slowly the history of each one comes out of each one.... More and more then every one comes to be clear to some one."[46]

Three Lives

Three Lives embodies these ideas of determinism, of fixed personalities, of the importance of repetition in one's life. In this text Stein attempted to paint the psychological portraits of three women, women, as Mellow writes, "who were acted upon in life and who seemed incapable of understanding, much less mastering their personal fates."[47] They did not make things happen, life happened to them and they were unable to control their own destinies.

The epigraph for Three Lives, ostensibly the words of the symbolist poet Jules LaForgue provided the frame for the work:"Donc je suis un malheureux et ce n'est ni ma faute ni celle de la vie:" "Therefore, I am an unfortunate person, and it is neither my fault nor that of life."[48]

None of the three stories is technically a "portrait", as the definition by Steiner will attest.[49] Neither are they novellas in the typical rhetorical style of the nineteenth century. The narrative

action does not rise and fall. Instead, the stories are episodic - attempts, through series of scenes in each characters life, none more important than the other - to paint total pictures of the women's consciousnesses. Henry James, in his commentary on the work of Trollope, in 1883, wrote that "character is action, action is plot, and any plot which hangs together... plays upon our emotion, our suspense by means of personal references. We care what happens to people only in proportion as we know what people are."[50] Stein believed that the reality of her characters would not be revealed by plot and movement, but by the representative samplings of their lives and "through the self-revealing perception of their emotions as they struggle to articulate their thoughts."[51] Thus her narrative choices were the repeated rhythms of their speech and their lives, through which she felt she could capture the essence of their identities.

She used repetition of words, actions, emotional states, relationships, themes, life patterns in order to do just that - capture the essence of their identities. It is through a close examination of these repetitions that the reader will attain a complete picture of each of the three women.

But it is not enough to state simply that Stein used repetition. Repetition can occur at many levels and scales, the smaller scale being the lexical, the grammatical levels; the larger scale consisting of units such as the phrase, sentence, paragraph; and, still larger, at the thematic, structural level, events and scenes which can occur within as well as across stories, works and entire bodies of work. Thus an attempt must be made to classify Stein's repetition systematically.

One method of studying repetition is simply to investigate the forms and types of constructions they manifest, enumerating the various

ways in which words are put together and repeated.[52] These can be noted on the different levels of repetition, the small scale and the large. The form method of classification simply arranges lexical repetitions in an ascending order from simple to complex. The simplest form of repetition is the successive repetition of the same word; then one would consider double repetitions of different words, then triple repetitions and so on.

Several of cases of single successive repetitions have already been discussed in terms of their cohesives properties. Stein occasionally uses what is termed non-consecutive repetition, a practice in which one word is repeated often in a single sentence, or across several adjacent sentences, such as: "She saved and saved and always saved;" "she worked and worked;" "a girl was a girl and should always act like a girl;" "Sorrow upon sorrow" and "Disgrace, Lena talking about disgrace! It was a disgrace... Disgrace to have him go away and leave her."

One can also note the repetitions of various grammatical forms, such as repetitions of noun phrases, verb phrases, sentence structure, etc. Stein consistently employs the SVO word order and at times begins a whole series of sentences and clauses with similar subjects. For example, in her descriptions of Anna, Stein begins each sentence with a particular feature and the personal pronoun "her": "Her face was worn, her cheeks were thin, her mouth drawn and firm, and her light blue eyes were very bright... Her voice was a pleasant one, when she told the histories of bad Peter and of Baby and of little Rags. Her voice was a high and piercing one when she called to the teamsters... her strained voice and her glittering eyes and her queer piercing german english

first made them afraid and then ashamed" (14).

Stein also consistently uses the coordinating conjunction "and" to string together series of adjectives, adverbs, and independent clauses to create immense sentences

> "Mathilda was an overgrown, slow, flabby, blonde, stupid, fat girl, just beginning as a woman; thick in her speech and dull and simple in her mind, and very jealous of all her family and of other girls, and proud that she could have good dresses and new hats and learn music, and hating very badly to have a cousin who was a common servant" (248).

However, this method of merely cataloguing repetitions is limited in its utility, because although it can give one a detailed account of what occurs when and how many repetitions of one word or phrase exists within the story, this listing does not contribute to an understanding of why these repetitions are where they are, what their function is , and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the story. Word counts, in and of themselves, are useless in contributing to an understanding of the aesthetic effects of linguistic features.

A more fruitful way to examine repetitions is to classify them according to function. Although this type of classification does not hold the key to understanding all the uses of repetition in Stein, it does help demonstrate how they work and how they contribute to the structure of each story.

Calvin S. Brown, in his study Repetition in Zola's Novels examined formal repetitions ranging from significant single words to phrases, sentences and larger passages which were repeated either identically or with variation. Brown classified and named the types, and although

they were not designed as a general system applicable to all literary repetitions, many of these types also occur in Three Lives. Thus, his system is invaluable as a starting point for studying Stein's methods.

The first type of repetition he notes is one of the simplest, and occurs often in both "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena." Stein makes considerable use of phrases, groups of one, two or perhaps three words, repeated throughout passages and sometimes the entire text, attached to names or objects, for example, "old Katy" "naughty Peter," and "jolly little Rags." Brown calls this 'the tag.' This is a "word or phrase, usually brief, serving to describe or characterize a person or thing, or to represent a characteristic trait or habit."[53] Thus, we see "good" attached to Anna and "gentle" to Lena, in the titles, as if these are fundamental characteristics of these women. We are "set up" from the outset to expect these traits to be true and therefore to expect all actions and interactions to be motivated by these characteristics, and thus judge the characters accordingly. However, Brown cautions that the descriptive tag, "which at first sight seems to be merely physical will usually turn out to have some ironic applicability."[54] In many cases, as the story progresses, 'tags' begin to display ironic overtones which at the beginning they did not have.

Equally common and striking to the reader are complex intricate cumulative repetitions. Throughout Three Lives Stein employs the technique of using polyadjectival strings, noun phrases composed of a head noun and a long string of modifying elements, to develop complete, descriptions of her characters. This practice involves not merely incremental repetition in which she adds one new adjective to each successive description. Rather, it is an addition, subtraction,

variation on a theme.

For example, in "The Good Anna," Stein introduces Anna as a "small spare, german woman... her face was worn, her cheeks were thin" (13). On page 31, she describes Anna again, almost as if we had not been given a description before. "Anna was a medium sized, thin, hard working worrying woman." Again, on page 32 we are told "she was always thin and worn." On page 38 and 46 the adjectives used to describe Anna as a whole, shift to her face in particular: "her worn, thin, lined determined face" and "her lined, worn, thin, pale yellow face." The adjective "determined" is replaced by "pale yellow," but the adjectives, "worn," and "thin," remain. As Anna begins to go downhill toward her death, we are told "she always grew more tired, more pale, yellow and in her face more thin and worn and worried" (80).

Stein also uses this technique to describe minor characters, such as Miss Mary Wadsmith, who was a "large fair helpless woman...large, docile, helpless Miss Mary Wadsmith... always large, helpless, gentle..." and Mrs. Haydon, "short, stout, hard built, german... all a compact and well hardened mass... a good and generous woman."

The simple technique of inundating the reader with these particular descriptive adjectives serves to keep them continuously in the foreground of the reader's mind. Each word has been carefully chosen to capture a facet of the character, and repeated so that the reader will pay attention. Stein does not state simply that Anna is thin and tired and worn, or Lena is gentle and patient and Melanctha is intelligent, complex and desiring, and leave it at that. She returns again and again to reassert these facts. This repetition forces the reader to react at more than a surface level, to visualize and internalize these characteristics. With each repetition Stein is making

the character fresh in the mind of the reader.

This technique of continually repeating certain traits also serves to further Stein's theory of determinism by emphasizing the unchangingness of the character of each individual. The personalities they were given by fate do not change and in the end seal the character's fate. Anna remains thin, worn and worrying, only to become more thin and worn until she wears out and dies. Lena's passive gentleness does not change, rendering her helpless in the face of the troubles she encounters. Melanctha's complex desires force her continually to seek love which is not satisfied and eventually leads to her sad and lonely death.

Another type of repetition Brown has defined is called the 'key passage,' a "relatively long repetition embodying in a striking and memorable form, one of the fundamental ideas of a book or sometimes the single idea on which the entire work is based. The key-passage is often used to indicate a fixed idea or obsession in the mind of a character."[55] Brown notes that because of its length and importance the repetition is more likely to be exact. As will be demonstrated in the discussion of each story, Stein used this important technique of foregrounding critical themes and ideas in all three of the stories. By repeating a passage verbatim, often with the interjections "Remember" and "you see" to draw our attention even more specifically to it, Stein indicates that these passages are significant, fundamental to our understanding of the stories.

Stein also relies heavily on scattered repetitions, certain key words which appear continuously throughout either the whole text or certain passages. Brown appropriately calls these 'hammer' words, words

used extensively and intensively "in order to emphasize an acting or situation, driving it home by repeated blows... (the hammer) indicates a strong or exclusive preoccupation with any single idea."[58] Each story has its own 'hammer' words, although some carry over from "The Good Anna" to "The Gentle Lena" and on to "Melanctha" which, as I will show, makes a very important difference in our interpretation of all three. The most striking example of this type of repetition is, of course, the word "certainly," which appears 433 times in "Melanctha." In the face of this intensive use of a single word, one cannot ignore it, nor the fact that, if repeated so often, it must be significant, and yet, many, if not most critics have.

It must be noted that these classifications necessarily overlap, since Brown used form, function and content in deciding upon ways to classify each type. For instance, "good" is part of the tag for "the good Anna", but it is also a 'hammer' word used throughout the three stories. It will also be necessary to decide in the course of the study whether a particular sentence, repeated verbatim, is a key-passage or not, and this will, naturally, make a difference in the interpretation of the story.

This method of classifying repetitions takes us further toward an understanding of what Stein was attempting to accomplish in Three Lives. But Brown extracted each of these types of repetition and studied them out of context.[57] In order to achieve a complete reading of these stories, one must examine them in context, as they appear.

Examining repetitions in context is a crucial difference, especially in the light of what Ballmer has written concerning the changing of meanings within the referential context of the text as a whole. This is also, as I see it, the major error critics have made in

reading Three Lives. Readers have had a tendency to focus on the repetition of one word or another or a repeated phrase or action. They use this focus to decide upon an interpretation of the character or the story. For instance, in his discussion of the problems Jeff and Melanctha experience in their relationship, Frederick Hoffman focuses on the word "trouble." He writes, "Perhaps the key word is "trouble"; it suggests a commitment to experience without a full understanding of it.[58] Hilfer, on the other hand, notices most of the key terms in "Melanctha" but he too chooses to single out the word "trouble" to interpret Jeff's problems. He cites the sentence "Jeff Campbell had never yet in his life had trouble" (p. 111) and crows, "Clearly this is what is wrong with him! Personally and socially vibrant and joyous, Jeff exhibits, nevertheless, a lack of depth and full reality... his ethical control over relationships is a shield against real experience. Needing real trouble in his life, he finds Melanctha."[59] Similarly, DeKoven tends to oversimplify when she writes that "'the good Anna' dies of her goodness,'[and that] the gentle Lena' dies of her gentleness."[60]

These inadequate readings, as I will show, result in distorted pictures. Taken out of context words or phrases elicit a certain response. Taken in context, however, when a certain repetition appears in the course of a story that repetition can change its meaning, and thus one's interpretation of that repetition, and ultimately of the story as a whole is changed. Key words or phrases often appear sporadically in the text before they are used as 'hammer words' or 'key passages' Therefore, there is often a lag between the time the word is introduced and the time the reader perceives that it is significant.

Thus the reader's retrospection, as Iser notes, plays a significant part in recognizing the significance of any particular element. Therefore, it is necessary to proceed through each work separately in order to evoke a new reading of each, and, ultimately of all three taken together. It is only by reading through the stories that the richness of each, and the repetitions in all their various shades of meanings, can be appreciated. As Iser writes, "Aesthetic experiences can only take place because they are communicated and the way they are experienced must depend on the way in which they are presented."[61] In my study of the three stories I will note the various types of repetition as they appear in the context of the story and show how the cumulative affect of these results in a different interpretation altogether.

One important effect of repetition in Stein's stories is to establish an ironic view of superficially sympathetic characters. Brinnin writes that Stein "set about to encompass the meanings of the lives of 'The Gentle Lena,' 'The Good Anna' and 'Melanctha' not with irony, but with a magnified, slow-moving and sympathetic realism."[62] I can agree with this statement only to a certain extent. Stein does treat the three women with deep sympathy and compassion, but not without irony. And her irony, especially when it is not levelled at her three main characters is often bitter and biting.

Stein establishes the irony through the use of an unreliable narrator. Dekoven has documented this use in detail. She notes that Stein uses the "omniscient third" but that the narrator is obtuse nonetheless: "There is a discrepancy, sometimes to the point of contradiction, between the tone of the narrative voice and the content of the narrative. Some such discrepancy is... characteristic of

fiction where irony, understatement or a conflict of conscious and unconscious creation so often generates a complex vision. But in Three Lives the discrepancy is so extreme that the narrator seems at times entirely blind to the import of what she narrates. While the narrator of Three Lives is consistently innocent, straightforward, mildly jolly and approving, the content is often grotesque, sinister, ridiculous."[63] This simple childish narrative voice serves to distance the language ironically from the content and heighten the discrepancy. For example, in the first scene in "Melanctha, describing the death of Rose's baby, Stein writes, "Rose Johnson had liked the baby well enough and perhaps she just forgot it for awhile, anyway the child was dead... [and] neither of them thought about it very long" (85). Anyway. The death is shrugged off. It is a fact of life in the negro community of Bridgeport, and whether or not it was Rose's fault doesn't seem to matter. Sam and Rose don't care.

Irony is also established through repetition. Throughout the three stories we are exposed to the continuous repetitions of people's thoughts and words. Each person's words, and alternatively, Stein's words to describe them, render, what Weinstein calls the unique "rhythm, density, continuity, speed, quantity" of consciousness.[64] However, as will be demonstrated, what one says one is, or thinks one is, or what Stein tells the reader a person is, is very seldom what that character actually turns out to be. The effect of the repetitions in context sharply contradicts what the words themselves, if realized without remembering, have stated. In Stein's fiction, actions belie what words have insisted.

Another issue is the general misunderstanding of Stein's use of

the continuous present. Many writers assumed that Three Lives was written in this form. This assumption is incorrect. Three Lives does mark the beginning of her use of the 'continuous present;' however, it has not yet evolved to the extent in which it was used later as in The Making of the Americans and her portraits. Here, she uses what she termed the 'prolonged present.' In "Composition as Explanation' Stein wrote:

> In beginning writing I wrote a book called Three Lives this was written in 1905. I wrote a negro story called "Melanctha." In that there was a constant recurring and beginning there was a marked direction in the direction of being in the present although naturally I had been accustomed to past present and future, and why, because the composition forming around me was a prolonged present. A composition of a prolonged present is a natural composition in the world as it has been these thirty years it was more and more a prolonged present. I created then a prolonged present naturally I knew nothing of a continuous present but it came naturally to me to make one, it was simple it was clear to me and nobody knew why it was done like that, I did not myself although naturally to me it was natural... In the first book there was a groping for a continuous present and for using everything by beginning again and again. There was a groping for using everything and there was an inevitable beginning of beginning again and again and again. I lost myself in it.[65]

In Three Lives Stein severely limits her vocabulary. This, critics

agree, was a deliberate attempt to reflect the dialects of the characters themselves: Anna and Lena with their German English and Melanctha with her "Negro" dialects. At times, as Walker has pointed out, Stein does use words such as "coquetry" and "repressed" that are far removed from the lexicon of the characters, but generally she restricted her vocabulary to words which she felt would be in the lexicon of second language or non-standard dialect speakers.

I would accept the view that this limited vocabulary is an attempt to reflect the speech of the characters. However, it seems that many critics such as Hoffman and Walker have mistaken simplicity of speech with simplemindedness of character. Michael Hoffman writes, "[The narrator] not only reflects the dialect of the characters, but he expresses the inarticulate thoughts of the characters in the very language that they would use were they able to express their thoughts for themselves."[66] Walker, in the same tone, writes of "the narrowly restricted linguistic universe that confines the speech and thoughts of simple uneducated characters."[67] According to Walker, Stein was exploring "the role of language in shaping the thoughts and the lives of characters whose imperfect command of English makes self-expression an arduous labor." She believes that each of the three women were "verbally impotent, [lacking] the verbal and conceptual resources provided by their class and educational background," and that this ´verbal impotence´ - the "confines of [their] language - shape and, finally, impede their understanding."[68] In Walker´s opinion, Anna´s inability to express herself in an awkward situation is due to the "inadequacy" of her language; Lena´s victimization is the result of her limited command of English and lack of "resources to defend herself

adequately against the verbal barrages to which she is constantly subjected;" Jeff's "struggle to understand Melanctha and his own awakening passion dramatizes the extent to which his language shapes and confines his thoughts."[69]

This is nothing short of linguistic chauvinism, due largely to a misunderstanding of the elasticity and capacity of language to express anything that needs to be expressed in however simple terms. Both Hoffman and Walker are confusing simplicity with inadequacy. Frederick Hoffman was nearer the mark when he wrote that Stein's technique suggested a broadening of perspective in the functions and uses of character analysis. "Its application to the minds of relatively 'unlettered' persons pointed away from the clumsy assumptions of contemporary naturalists who seemed to think that subconsciously a person's emotional status was as complex as his background and social level dictated."[70] I will demonstrate in the course of the chapters, neither Anna nor Melanctha are inarticulate, but are quite capable of expressing themselves well, Anna even with her so-called 'broken English.' Lena, I would agree is inarticulate, but I feel the reasons for this inability to express herself lie elsewhere.

I believe that Williams James' theory of knowledge influenced Stein's choice of characters. James felt that there were two types of knowledge and made a clear distinction these types. He called the first 'knowledge of acquaintance' and the second 'knowledge-about.' 'Knowledge of acquaintance' is an elementary kind of knowledge which is vaguely intuited; in other words, "knowledge immediately obtained and thus recognized but without the ability to be communicated to others, who must themselves become acquainted with whatever is known in this way. Included in this incommunicable way of mere acquaintance are 'all

the elementary natures of the world, its highest genera, the simple qualities of matter and mind, together with the kinds of relation that subsist between them...." 'Knowledge-about' is a more sophisticated grasp of the nature of things. It implies a selection of details, a making sense out of the chaos of the world around one. 'Knowledge-about' a thing means "a conceptual grasp of its relations, whereas acquaintance with it is limited to a bare impression of the thing while being vaguely aware of a 'fringe' of unarticulated affinities."[71] This theory has important implications for Anna, Lena and Melanctha. The spheres of their lives were limited, and thus their knowledge of the world. This did not make them stupid or inarticulate, merely narrow in focus, limited in their the world view and concept of it.

But while she has chosen to reduce the vocabulary itself, Stein expands the range of meanings of many words and this exasperating "slipperiness" of words has been a major problem in interpreting these three stories, particularly "Melanctha." Ambiguity, the use of syntax to simultaneously present more than one contextually appropriate semantic unit, is a characteristic feature of Stein, and repetition of words in various contexts makes it difficult to pin down and make a definitive statement about what Stein meant by a particular word. Bridgman theorizes that Stein restricted her vocabulary in part because of the subject matters she was exploring. Vague indirect statements and euphemisms "in part reflect the verbally puritanic milieu about which she was writing in Three Lives but it was also personally useful for Gertrude Stein since it permitted the broaching of taboo subjects."[72] For instance, in "The Good Anna" Mrs. Lehntman's friend was an evil and mysterious man who "got into trouble doing things that were not right

to do (64). It is quite clear that this man is involved with performing abortions, but Stein does not explicitly say.

In "Melanctha" Stein displays her remarkable sense of humor and ear for language with her double entendres and euphemisms: "Hullo, sis, do you want to sit on my engine?" (98); "Hi there, you yaller girl, come here and we'll take you sailin... Do you think you would make a nice jelly?" (101-102); "It was not from men that Melanctha learned her wisdom" (108); "Melanctha loved it the way Jem knew how to do it" (218).

An outstanding example of her expansion of meanings of simple words in varying contexts is the word "wander," in "Melanctha." This word is especially interesting precisely because of its repetition - the manner it which it wanders through the text, appearing and reappearing in an artless, and, at first glance, indiscriminate manner. The word "wandering" implies movement without direction, a vague going nowhere in particular, movement for movement's sake. The word is introduced in the description of Melanctha's mother, who "had always been a little wandering and mysterious and uncertain in her ways" (90). In this context the words means vague and perhaps slightly crazy, sweet, but unable to focus thoughts or energies. "Wandering" next appears when Melanctha begins to "wander after wisdom." In this context "wandering," means a quest for knowledge, Melanctha's seeking to learn about the world, searching for answers to her question about sex, men and life. "Wandering" appears again when Melanctha and Jane wander together. This use expressly implies promiscuity, although it is not men from whom Melanctha learns wisdom. After her breakup with Jane, Melanctha begins to wander again, and in this context wander undoubtedly means promiscuity, because the sentence "Melanctha these

days wandered very widely" is followed immediately by "Melanctha tried a great many men, in these days before she was really suited" (108). After she meets Jeff she never wanders except with him, and this context returns us to the original meaning of movement for the sake of movement, Jeff and Melanctha engaging in directionless meandering, engrossed more in being together than where they are going or where they will end up. As the relationship begins to dissolve, Melanctha resumes her wandering, returning both to indiscriminate promiscuity and to a desperate search for comfort and friendship beyond Jeff. Stein refers directly to this shading of meanings on page 216 when she writes "One day Melanctha had been very busy with the different kinds of ways she wandered."

The manner in which Stein plays with words, I feel, is where she particularly demonstrates her virtuosity and genius. The manner in which she makes words resonate and single words take on a variety of meanings and display overtones which bring into being many of the nuances of the word at once is a marvelous display of power which has generally been overlooked.

It will be necessary to discuss some of the various critical readings of Three Lives in order to show, in the course of the discussion, how exactly interpretations are incomplete. But, rather than focus on the criticism as a whole, I will mention the various readings in the context of my own interpretation of each of the three stories and demonstrate how a study of the repetition in each either clarifies, corroborates or contradicts what has previously been written on the subject.

Three Lives, because it seems to be one of the simplest of Stein's

works to read and understand, has been grossly underestimated. Over the years, the criticism of this work has been equally divided between praise and condemnation. Stein deliberately used a very limited lexicon and a spare style which has mislead readers and critics alike to construe her simplicity as being simplistic. I hope to show, in the course of this dissertation that these stories are worthy of praise, and that they were actually extraordinarily complex disguised under the seeming simplicity of restricted vocabulary and incessant repetition.

CHAPTER TWO

"THE GOOD ANNA"

Of the three novellas in Three Lives, "The Good Anna" was written first. As has been documented by Walker, Michael Hoffman, Carolyn Copeland and others, "The Good Anna" was directly influenced by Flaubert's "Un Coeur Simple." Both are simple stories of servant women who,"because of their social position, the course of their lives is the by-product of the actions of others."[1] Anna is a feisty German-American of lower middle-class stock who works her way through a series of employers and finally dies at a relatively young age.

For such a simple story, the critical literature surrounding it is surprisingly contradictory. Anna has been labelled everything from slow-witted, inarticulate and simple-minded to crafty, tyrannical and overbearing. Some critics have been sympathetic, others decidedly negative. One tells us that Anna is domineering, another has told us that Anna has been dominated by women her entire life.

For instance, Marilyn Gaddis Rose calls Anna a self-elected martyr. She states that "Anna is overbearing, imposing her rigid yet inconsistent standards without reflection or self-awareness... To the extent that Anna emerges as a "real" fictional character, it is a generally pitiable person whose domestic capabilities barely counteract her self-righteous domineering." She states that the repetition of the sentence: "Anna led an arduous and troubled life" reveals that the

distresses Anna suffers are paradigmatic, and that "the petty looms as large as the serious [and] her martyrdom, regardless of the triviality of some of its causes, will be real." Her summation of Anna is that "Stein has shown how "good" her Anna is - an efficient house manager and friend to animals - but simultaneously cruel, tyrannical, childish, cantankerous nagging and crafty."[2]

In contrast Bridgman writes that "The Good Anna" "describes the scoldings and mutterings of a loyal servant who is clearly intended to be endearing."[3]

Marianne DeKoven concurs with Bridgman, stating that Anna is a "generous, hard working, stubborn, managing German immigrant [who] works herself to death for a series of selfish employers and friends who take all she offers, allow her to run their lives (the only repayment she exacts,) then desert her when she has outlived her usefulness or when they are tired of her rigid control."[4]

Frederick Hoffman writes that the 'goodness' of Anna appears often to be wasted on lazy mistresses, or to have the contrary effect of "spoiling" the men whom she favors as masters; but goodness is in itself a convention that has many particular forms of expression and the values of Anna's goodness are realized with a full appreciation of their pathos, occasional eccentricity and ultimate soundness."[5]

In this chapter I will demonstrate through a close study of the repetitions which occur throughout "The Good Anna" that these different interpretations of Anna, contradictory though they might be, are accurate descriptions of Anna. I will show that Anna is a very complex person who displays all of these traits, but that the repetitions reveal a character who is all of these and yet different from any one interpretation which has been given her yet. My interpretation most

closely agrees with Carl Wood, who writes that Anna is a "petty and incorrigible domestic tyrant..." However, he notes, due to the shifting perspectives of the story, as the reader lives through Anna's life with her, her character becomes sympathetic and her actions defensible. He writes that Stein "has presented the reader with conflicting views of Anna which cannot be resolved to form a neat, coherent estimate of her character. At the end of the story we are forced to the paradoxical awareness that Anna is both the triumphant domestic tyrant of Part I and a pitiful, basically unhappy individual."[6]

Although Wood focuses on several of the key repetitions in "The Good Anna and although he is concerned with how the reading-through of the text changes the reader's interpretation, he does not go far enough in recognizing how the various repetitions work together with the shifting perspectives to render the character of Anna. As the reader progresses, the key repetitive patterns of words, phrase and actions begin to shape the narrative and, consequently, the reader's interpretation. Using the classifications formulated by Calvin Brown we can impose order on these different types of repetition and draw conclusions about the character of Anna. I will first isolate these different types and then demonstrate how they work together in the context of the story.

The reader will notice immediately that the word "house" is an oft-repeated word: "Anna managed the whole little house... it was a funny little house, one of a whole row... they were funny little houses... This one little house was always very full with Miss Mathilda, an under servant, stray dogs and cats and Anna's voice..."

(11). This sets the stage for the scenes which unfold. The house represents Anna's universe, the whole of her life, the environment in which she exists and from which she takes her identity. She lives in and through and for the households she runs. Anna's 'knowledge-about' is strictly of the households. Her knowledge of the world beyond is 'knowledge of acquaintance.' But she does not care. The house is her universe and beyond what she needs to know to run it, nothing matters.

Stein's irony begins immediately. The fourth sentence of the story is set off as a separate paragraph as though it were a significant and important thought: "Anna led an arduous life." This statement is juxtaposed against descriptions of Anna bargaining for lower prices in one store with the threat of getting groceries for a little less "by Lindheims; Anna's arguments with Sallie over the butcher boy; her confrontations with the teamsters and other "wicked men" and her shouting at her dogs for their misbehavior. This same sentence is repeated again, after the sad mishap of Peter's philandering. The "arduousness" of her life, set in opposition to these trivial incidents, is rendered slightly ridiculous.

In "The Good Anna" Stein makes use of certain phrases, consisting of two or three or more words, repeated within sentences and sometimes throughout the entire text. These often take the form of descriptive adjectives modifying certain characters or objects: for example, "Old Katy," and "funny little house." As noted in Chapter One, Brown's classification lables these modifiers 'tags.' These tags serve to characterize a person or thing or to represent a character trait or habit. "The most frequent function of the tag is state or imply, with one or two brief strokes, the essentials of a person's character or function."[7] Thus we see "naughty Peter", "jolly little Rags" and, most

importantly, "the good Anna," recur throughout the story. Anna is not simply Anna - she is the good Anna. In the beginning it is reasonable to accept this tag at face value. It is only further readins, viewing this tag in context that first impressions will be modified. At first the reader need only assume that Anna is just that - good.

Stein also uses certain complex and intricate repetitions of phrases. In her descriptions, particularly of Anna, Miss Mary Wadsmith and Miss Mathilda, she uses her characteristic polyadjectival strings attached to a head noun. Stein begins with a descriptive statement: The good Anna was a small spare, german woman... her face was worn, her cheeks were thin" (13). On page 31, she writes, "Anna was a medium sized, thin, hard working worrying woman." On the next page she repeats these characteristics: "She was always thin and worn" (32). The repetitions continue:

> Her worn, thin, lined determined face... (38).
>
> Her spare, thin, awkward body and her worn, pale yellow face (40).
>
> Her lined, worn, thin, pale yellow face (46).
>
> She always grew more tired, more pale, yellow and in her face more thin and worn and worried. (80).

Thus we are presented continually with a picture of Anna throughout the text which does not change except that the thinness and wornness become more pronounced and exaggerated as she grows older.

We are also given an extensive description of Miss Mary Wadsmith which is in direct contrast to Anna:

> A large fair helpless woman (25).

large, docile, helpless, Miss Mary Wadsmith (27).

She sat there always, large, helpless, gentle (29).

Like all large and helpless women, Miss Mary's heart beat weakly in the soft and helpless mass it had to govern (29).

The next type of repetition found in "Anna" is the 'key passage.' We will recall that this is a "relatively long repetition embodying in a striking and memorable form, one of the fundamental ideas of a book or sometimes the single idea on which the entire work is based."[8] "The Good Anna" has two major key-passages. The first is: "Mrs. Lehntman was the only romance Anna ever knew." This sentence is repeated verbatim five times, (30, 34, 52, 54, 55) and then in a variation when Anna's friendship with Mrs. Lehntman builds again slowly after their long falling out: "Mrs. Lehntman could never be again the romance in the good Anna's life, but they could be friends again" (70).

The second key passage is: "Anna led an arduous and troubled life" (11, 13, 21). This passage is also repeated verbatim. With both, Stein uses the interjections "Remember" and "you see", to draw our attention even more specifically to them, a device which indicates that she is foregrounding these passages as significant and fundamental to an understanding of the life of the good Anna.

In this story Stein also relies on scattered repetitions of certain key words which appear extensively throughout the text. The most notable of these words are "good," "bad," "work," "worry," "poor," and "scold."

A careful analysis of these different types of repetitions, the hammer words in relation to the key-passages, will begin to reveal exactly what it is that Stein is trying to tell the reader about Anna.

The most striking hammer in "The Good Anna" is, of course, the word "good." "Good" is used as an adjective in many of the different senses of the word. For example, Stein writes of the "good looking" Peter, and Anna's "good natured" brother. We find many other uses throughout the text:

> Never going to come to any good (50).
>
> ...honest, decent, good, hard working, foolish girls who were in trouble (52).
>
> It will be a good place (53).
>
> Anna heard a good deal of this (56).
>
> Anna saw Mrs. Lehntman a good deal now (71).
>
> ...they all knew how well Anna could take care of people and their clothes and goods (77).

Many of these uses relate to Anna herself:

> ...and you so good to them Anna (50).
>
> You are so good Anna (51).
>
> Anna's life went on, taking care of Miss Mathilda... and being good to everyone that asked or seemed to need her help (70).

The most notable use of "good" is the tag in the phrase "the good Anna." The reader is literally barraged; the phrase "good Anna" appears a total of 84 times, with the variations "the good Anna," "our good Anna," and "a good and german Anna." Each increment of the repetition serves ostensibly to hammer home the fact that Anna is good. But, unlike the factual descriptive adjectives, "good" is an evaluative adjective. At first, the repetition reinforces the idea that Anna is a

good person, but with its insistence, it sets up doubts. In the face of the trivial ironic situations Stein has placed Anna in the reader is forced to question, to suspect possible irony, to re-evaluate Anna, and finally to revise his or her appraisal. This insistence does not allow one the luxury of taking the word at face value, because, as the reader proceeds through the text it becomes evident that the word "good" is often used in an inconsistent way with her behavior.

Anna does do good things. She takes in stray dogs; she helps the poor girls in trouble, takes care of old Katy, gives away her savings for this charity or that person in trouble, bails out Mrs. Lehntman whenever she needs money. Anna is, in many cases, a good person. But she also lies, gets rid of Molly when Molly won't knuckle under, and manipulates everyone around her - interfering, bossing, grumbling and scolding. In fact, most of Anna's life is taken up with scolding and pushing other people around.

This trait is especially evident in her work relationships. During her life Anna works for Miss Mary Wadsmith, Miss Mathilda and Dr. Shonjen; her last position is that of a boarding house keeper. Throughout her life, Anna is very particular about whom she works for. "Anna's superiors must be always these large helpless women, or be men, for none others could give themselves to be made so comfortable and free." (25) "Most women were interfering in their ways... She did not like them thin and small and active and always looking and always prying." (58). If the reader will return to the physical description of Anna herself, as a small thin, spare, woman who is always working hard and worrying, s/he can deduce that Anna does not like to work for women who are too much like herself. Anna also does not like little girls, because of the "subtle opposition showing so early always in a young

girl´s nature." (25)

In the beginning of the story Anna is managing Miss Mathilda´s house. There is a succession of under-servants. Melancholy Molly is sent away because she will not obey Anna. Molly goes to work in a factory, her health fails, and when she finally breaks down Anna takes charge again of her life and dictates the way Molly should be cared for. As long as Anna is in control, it is a "happy family all there together in the kitchen" (19).

Under Miss Mary Wadsmith, Anna has a serious encounter with Miss Jane over the blue dressings, and Anna threatens to leave unless she is given absolute power to make all the decisions. When Miss Jane marries, Anna leaves because "she could not live as her Miss Mary´s girl, in a house where Miss Jane would be the head." (33).

Anna also leaves the service of Dr. Shonjen when he marries. She will not go back to Miss Mary because she dreads "Miss Jane´s interfering ways" (57). She is happy with Miss Mathilda, and when Miss Mathilda goes abroad, Anna cannot bring herself to be under any more people because "no one could ever again freely let her do it all" (77). So she begins taking in boarders. Only men. She will not take in women. She loves to work for men. Once they´ve eaten and are content, they "let her do whatever she thought best" (37). She is once again happy working and scolding and taking care of people.

It becomes evident that the word "power" is a key word in Anna´s life. She must have control over everyone - Dr. Shonjen, Miss Mary, Miss Mathilda, Miss Jane and even Mrs. Lehntman. It is important to note, however, that although the word "power" is used eight times in the story, four occur when Anna has lost power. These four uses occur in

connection with an episode with Mrs. Lehntman and the argument over her new house. Mrs. Lehntman wins the argument and for Anna, the loss is a great defeat.

> So the good Anna grew always weaker in her power to control (54).
>
> In friendship power always has its downward curve (54).
>
> There is always danger of a break or of a stronger power coming in between (55).
>
> Poor Anna had no power to say no (55).

Mrs. Lehntman is the romance of Anna's life. She is a woman other women love, the one person Anna cannot control. "Mrs. Lehntman was the only one who had any power over Anna" (31). In turn, the only person who has power over Mrs. Lehntman is the evil doctor. One can only speculate whether this inability to control is part of Anna's fascination and obsession with the midwife. When they break off, the affair is "too sacred and grievous" to ever be told to anyone, not even to Mrs. Drehten.

The depth of feeling Anna has doesn't mean that she doesn't try to take control: "Anna gradually had come to lead" (42) in the relationship. But not really lead. Mrs. Lehntman has a devious way of not hearing, of saying she will do things and yet not doing them, of ignoring Anna's advice. She also has a way of manipulating Anna in order to get Anna to do what she wants. She uses up Anna's savings to buy the house and to help girls who are in trouble, and to help Julia get started when she marries. A key factor in this relationship is that although Mrs. Lehntman needs Anna just as much as Anna needs her, Mrs. Lehntman is "ready to risk Anna's loss" (54). Anna has power in

superficial things such as dictating how the house should be done over, but her strength of control is less; Mrs. Lehntman "could always hold out longer" (55). So Anna is defeated. This romance, which Stein tells us is "the ideal in one's life" (55) is crucial to Anna's happiness. Stein goes on to write "it is very lonely living with (the romance) lost" (55). Wood speculates that Anna's insistent management and tyranny over others is part of her struggle to cope with the loss of Mrs. Lehntman's friendship. However, he fails to notice that Anna's tendency to take over is consistent throughout her life, and that Anna has also tried with Mrs. Lehntman. Wood also fails to notice that Anna does find happiness in each of her positions, and that, although the brilliance and romance is gone from their friendship, Anna and Mrs. Lehntman do re-establish their relationship. However, when the friendship collapses, it is a terrible blow for Anna.

Another word consistenly used is the word "poor." Anna is poor in several ways. She is monetarily poor. She is continually giving up her savings to others. "She saved and saved and always saved, and then here and there, to this friend and that, to one in her troubles and to the other in her joy, in sickness, death, and weddings, or to make young people happy, it always went, the hard earned money she had saved" (54). "Of course, it was the good Anna's savings that came in handy" (71). She is also poor in the sense of being an unfortunate victim. Poor Anna. She is forced to pretend love for the relatives she does not love. Poor Anna. She is defeated by Mrs. Lehntman. Poor Anna. She is forced to resign because the doctor has married and Anna cannot suffer being overruled by his haughty arrogant wife. Poor Anna. Miss Mathilda goes off to another country for good. Sorrow upon

sorrow. "Dark were these days and much she had to suffer (57).

Two other hammer words used consistently with respect to Anna are "work" and "worry."In the cumulative repetition of her characteristics In the polyadjectival strings describing Anna, we are told she is medium sized, hard working and worrying. If her life is not taken up in scolding, it is consumed by working and worrying.

> You know I work myself sick for you (29).
>
> She worked away her appetite, her health and strength and always for the sake of those who begged her not to work so hard (32).
>
> Anna endured the operation... but when she was once more at work all the good effect of the several months of rest were soon worked and worried well away (32).
>
> Anna worked and sewed hard... worked so all the time (33).
>
> She worked and worked all day... and with all the work she just managed to keep living (79).
>
> Anna worked and thought and saved and scolded (80).
>
> Anna could never take a rest. She must work hard through the summer as well as through the winter (81).

There is never an end to Anna's effort. Finally she literally works herself to death. "The good Anna with her strong, strained, worn-out body died" (82). It becomes clear that Anna is, as Gaddis asserts, a martyr. "I gave her better things to eat than I had for myself," she tells Miss Mathilda of old Katy (18). "I do everything I can and you know I work myself sick for you," she tells Miss Mary in the fight over the blue dressings.

The question that the reader must ask is why? Why does Anna work

so hard? If power is the key and she is happiest when she is scolding and bullying, why is her life so difficult and why does she drive herself, slaving, as she puts it, for others? Why is her life so arduous and troubled? This key-passage, used to introduce Anna, has served to make her appear ridiculous when juxtaposed against the description of her life with Miss Mathilda, the dogs, the under-servants. On the surface it appears to be a good life, relatively free of worries, and with "troubles" that are relatively minor and inconsequential.

Close examination of Stein's patterns of repetition, however, reveal that the key to this question is the word "right:" "the right thing," "the right way." Anna is of South German Catholic stock and has very strong ideas about what is good and what is bad. "She did try so hard to do the best she knew" (58). This word "right" is repeated again and again, both by Stein in describing Anna's behavior and by Anna herself:

> Anna always had a firm old world sense of what was the right way for a girl to do (24).
>
> She never compromised herself...in what was the right thing for a girl to wear (40).
>
> To her thinking, in her stubborn, faithful, german soul, this was the right way for a girl to do (32).
>
> She ain't got no sense what's the right way to do (43).
>
> It ain't right, Mrs. Lehntman, to do so (44).
>
> The young people nowadays have no sense at all of what's the right way for them to do (54).

Anna has fixed in her mind what should be and she will not be swayed. "Anna was, as usual, determined for the right" (42). She also believes it is her duty to entrench this idea in the minds of others. "Now it was not only other girls and the colored man, and dogs, and cats, and horses and her parrot, but her cheery master, jolly Dr. Shonjen, whom she could guide and constantly rebuke to his own good" (37).

The firmness and fervour with which Anna holds to these principles are emphasized by Stein in her subtle and ironic use of Biblical plays on words:

> The new owners were certain that this Foxy had known no dog since she was in their care (12).
>
> Not that Julia Lehntman was pleasant in the good Anna's sight (39).
>
> The brother's wife had not found favour in our good Anna's sight (49).
>
> Her daughters were well trained, quiet, obedient, well dressed girls, and yet our good Anna loved them not, nor their mother, nor any of their ways (49).
>
> The good Anna did not weep for poor old Baby. Nay, she had not time even to feel lonely, for with the good Anna it was sorrow upon sorrow (75).

By using these Biblical references, Stein is entrenching the strength and fervour of Anna's beliefs into the reader's mind. She is also, at a subliminal level, attempting to hook the reader into accepting that, in her fervour, Anna is in the right.

At this point, we must return to the use of the word "good" as a tag. "Good," as noted, seemed to be used indiscriminately, and in places

when Anna is not being good. We find the "good Anna" when she is lying about Peter, when she is having her troubles trying to dominate Miss Mathilda, when she is favoring the children of Mrs. Drehten over her own nieces, when she is disobeying her religion to visit the medium.

But closer examination reveals a pattern in the way "good" is used throughout the text. In Chapter One, we are introduced to Anna when she is working for Miss Mathilda. Then in Chapter Two, we are taken back in time to Anna's emigration from Germany and her first position with Miss Mary. The tag "good" appears only twice while Anna is working for Miss Mary until Anna's first operation, when she has worked and slaved and worried herself to the bone so that she is never really well again. As she grows older and works harder and becomes more and more set in her ways, the use of the word "good" appears more and more insistently. Most of the uses of "good" occur in the latter half of Anna's life.

In direct opposition to the word "good" we find the word "bad. "Bad" primarily occurs in reference to others in the story, to their actions and their situations in life:

> "You bad dog," Anna said to Peter that night. "You bad dog" (11).
>
> Molly had a bad temper and always said ugly dreadful swear words (14).
>
> Sallie's chief badness... was the butcher boy (19).
>
> She spent the evenings when Anna was away, in company with this bad boy (20).
>
> This was as bad as it could be (44).
>
> Mrs. Drehten who with her chief trouble, her bad husband...(80).

Anna does do a few "bad" things, such as bargaining sharply to get things at "a little less," or not going to mass. And then things tend to go wrong for her. But she also deceives people "for their good" and when she tells Dr. Shonjen what she has done her deed is not really a sin anymore and she doesn´t have to confess to the father and do penance.

"Bad" is used in one significant episode in relation to Anna herself. This instance, which refers directly to Anna´s behavior, occurs during Anna´s visit to the fortune teller. "It was very bad to go to a woman who tells fortunes...the german priest...always said that it was very bad to do things so..." (58). But this emphasis is countered by "But what else now could the good Anna do? She was so mixed and bothered in her mind, and so troubled with this life that was all wrong, though she did try so hard to do the best she knew" (58). The ´badness´ of her action is rationalized away with the excuse that Anna is terribly mixed up and does not know where to turn. Therefore, we are led to assume that it is excusable, and not her fault.

William James, in his book, Psychology wrote:

> An act has no ethical quality whatever unless it be chosen out of several all equally possible. To sustain the arguments for the good course and keep them ever before us, to stifle our longing for more flowery ways, to keep the foot unflinchingly on the arduous path, these are characteristic ethical energies. But more than these; for these but deal with the means of compassing interests already felt by them to be supreme.[9]

James´ words bring us back to Stein´s key-passage, "Anna led an arduous

and troubled life." Her choice of the word "arduous" when we keep in mind the profound influence William James had upon her life, cannot have been merely coincidental. Goodness and doing the right thing are, to Anna, supreme. She is struggling to do what she feels is right, forever working to keep her feet and those of others unflinchingly on the right path.

In order to understand Anna fully, we must also examine Stein's use of repetition on a larger scale. Stein's idea that history repeats itself in this type of determined character, and that nothing changes is embodied in Anna's history. Anna's life does not change measurably, nor do her circumstances. Thin, tired, worn, she becomes only progressively more thin, more tired, and more worn until she is worn out and dies. She moves from one servant situation to another, each one a nearly exact repetition of the former. Her history repeats itself again and again until her death.

Not only does she not believe, neither does she even conceive that she might better herself or change her life or go anywhere beyond her servant status. She was born of lower middle class south German stock and that is where she will stay. So ingrained is her sense of her 'place' she will never sit in the parlor evenings, not even when the smell of new paint in the kitchen makes her sick. She always stands up while she talks with Miss Mathilda. Anna's and other characters accept their fate without question. This blind acceptance permeates the story:

> It was a family life the good Anna very much approved... with a german's feeling for the masterhood in men, she was docile to the surly father and rarely rubbed him the wrong

way (46).

> It is only in such a close tie such as marriage that influence can mount and grow always stronger with the years and never meet with a decline. It can only happen so when there is no way to escape. (54).
>
> Mrs. Drehten was a large, worn, patient german woman, with a soft face, lined, yellow brown in color and with the look that comes from a german husband to obey. (69).
>
> It is wonderful how poor people love to take advice from people who are friendly and above them, from people who read in books and who are good. (70).
>
> Even in her dress, Anna "knew so well the kind of ugliness appropriate to each rank in life" (40).

She knows her place, and does not aspire to better it. Hers is a recurring lifestyle with no way out. The essence of Anna, her being and her state in life, do not change.

By using Stein's repetitions as a guide to the character of Anna, we derive a totally different picture of the good Anna. We find that the criticism is not wholly wrong, but neither is it correct in the sense that the critics have failed to capture the character of who Anna is. Yes, she is domineering and manipulative - because she feels that this behavior is her duty She is also a victim of manipulation, because she is so genuinely concerned with what is right for others. Mrs. Lehntman, and everybody else know that "Anna (has) a feeling heart" and they have no shame in taking everything she has. Had she lived to be old, her fear of dying in poverty would probably have been realized.

Stein's narrator in "The Good Anna" has been called an unobtrusive narrator. But she actually is obtruding, blatantly so, not only with the occasional "you see" and "remember," she is subtly and deliberately forcing, thrusting, her opinion onto the reader. "Good" is a value judgment. It is literally pounded into the reader's head and not only when Anna is being good. Although it does not appear so, because she uses the third person narrator, Stein has in effect entered the mind of her character. She is seeing life through Anna's eyes, as it looks to Anna.

Stein also reinforces the effect of seeing life through Anna's eyes at a subtle level by employing a syntax which has been manipulated to simulate German immigrant speech patterns. The syntax has been rearranged to sound as if the syntactic rules of German are still prevalent in Anna's speech. For example:

> Miss Mathilda every day put off the scolding (15).
>
> Boys love always better to be done for and be made comfortable and full of eating (25).
>
> Mrs. Lehntman in her work loved best to deliver young girls (31).
>
> Edgar had now been for some years away from home (32).
>
> And you so good to them Anna all the time (50).
>
> She had every day her busy time... and every night she had her happy time (51).
>
> Doctor got married now very soon (57).
>
> Then they did the operation (82).

These examples are in addition to Anna's speech, which is structured to

reflect interference from German syntactic formation:

> Miss Mary... Of course I go help you to get settled and then I think I come back and stay right here in Bridgepoint. You know my brother he is here and all his family, and I think it would be not right to go away from them so far, and you know you don´t want me now so much Miss Mary when you are all together there in Curden (35).

We must digress for a moment to confront the issue of Anna´s alleged "inarticulateness." The incidents Walker cite are when Anna must confront Miss Mary, first, with the issue of the blue dressings from the bedroom and then with the news that Anna will not continue to work for Miss Mary after Jane marries. In the second situation she relies on Mrs. Lehntman to help her through this tense scene. "Anna´s words had not the strength of meaning they were meant to have." Walker focuses on this statement and the "grammatical errors" in Anna´s speech to demonstrate the inadequacy of Anna´s language to express herself, ignoring the sentence that "even courageous Mrs. Lehntman, efficient, impulsive and complacent as she was and not deeply concerned in the event, felt awkward, abashed and almost guilty in that mild, helpless presence" (34). It it not Anna´s inability to express herself so much as her anxiety caused by the situation rather than the linguistic impotence to which Walker attributes it. The "errors" in Anna´s speech are not "errors," but the interference of her first language as she uses her second. She is using English words with German syntax. In other situations Anna uses language to her own advantage very effectively. Anna is certainly able to manipulate the tradesmen to give her bargains; she is able to shame and strike fear in the hearts of the

teamsters over their treatment of animals. Most of the descriptions of Anna are her talking, complaining, teasing, scolding. She is an extremely verbal person. This is not linguistic impotence at all. The story is full of examples of Anna's verbosity:

> But she truly loved it best when she could scold (37).
>
> ... like all who had to do with the good Anna, Mrs. Lehntman dreaded her firm character, her vigorous judgments and the bitter fervour of her tongue (42).
>
> Then Anna would tell these histories to her doctor...And the good Anna full of the coquetry of pleasing would bridle with her angular, thin, spinster body, straining her stories and herself to please (38).
>
> The boy was easier to scold, for scoldings never sank in very deep, and indeed he liked them very well for they brought with them... lively teasing, and good jokes (39).
>
> And then he would listen and laugh so loud, as she told him stories of what had happened on that day (51).

The different devices of "German" syntax, the cumulative insistence of "good" and the technique of making the reader see the world through Anna's eyes, work together to demonstrate that the "goodness" in Anna is in Anna's mind. Not that Anna is so good, but that she is struggling unflinchingly along the arduous path to <u>be</u> good and do what is right, and she sees <u>herself</u> as being good.

Seen in this light, Anna is not an overbearing, tedious, miserable character, but rather a tragic figure. Caught in a life from which she cannot escape, struggling to gain some control over her circumstances, she is living the best life she knows how. She does good. She is of

the type Stein categorized as "needing to love." The people she works for and takes care of are happy. All her manipulating is done in the best interest of others.

The word "hard" also appears continually throughout the story. Anna is a hard-working person slaving to get by. The only thing that is easy in her life is her death. "Miss Annie died easy" (83). She lived and she died. And that was all.

I have mentioned before the issue of irony. Certainly, Stein has been ironic in some instances, as indicated above. But we must look beneath the surface irony of Anna's character. There is some irony. But not irony that provokes ridicule; irony that promotes, instead, compassion. As seen by others, Anna is a slightly ridiculous figure. But when one is inside looking out, the view is different. There is no irony, just hard work and worry and finally, an easy death to end it all.

CHAPTER THREE

"THE GENTLE LENA"

Of the three stories in Three Lives "The Gentle Lena" has been passed over in the critical literature in favor of the more complex and interesting Melanctha or the more strident Anna. "The Gentle Lena" appears on the surface to be a simple, albeit tragic story. The bareness of the prose, the deliberate understatement, and again, the innocent narrative voice have distracted all but the most careful of readers from the intricate web, woven by the repetitions, which reveal the characters in great depth and a complexity of structure that make this as technically accomplished a piece of writing as the other two. Few critics have afforded Lena more than a passing glance and find little to say, summing up the story in a sentence or two. Again, the criticism is divided as to how to interpret the story.

For example, Richard Bridgman writes that the story "describes a simple creature who desires only the kindness of others. She is manipulated, notably by an aunt who makes a marriage match for her... After Lena and her fiance marry, they have a reasonably contented relationship until she dies in childbirth."[1]

Frederick Hoffman, on the other hand, reaches a much less cheerful interpretation when he writes that this story is "almost pure pathos. [Lena] suffers experience without really understanding what is happening to her. The manners of her world require of her decisions

that she is scarcely able to comprehend... Lena's pathos comes from her immaturity, her inability to appreciate any crisis personally; she dies without really understanding why she has lived. She is passively a victim of the failure of persons to respond to a convention and to live within it."[2]

DeKoven focuses on Lena's "gentleness": "Lena dies of her gentleness. She is passive, dreamy, absent, slow witted, out of touch with her feelings."[3] Walker turns her attention to Lena's silence in the face of the manipulations of all those who have authority over her, concluding that Lena "lacks the resources to defend herself adequately against the verbal barrages to which she is constantly subjected. Consequently, she becomes the passive victim of the desires, and the discourse of others.... For her, marriage and children only increase her isolation and alienation."[4]

My own reading, based on a careful study of the repetitions in "Lena" leads me to agree most closely with Frederick Hoffman and his sympathetic reading of the story. I will show in the course of the study that Lena's married life is definitely not contented, and that there is more to her passive acceptance of her fate than mere gentleness or linguistic impotence.

Stein's style has evolved; "The Gentle Lena" is much different from "The Good Anna." The irony has a bitter quality; the tone is less jolly; the narrator is still innocent and straightforward, but no longer cheerful. There is little to like in this story. Few of the characters are sympathetic or even likable except the cook, who is the only one who really cares for Lena.

In the title "The Gentle Lena," Stein gives Lena the 'tag' "gentle." Stein sets up the same expectations with this word "gentle" in

the title as she did with "good" in "The Good Anna" and critics have characteristically complied by focusing on this 'tag' and taking the word at face value as Lena's most salient character trait. However, the experienced reader who has caught the irony in "good" approaches "The Gentle Lena" with the idea that this 'tag' might also be either ironic or possibly be used in a contradictory sense.

Contrary to "The Good Anna," Stein does not immediately create irony by showing the reader Lena in situations which contradict the 'tag.' Instead, she reinforces the impression of "gentleness" by her choice of words and scenes which enhance the image of a gentle sweet woman. Stein crystallizes the essence of Lena in the first paragraph. "Lena was patient, gentle, sweet and german." With the gradual accumulation of adjectives, Stein rounds out the character over the next few pages:

> She stood in the hallway... in her unexpectant and unsuffering german patience...(239)
>
> all liked the simple, gentle, german Lena very well (240).
>
> Lena was a brown and pleasant creature (240).
>
> Lena had the flat chest... of the patient and enduring working woman... and the eyes, simple and human, with the earth patience of the working, gentle, german woman (240-241).

Use of the word "the" in the sentence "the working, gentle, german woman" suggests that these traits characterize a certain type of woman. Stein's description of Lena is very similar to that of Mrs. Drehten who was "a mild, worn, unaggressive nature that never cared to influence or to lead... a large, worn, patient german woman, with a soft face,

lined, yellow brown in color" (69). Both women are in subservient positions, Mrs. Drehten to her husband and many sons, Lena to a pleasant unexacting mistress. Although Mrs. Drehten's life is painted as sheer drudgery "with a german husband to obey, and seven solid girls and boys to bear and rear" compared to Lena's relatively easy job of caring for several small children, the similarity of descriptions suggest that both belong to one of Stein's types of personalities -- that being an old-world german working woman is synonymous with being patient and enduring in the face of life, never questioning, never complaining.

As in "The Good Anna," this story begins during a time when Lena's life is happy. Her life is as simple and pleasant as she is. She has a pleasant employer, a surrogate mother in the cook who scolds her for her own good, and friends who take great pleasure in teasing and confusing her.

Stein emphasizes the happiness of her life by repetitions of the words "pleasant" and "peaceful." "It was pleasant, all this life for Lena." "It was all a peaceful life for Lena, almost as peaceful as a pleasant leisure." In the third repetition: "Yes it was all a peaceful life for Lena" the affirmative "Yes," is added to even further emphasize the goodness of Lena's life.

Many of the verbs describing Lena's life are in the passive voice or the modal: "Lena had been brought from Germany;" "she was sent out into the park;" "Lena had to soothe her... Lena had to pick it up and hold it." Other verbs are simply stative: "Lena was patient;" "Lena was a brown and pleasant creature;" Lena had the flat chest.. of the patient and enduring working woman." In contrast to Anna, who was always <u>doing</u> -- scolding, grumbling, cooking, joking, managing,

shouting -- we rarely see Lena doing more than standing in a hallway placidly calling the children awake or sitting on a park bench listening to her friends talk and allowing them to tease her. The verbs in this introduction accentuate this sense of passivity and the placid peacefulness of both Lena herself and her existence.

Stein singles out one incident from the four years of Lena's service. Lena has gotten some green paint on her finger, which she tastes. Her teasing friend Mary tells her seriously that it is poison. Lena becomes "a little troubled" and wonders whether it actually is poison, but rubbing her finger on her dress and wondering is the extent of the action she takes. All their teasing only makes a 'gentle stir' within her. Because of Stein's emphasis on this event, and the fact that she singles it out for the telling, she is shifting the reader's attention from Lena's placid gentleness to the fact that Lena is also slow, perhaps a little dim-witted.

But still, people like Lena, she does her work well and cares for the children conscientiously and kindly. The tag "gentle" is an appropriate one.

Stein chooses to tell us that Lena's pleasant life was all made possible by her aunt, Mrs. Haydon, who rescued her from a "harsh and dreary" existence in Germany, where the people were "not gentle and the men when they were glad were very boisterous and would lay hold of her and roughly tease her" (246).

The word 'german' is also included within the tag for Mrs. Haydon, but her description sharply contrasts with Lena's. Instead of being passive and gentle, she is firm and hard and forceful, a different type:

> This aunt... was a hard, ambitious, well meaning, german woman (242).
>
> [She] was a short, stout, hard built, german woman... all a compact and well hardened mass... (243).
>
> [She] was a good and generous woman (244).
>
> Mrs. Haydon was a real, good, german woman (259).

Stein comments that 'she always hit the ground very firmly and compactly as she walked" and this vivid phrase symbolizes the way she conducts life as a whole. Her children (with the exception of her son whom she has spoiled and "who was not honest") have been brought up firmly. Her manner reminds the reader of that of Anna, dictating to others "for their own good." When Mrs. Haydon returns to Germany for a visit she feels herself very grand and important and patronizes her relatives, managing, directing and advising. Since she is so "wealthy and important" she is allowed to take charge. She decides it would be a fine thing to take one of her brother's children to America and give her a new life. "Mrs. Haydon with all her hardness had wisdom" (245), and so, in her wisdom, chooses Lena.

Her choice is based upon several factors: "Lena's age just suited Mrs. Haydon's purpose... Lena was so still and docile, she would never want to do things her own way. And then too, Mrs. Haydon.. could feel the rarer strain there was in Lena" (245). The reader, in retrospect, will notice that Stein has used this odd turn of phrase several pages earlier in her description of Lena: "The rarer feeling that there was with Lena, showed in all the even quiet of her body movements, but in all it was the strongest in the patient, old world ignorance, and earth made pureness of her brown, flat, soft featured face" (241). In a

characteristic manner, Stein does not explain what she means by this phrase "rarer feeling," but leaves it for the reader to discover. At this point in the narrative we have no clues except perhaps to conjecture that it is Lena's extreme docility and passivity, which is in direct contrast to coarseness and ungentleness of the people of Germany, the dictatorial manner of Mrs. Haydon and the unpleasant arrogance of the two daughters Bertha and Mathilda. This idea is further reinforced by the action Lena's family takes. In a group decision, the family decides they will send Lena to American since she is "not an important daughter in the family" (245).

Once home in America, Mrs. Haydon finds Lena a position as servant and then sets about finding a husband for her. This is all in Lena's best interest. "Mrs. Haydon was a real, good, german woman and she did really mean to do well by her niece Lena " (259). It will be a good marriage.

The man she chooses is from a family who is very similar to hers. "The elder Kreders... were hard, good german people" (251). Herman, who is good, and like his father, thrifty, careful and "very saving," is also like Lena. Best of all, he is obedient. "Both Lena and Herman were saving and good workers and neither of them ever wanted their own way."

At this point Stein sets up the word "gentle" as a tag for Herman also, which she continues to employ throughout the story:

> He was a gentle soul (251).
>
> He was gentle and he never said much (254).
>
> He always had a gentle, tender way when he held (his children) (278).

But, in sharp contrast to the gentle placid pleasantness of her early life, Lena's marriage is a disaster, and she steadily declines from being a person who was "always clean and decent in her clothes and in her person" (268), to someone who "just dragged around and was careless with her clothes and all lifeless, and she acted always and lived on just as if she had no feeling" (276). She steadily fades into nonexistence and finally dies, although she has been dead in spirit long before. And after she is gone, life goes on as before. No one even misses her except the good german cook. She has lived a totally inconsequential life. She was there and then she was gone, hardly causing a ripple or stir in anyone else's life.

It is Lena's passiveness and unwillingness or inability to assert herself or make her own decisions that forms the central focus of the story. She always gives way, without question, to a stronger character's will. Again, there is no rising action or plot per se; Stein's narrative consists of a simple series of episodes that mark the monotonous life, decline and final demise of Lena. It is this passivity, this lack of control, this helplessness on which Stein focuses her attention and here again she uses repetition to pound this idea relentlessly into the reader's mind.

As in "The Good Anna," Stein employs 'hammer' words, words used extensively to foreground certain ideas and emphasize either actions or situations.

One of the most noticeable lexical repetitions is the word "scold." This word occurs thirty-five times throughout the text and Lena is on the receiving end of most of the scoldings. There are obviously different types and degrees of scolding. The cook scolds her

a great deal, but, as Stein asserts, "The good incessant woman really only scolded so for Lena's good" (239). Mrs. Haydon scolds her, often and hard, and not necessarily kindly, but Stein is quick to add "but then she was very good to Lena" (253), and, of course, in her mind at least, this is also for Lena's own good. It is Mrs. Kreder's scolding, however, that is so vicious, destructive and awful. "The only real trouble that came to Lena with their living all four together, was the way old Mrs. Kreder scolded. Lena had always been used to being scolding, but this scolding of old Mrs. Kreder was very different from the way she ever before had had to endure it" (269). It is Mrs. Kreder's unrelenting and nasty scolding that contributes to Lena's downfall.

By far the most prevalent 'hammer' is the word "good." In sheer quantity it outweighs all the other repetitions, occurring ninety-seven times through forty pages of text. In a noticeable repetition of "The Good Anna," "good" is used as a tag in reference to several characters, the cook, for example:

> The good cook sometimes made Lena come to see her. Lena would come with her baby ... and watch the good woman cooking, and listen to her sometimes a little, the way she used to, while the good german woman scolded her (277).

It is also used in reference to the Kreders: "The Kreders, everybody knew, had saved up all their money, and they were hard, good german people..." (251).

The use of "good" is literally hammered in with reference to Mrs. Haydon, not only as a tag, but as as adjective describing the good

things she does for Lena and also describing the manner in which she treats her niece:

> Mrs. Haydon was a good and generous woman, and she patronized her parents grandly (244).
>
> Then, too, Mathilda would get very mad when her mother had Lena at their parties, and when she talked about how good Lena was to certain german mothers in whose sons, perhaps, Mrs. Haydon might find Lena a good husband (248).
>
> Mrs. Haydon felt more and more every year that she had done right to bring Lena back with her, for it was all coming out just as she had expected. Lena was good and never wanted her own way, she was learning English and saving all her wages, and soon Mrs. Haydon would get her a good husband (250).

As in "The Good Anna" it becomes immediately apparent that "good," especially when describing Mrs. Haydon is used ironically. The "goodness" of Mrs. Haydon is primarily in her own estimation of herself. In fact, as Dekoven has pointed out, Mrs. Haydon is actually a monster, and it is her "goodness" and her belief that she has "done the right thing" for Lena that actually leads to Lena's destruction.[5] Note, in particular, her self-righteous little speech when she is berating Lena after Herman has jilted her:

> Did Lena think it gave Mrs. Haydon any pleasure to work so hard to make Lena happy and get her a good husband, and then Lena was so thankless and never did anything that anybody wanted...(Her husband) always said she was too good and nobody every thanked her for it, and there Lena

> was always standing stupid and not answering anything anybody wanted. Lena... who never did anything for her except to take away her money and here was her aunt who tried so hard and was so good to her and treated her just like one of her own children... (256).

Stein is stressing -- hammering, in fact -- the point that Lena owes everything to her kindness and charity. And all without any thanks. Her stress on Lena's thanklessness implies that she has extended herself above and beyond the call of duty on Lena's behalf, which only serves to emphasize the irony. Mrs. Haydon derives great self-righteous satisfaction in taking charge and appearing to be the "grande dame" from America.

Only the kind cook sees through the self-righteous exterior to the real Mrs. Haydon, and she tells Lena so when she says that "people who always thought they were so much never did really do things right for anybody" (259).

This repetition of "good" is even more sinister when used in reference to Herman because superficially Herman does appear to be good. Even Bridgman is apparently deceived by Herman's "goodness," when he remarks that Herman's marriage to Lena is "reasonably contented." "Good" is not in general used as part of Herman's 'tag.' It is more often used in reference to Lena as being a good wife for him and the marriage being good for him. But Herman's 'goodness' is given great weight in his sister's opinion of him and also what he should do:

> She liked it that he was so good...She thought it would do him lots of good to get married...He was good, her brother Herman, and it would surely do him good to get married (265).

When Herman runs away from home to this sister in New York, she uses the word repeatedly to coax him to go back and marry Lena. In her speech to him she tells him:

> "Your mama she is thinking only what is good for you to have... and she talks always about how happy she will be, when she sees her Herman married to a nice girl, and then when she fixed it all up so good for you... It do you good really Herman to get married... It do you good Herman to get married... You always been good to me Herman and I know you always be good to that Lena..."(264-266).

The word "good" carries several of its different meanings in this context. When describing Herman it implies honorable, decent, worthy, reliable, kind. Herman's sister believes that Herman has those qualities and will be kind and honorable to his wife Lena. The marriage will also be good <u>for</u> him, in the sense that it will be beneficial to him. His life will be the better for the marriage.

His sister is right. The marriage does turn out to be good for him. When his children are born he really comes alive and becomes the person he had the potential of becoming. He is happy and content.

Unfortunately, the marriage is definitely not good for Lena. "These were really bad days for poor Lena" (275). Browbeaten by her mother-in-law, she starts to sink. Stein's language here is understated to the extreme. Stein tells us very little about what actually happens except for clues slipped in when she mentions the scoldings, "the awful way" Mrs. Kreder treats Lena, and the cook's repeated remarks about how

Lena spends so much time crying. We read that Herman, of course, is "always was real good to her" (275). In actuality, however, he does very little to help her. He is worried and sees what his mother is doing to poor Lena, but it is more important to avoid struggle than to stand up for Lena.

> "Herman really did not know very well how he could do to help Lena to understand it. He could never answer his mother back to help Lena, that never would make things any better for her, and he never could feel in himself any way to comfort Lena, to make her strong not to hear his mother, in all the awful ways she always scolded. It just worried Herman to have it like that all the time around him" (270).

And so he does very little. Until the baby is born. Then he makes a nominal attempt to help Lena by moving to a house next door and taking over most of the housework and care of the babies, but it is clear this is not out of love for Lena. "Herman never really cared about his wife, Lena. The only things Herman ever really cared for were his babies" (275). And by the time he moves Lena, it is already too late. "This did not seem to make much change now for Lena... she just dragged around ...all lifeless" (276). Finally she dies. Gentle Herman, on the other hand, is thriving. As Lena progressively becomes more lifeless he grows happier, more competent and content with his children. Once Lena is dead his life is very regular and peaceful.

It is significant that Stein drops the 'tag' "gentle" for Lena on the third page of the story. In these first three pages "gentle" appears six times. It is used as an adjective in the 'tag' describing Lena, twice to describe the reaction she has to the teasing of her

friends once to describe her voice as she wakens the little ones each morning. "Gentle" is discontinued after this page and is only used once more on page 247, and does not occur in reference to Lena until page 277, immediately before Lena´s death: "Sometimes Lena would wake up a little and get back into her face her old, gentle, patient, and unsuffering sweetness..." Then "gentle" is used once more, as the good german cook remembers Lena as she was before her marriage: "how nice Lena had looked... and how her voice had been so gentle and sweet sounding..."(279). Of the sixteen occurrences of the word "gentle" in "The Gentle Lena," only nine refer to Lena. "Gentle" instead shifts to the description of Herman and, when it does, it is replaced for Lena by the use of "stupid." This adjective "stupid"is used a total of sixteen times throughout the story, eleven referring to Lena. It is particularly hammered in in Mrs. Haydon´s speech to Lena when she is arranging the marriage with Herman:

> ´Why you stand there so stupid...´ Mrs. Haydon was furious with this stupid Lena...´You stand there so stupid and don´t answer... Answer me, Lena, don´t you like Herman Kreder? He is a fine young fellow, almost too good for you, Lena, when you stand there so stupid and don´t make no answer.´ (252).

This phrase "standing there so stupid,"is repeated four times in as many pages. Lena´s bovine acceptance of having her life ordered for her is driven home to the reader by Lena´s answer to the charge: "I didn´t know you wanted me to say nothing. I do whatever you tell me it´s right for me to do" (253).

"Stupid" is dropped just as abruptly as "gentle" was and is replaced on page 269, by the adjective "lifeless" to describe Lena's state, occurring seven times in the last four pages. "Lifeless" is also used in conjunction with several others as 'hammer' words: "dull" and "careless" to repeatedly emphasize the downward spiral Lena is on:

> And so they began all four to live in the Kreder house together and Lena began soon with it to look careless and a little dirty and to be more lifeless with it. (269)
>
> She was scared and still and lifeless... she could only sit still and be scared, and dull, and lifeless...(276).
>
> She just dragged around and was careless with her clothes and all lifeless...(276).
>
> She was always careless, and dirty and a little dazed, and lifeless (277).
>
> But mostly Lena just lived along and was careless in her clothes, and dull and lifeless (278).

Lena has deteriorated from a pleasant, reasonably contented girl to a dirty, slovenly spiritless shadow who cries constantly. Finally, she is literally lifeless, dying in childbirth. "When the baby was come out at last, it was like its mother lifeless... When it was all over Lena had died too, and nobody knew just how it had happened to her" (279).

Gentle Herman lives on, happily.

It has become increasingly clear that one must not only note the repetitions as they refer to Lena, but also as they refer to Herman. A closer examination will show the ways Stein juxtaposes Herman with Lena for a vivid picture of both. I will first discuss several of the key

repetitions employed to describe Lena, and then return to show how they directly contrast with the descriptions employed for Herman.

It will be recalled that the 'key-passage' is "a relatively long repetition embodying... one of the fundamental ideas of [the work]" and that "the repetition is likely to be more exact than in some other types because of its length and importance."[6] In "The Gentle Lena" there are several sentences which we could possibly consider to be a key passage due to their importance to our understanding of Lena's character. The exact repetitions of these phrases alert us to their significance.

The first occurs four times (245, 246, 262, 268) in the story: "She was always sort of dreamy and not there."

Lena's dreaminess and 'absence', as it were, contribute to her death through her lack of control over her own life. The sense in which this sentence is used does not so much suggest an other-wordliness as a glazed-eyed simple ignorance about not only what is happening to her, but life in general.

This impression is driven in by two other near-exact repetitions that occur again and again throughout the story:

"She did not think..."

"She did not know..."

The phrase "she did not know" appeared first during the incident with the paint. Lena had sucked her finger a good deal, and was then told it was poison, which troubled her. Stein began to clue us to the extent of Lena's stupidity when she wrote, "And Lena never knew for certain whether it was really poison." The next repetition occurred during Mrs. Haydon's trip to Germany. Stein proceeded, through a triple

repetition to reiterate just how dim-witted Lena really was:

> Lena did not really know that she did not like [her life in Germany] She did not know that she was always dreamy and not there. She did not think whether it would be different for her away off there in Bridgepoint. Mrs. Haydon took her and got her different kinds of dresses and then took her with them to the steamer. Lena did not really know what it was that had happened to her" (246).

The second occurrence of this phrase occurred during the trip across the ocean to America. Lena was very seasick, and absolutely helpless.

> "Poor Lena had no power to be strong in such trouble. She did not know how to yield to her sickness nor endure. She lost all her little sense of being in her suffering. She was so scared, and then at her best, Lena, who was patient, sweet and quiet, had not self-control, nor any active courage" (247).

The word "trouble" was used to describe such a trivial situation that at this point, Lena was almost contemptible. The word "stupid" had not been introduced yet into the story, but by this time even the most sympathetic reader could not help but wonder at the dullness of a girl who did not even know how to take care of herself. When, at the bottom of the same page, the reader encountered Mr. Haydon's summation of her, "she was for him stupid, and a little simple, and very dull and sure some day to need help and to be in trouble" (247), it was not difficult to agree.

The repetitions continued:

> Lena never knew that she did not like [the Haydon girls] either. She did not know that she was only happy with the other quicker girls (248).
>
> [She] never really knew that she was slighted (249).
>
> Lena did not know how all the Haydons felt (249).
>
> She did not know really what [getting married] was (254).
>
> ...yet she did not really know what it was, this that was about to happen to her. (254)
>
> Lena did not know what is was that she had done, only she was not going to be married... (257).
>
> Lena never had any sense of how she should make people stand round for her (260).
>
> She never did know how to show herself off for what she was really (260).
>
> (she) did not know how to save things right (270).

The only time Lena does know anything is after her disgrace at being left at the altar. "She knew very well how Mary meant is all... Lena knew very well that her aunt was right" (261), and when her aunt calls her back on Sunday, it is "easy, even for Lena, to see that her aunt was not really angry with her" (261). But that is the extent of her 'knowing' or being aware of anything that is going on. We can see that Frederick Hoffman is correct in his interpretation of Lena. Lena does not understand anything that happens to her. She seems to live in a dim haze failing to make sense of what is going on around her. Her understanding of life is limited to James' 'knowledge of acquaintance' -- an elementary, vaguely intuited, limited grasp of the world around her. Perhaps this is the "rarer feeling" that Mrs. Haydon sensed in her

- an utter naivete, the "little sense of being" (247), the pure unspoiled nature, "the patient, old world ignorance, and earth made pureness" (241) which would make her putty in the hands of a woman who gained a feeling of power from manipulating and directing.

In the light of the incidents Stein has chosen to relate to us, Lena's gentleness and stupidity could almost make one sympathetic to Mrs. Haydon. Someone has to take her in hand. The impact of the word "stupid" is heightened by the pounding repetition that Lena does not know how to do anything. And on top of that, she does not think at all. Ever, it seems.

> She did not think whether it would be different for her... in Bridgepoint (246).
>
> She never thought of any way to spend (her wages) (249).
>
> Lena always saved her wages, for she never thought to spend them (250).
>
> She did not think much about Herman Kreder (252).
>
> She did not think much about what it meant for her to be married (262)
>
> She never had thought how to use (her own money) (268)
>
> Lena had been... always clean and decent in her clothes and in her person, but it was not because she ever thought about it... (268).
>
> She did not think about (the Kreders) being stingy dirty people (269).
>
> She never thought to take (the baby) out or to do anything she didn't have to (277).

But as these phrases are continued throughout her life, as she is used and manipulated and then abused and ignored, these repetitions begin to take on a singular brutality, particularly when juxtaposed against the other 'key passage' "she did not know": "and Lena began soon with it to look careless and a little dirty, and to be more lifeless with it, and nobody ever noticed much what Lena wanted, and she never really knew herself what she needed" (269). And never thought to ask.

In the face of these two key repetitions, the word "trouble" which was mitigated and given ironic overtones from the trivial circumstances in which it was used, now takes on a bitter and tragic quality. These three phrases: "she was always dreamy and not there," "she did not know" and "she did not think" are the key passages in Lena's life serving to capture the key facets of Lena's personality.

Now it is necessary to digress and examine the 'key passages' in Herman's life, which directly contrast with Lena's.

As I pointed out above, the word "gentle" is used as a descriptive 'tag' for both Lena and Herman, although its use shifted from the description of Lena to that of Herman. As the story continues it is clear that there are other similarities between them.

Calvin Brown writes that "according to any deterministic point of view, the same causes will inevitably produce the same effects. As a corollary it must follow that an author who gives consistently objective accounts of his situations and characters will report identical or similar happenings in identical or similar words.[7] He goes on to state that these parallels will bring the identity or similarity between characters forcibly to the reader's attention. These parallels have two different purposes: either to emphasize the similarity of the subjects or to point out the basic similarities with

significant differences. By virtue of their being set in repetitions, the differences or the similarities will stand out sharply.

The most striking of these parallel repetitions which describe both Lena and Herman's life patterns is, of course, the repeated phrase that both Lena and Herman do everything that the cook, Mrs. Haydon, Mr. and Mrs. Kreder, in short, everyone has ever told them to do.

Variant phrases of this idea occur seven times with respect to Lena. Mrs. Haydon chooses Lena to come to America precisely because "Lena was so still and docile, she would never want to do things her own way" (245). And Lena obediently comes to spend every Sunday with her aunt even when she would rather spend it with her friends because it "never came to (her)... to do something different from what was expected of her, just because she would like it that way better." (247) Mrs. Haydon feels she has done right to bring Lena to America because "Lena was good and never wanted her own way" (250). When Mrs. Haydon berates her for standing there so stupid and not answering, Lena replies, "I didn't hear you say you wanted I should say anything to you. I didn't know you wanted me to say nothing. I do whatever you tell me it's right for me to do" (253).

She does not question this marriage at all because she "always did whatever her aunt said and expected" (264).

In his speech cajoling Herman to go back and marry Lena, Herman's father points this out as one of the most important and marriageable characteristics any wife could have. In fact, this is the extent of what he sees in Lena - her docility and therefore her usefulness as a wife. He and Mrs. Kreder want to Herman to marry a nice girl, one like "Lena Mainz who is always just so quiet and always saves up all her

wages, and she never wanting her own way at all like some girls are always all the time to have it"(264).

The phrase "always did whatever (they) wanted" is repeated in near-exact phrases eleven times with respect to Herman. This is, in fact, how he is introduced into the story, the phrase tacked onto the end of the list of his merits as if saving the best for last:

> The man Mrs. Haydon wanted for Lena was a young german american tailor, who worked with his father. He was good and all the family were very saving, and Mrs. Haydon was sure that this would be just right for Lena, and then too, this young tailor always did whatever his father and his mother wanted (250).

A variation of this phrase, "he was obedient" follows twice in the next paragraph. The repetitions continue to the end of the story, even through his marriage. Stein here displays her delightful sense of humor in Mary's speech to Lena after Herman has run off. Mary is very 'hot,' and gives her own version of how Herman is. "And poor Lena, she was so stupid to be sorry for losing that gawky fool who didn't ever know what he wanted and just said "ja" to his mamma and papa, like a baby" (260). Again, it is the cook who sees through to the real Herman when she says, "he is just the way always his mother wants him, he ain't got no spirit in him, and so I don't really see no help for that poor Lena." (274). The real irony here, however, is that he does not do whatever they want. In his first act of disobedience, he gets "notions" and runs off to New York to avoid this marriage. It is only after much coaxing by both father and sister (with the promise that now that he will have "somebody [he] can boss around" (265), does he allow himself to be

brought back. For a while he is as he always was. "Herman was now again just like he always had been, sullen and very good, and very quiet, and always ready to do whatever his mother and his father wanted." (267)

In direct contrast to the three phrases which characterize Lena: "she was always dreamy and not there," "she did not know" and "she did not think," three similar phrases are used to capture the essence of Herman's character:

"Herman knew well..."

"Herman did not know..."

"Herman had never cared..."

On the one hand, Herman is portrayed as being knowing and worldly-wise about certain matters. Herman knows very well what it means to get married (254), that he has to bow to his parents and marry Lena (262), and that his predictions about how this marriage was going to turn out have come true (270). He also knows what his mother is like and how to deal with her by working hard all day and simply not listening to her scolding (270).

But on the other hand, there are important things that Herman does not know how to do. What Herman does not know is how to fight his mother to help Lena. "Herman did not know much about how a man could make a struggle with a mother, to do much to keep her quiet, and indeed Herman never knew much how to make a struggle against anyone who really wanted to have anything badly" (270). He does try to "keep his mother off her, with the awful way she always scolded" (275), but in the face of the repetition "Herman had never cared much about his wife, Lena" (275, 278), eleven repetitions of "Herman did everything his mother

and father wanted," and the statement that "Herman all his life never wanted anything so badly, that he would really make a struggle against any one to get it," (271) one must wonder how hard he actually tried.

At first, the reader was given the impression that Herman is as passive and malleable as Lena is. But here is where the similarity ends. With the coming of his first child, Herman finds the strength to break from his parents and take control of his own life. When Lena becomes pregnant Herman really comes to life. Now he "even sometimes tried to stop his mother from scolding Lena." In one brief passage Stein describes the total reversal that the prospect of becoming a father makes on Herman:

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

> his baby from all trouble, to really make a strong struggle with his mother and his father too, if he would not help him to control his mother (275).

Embedded in the passage are the key issues which have directed his life until now. Herman had never cared much for anyone or anything, he had always done everything he was told, and up until now he did not know how to struggle against his parents. But now there is a <u>new</u> feeling in him. The negatives "always" and "never" which characterized him before have disappeared. The words "wanted," "struggle," and "strong" accentuate the remarkable change that takes place in the formerly passive, sullen, obedient "gawky fool." The new life of his own child literally brings him to life, while, in contrast, Lena becomes steadily more and more lifeless.

Herman takes control of his life. Lena never does. Whereas Herman's disobedience is the beginning of life for him, marriage is the beginning of the end for Lena. She dies because of her passiveness and helplessness in the face of more dominant personalities. The repetitions of the "unexpectant and unsuffering" nature of Lena take on a gross irony in the face of the suffering she actually endures.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, Jayne Walker has interpreted Lena's helplessness in linguistic terms. She writes:

> In "The Gentle Lena," the central character suffers as a result of her linguistic inadequacy. A recent immigrant from Germany with a limited command of English, she lacks the resources to defend herself adequately against the verbal barrages to which she is constantly subjected. Consequently, she becomes the passive victim of the desires

> and the discourse of others. Her aunt arranges a marriage for her, which neither she nor the prospective husband desires, but Lena can never voice her feelings: "Mrs. Haydon spoke to Lena about it very often. Lena never answered anything at all."[8]

Walker interprets Lena's failure to speak for herself and her own rights as "linguistic helplessness, Lena's total subjugation to the discourse that dominates her." She writes that both Lena and Herman are unable to articulate their reasons for opposing the social norms which their families are foisting upon them, but that Lena's only defense is silence.

But Lena's helplessness goes deeper than simply victimization by language and her own verbal impotence. Even though Walker focuses on the repetition of such words as "stupid" and Lena's reply, "I didn't know you wanted me to say nothing," she is missing the point of those repetitions. It is true that Stein concentrates on the speech of others, and that Lena speaks only twice in the entire story, the first in her acquiescence to Mrs. Haydon, the second on the street car, coming home from her postponed wedding. However, our previous discussion of the key words and phrases demonstrate that this helplessness is not just linguistic. There is more to it than that. It is total helplessness of being, a belief that she has no control over her life and must bow to the wishes of others that underlie Lena's inability and unwillingness to defend herself or stand up for her own rights.

As in "The Good Anna," Stein employs the word "power." In "The Gentle Lena" she uses it only twice, but Lena's reactions to situations

are exactly the same both times, and the phrases used to describe these are repeated almost verbatim. Lena is very sick on the voyage over from Germany. She is so sick she is afraid she will die, and she cannot do anything , neither eat, nor moan nor move nor even help herself.

> "She was just blank and scared, and sure that every minute she would die... Poor Lena had no power to be strong in such trouble... She lost all her little sense of being in her suffering. She was so scared, and then at her best, Lena, who was patient, sweet and quiet, had not self-control, nor any active courage (246-247).

The second repetition of Lena's total helplessness and lack of control occurs during her first pregnancy. Stein even brings our attention to this repetition by stating, "She was scared the way she had been when she was so sick on the water" and we must take this referral to mean that Stein considers the similarity important. She goes on with the near-exact repetition:

> She was scared and still and lifeless, and sure that every minute she would die. Lena had no power to be strong in this kind of trouble, she could only sit still and be scared, and dull, and lifeless and sure that every minute she would die (276).

Lena had no power. This is key to Lena, the central core from which all her actions and reactions are structured and dictated. She is acted upon. Life happens to her. She has no control, does not even believe that she possibly can have control. Determinism. Her fate is

sealed from the beginning.

In light of the other repetitions the "gentle" we encounter in the title takes on a singularly grim brutality. Lena is like a cow, docile, willing to be led, never wanting her own way, to be wed, bred and then slaughtered when she is of no use to anyone anymore.

Hoffman is right. This is sheer pathos, a story unrelieved with more than an occasional show of goodness in characters or happiness in the life of the central character. The one time Lena comes out of her haze is a brief period before her wedding. "Lena was nervous these days... She always did whatever her aunt said and expected, but she was always nervous when she saw the Kreders with their Herman. She was excited and she liked her new hats" (254). After the excitement of Herman's disappearance "Lena now fell back into the way she always had of being always dreamy and not there, the way she always had been, except for the few days she was so excited..." (262). The one thing Stein singles out to emphasize that Lena really likes is her new hats. That a girl can find such pleasure in something so insignificant only heightens the terrible tragedy of the way she is treated, and again adds impact to the monstrosity of the characters of Mrs. Haydon, Mrs. Kreder and her dear gentle husband Herman.

Gentle Herman lives on, peaceful and content, "with every day just like the next one, always alone now with his three good, gentle children" (279).

CHAPTER FOUR

"MELANCTHA" - Part One

Of the three histories in Three Lives, "Melanctha" has been the most extensively studied and perhaps the most misunderstood. "Melanctha" is usually considered to be Stein's masterpiece. And yet on the one hand, Weinstein can write, "I consider "Melanctha" of the greatest human and artistic importance because of the unrelenting depiction of the human personality falling in and out of love,"[1] while on the other hand Russell can comment on its "puerile repetitiveness" and dismiss it as "an account of a headstrong mulatto girl who rejects one lover, is rejected by another and without apparent motivation dies at the end of the story."[2] There is very little agreement as to what happens, how it happens and why.

The story itself is simple, a tale of sorrow, a tragic rendering of a woman caught in ever recurring cycles of activities, emotional states, and relationships, from which she cannot escape. Woven through the story are cycles of repetitions, both lexical and thematic. An examination of these repetitions will provide new insights into the character of both Melanctha and her story.

But while the story is simple enough, the manner in which it is told is not. Stein has changed her tactics again. Progress is slow and painful and at times almost imperceptible. It proceeds in undulating 'waves.' The reader gets the impression that he has covered the same

3

ground twice, if not more often. Jeff and Melanctha seem to make progress toward falling in love and yet in their conversations they cover the same issues over and over again. However, somehow movement does take place. Their relationship builds and develops and then it declines and dissolves totally. It is difficult to determine when and where progress has been made, but the reader in retrospect will find that the love affair between Jeff and Melanctha has evolved. DeKoven in commenting on this strange circular style writes:

> Like a fixated, blocked mind struggling to free itself by going over and over the terms of its fixation until it has mastered them, Stein's narrator ruminates over Jeff's feelings and the dynamics of his relationship with Melanctha, pushing the story slowly forward, gradually achieving a full statement of her vision... Each time the narrator rethinks the situation, she both re-covers the same ground and adds a little new territory, so that the picture slowly becomes both larger and clearer.[4]

As I will demonstrate, the idea that Stein is re-covering old ground is actually an illusion, created by the syntactic distortion of the sentences reader to a virtual crawl, and the near-exact repetition of scenes, and conversations which overlay the repetitions of words and phrases. Stein does not repeat any scene twice. Each one is new and different, revealing the perceptions of Jeff and Melanctha within the context of the evolution of their relationship. Stein is revealing in more depth and complexity the same theme she explored in "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena" - characters trapped by their personalities and situations to endless repetition of their life patterns.

Because of the length and the overwhelming complexity of repetition, examining the repetitions as they appear within the text as a whole becomes an impossibly complex task. Therefore, the strategies for analyzing them must be altered. In an attempt to impose order on this complexity it is appropriate to divide and conquer, to examine "Melanctha" as if it were comprised of several sections and layers. These divisions are necessarily arbitrary, but the reader will see that the story divides itself naturally into sections. Stein deliberately marks each section with the repetition of certain key words and phrases. In this chapter, I will examine these lexical repetitions and several of the repetitious phrases as they appear chronologically through the text. I will also examine the patterns of behavior as they are repeated from the beginning of the story until Melanctha's final break with Jeff. In Chapter Five, I will proceed through the larger units of repetition - such as key paragraphs, phrases and incidents. Then I will demonstrate the larger cycles of repetition which overlay the entire story. Through this method of analysis I will attempt to show how the repetitions work together to achieve an altogether different interpretation of "Melanctha" than those which have resulted from approaches not taking these repetitions into account.

Stein helps her reader by employing the device of summing up sections -- by stepping out of the narrative mode and either repeating characteristics of a person or introducing a new person. In "Melanctha" this is often a welcome change, offering a "breather," as it were from the complexity of the cycles. This device also serves to orient the reader sharply with respect to new characters and situations.

PART ONE

Introduction

"Melanctha," like "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena," begins in media res, but, unlike the previous stories, it does not begin during a period of happiness in Melanctha's life. It begins, instead, although we do not know this until the very end of the book, during Melanctha's period of decline, when she has already broken off with Jeff and quite soon before her death.

Stein spends the first eight pages introducing her characters, giving us a glimpse of Melanctha's past, and a detailed description of her character by recounting three separate periods in her early life, before bringing the reader to the present. Stein builds her case, and her character carefully.

"Melanctha" is a study in contrasts. As in "The Gentle Lena," one of Stein's primary devices for delineating a character in "Melanctha" is by placing it in juxtaposition with another. She does this by comparing Melanctha to her friend Rose, her mother and her father. This method gives us a rounded, full image of the type of person she is. In this story Stein does not use the device of the 'tag' for Melanctha as she did with "good" for Anna and "gentle" for Lena. Instead, she relies strictly on the cumulative effect of polyadjectival strings. Stein begins the accumulation of adjectives to describe Melanctha by first making a comparison between Melanctha and Rose. Rose is a cowardly, selfish, careless and negligent woman who fusses, howls and makes "herself to be an abomination and like a simple beast"(88). Melanctha, in contrast, is "patient, submissive, soothing and untiring" (89). Rose is sullen, stupid, childlike, coarse, real black, good looking,

shiftless, immoral and promiscuous. Melanctha, on the other hand, is subtle, half white, pale yellow, intelligent [and] attractive. This first set of descriptive adjectives gives us a very positive picture of Melanctha. Each adjective is set in direct opposition to Rose. We gather that she is a sensitive, caring, giving person who is willing to suppress her own wants for the needs of another.

Stein then tells us that Melanctha is also subject to fits of despair during which she considers killing herself, whereas Rose finds this very stupid. She'd kill someone else before she killed herself.

Stein goes on to add the adjectives "complex", "desiring," combining the two for a third phrase that subtly alters the meaning of the words as separate meanings: "complex with desire," suggesting that her complexity is further complicated by the conflicting desires she finds in her.

Stein clarifies this idea of Melanctha's complexity by backtracking in time to when the two women meet. Unlike Rose, Melanctha has not made her life simple. Her life, and the adjectives and verbs Stein chooses to describe it, imply erratic, spontaneous movement - leaving and being left by others, loving too hard, and too often. "She was always full with mystery and subtle movements and denials and vague distrust and complicated disillusions. Then Melanctha would be sudden and impulsive and unbounded in some faith, and then she would suffer and be strong in her repression" (89).

Stein then tantalizes the reader with the question: "Why did the subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl Melanctha Herbert love and do for and demean herself in service to this coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish Rose, and why was this unmoral,

promiscuous, shiftless Rose married, and that's not so common either, to a good man of the negroes, while Melanctha with her white blood and attraction and her desire for a right position had not yet been really married" (86). But she does not answer the question. She goes on to another subject, leaving the reader to guess.

Stein turns even further back in time to Melanctha's childhood. Here again, our understanding of Melanctha's character is furthered by contrast with her parents. She is an odd combination of the traits of both her mother, who is "pleasant, sweet-appearing, pale yellow, mysterious, and uncertain and wandering in her ways," (90) and her "powerful, loose built, hardhanded, black, angry" father. Melanctha, with her "break neck courage" is much closer in feeling to her father, although she does not love either of them.

Several words appear at the end of Part One: "trouble" and "suffering." "It was never Melanctha's way, even in the midst of her worst trouble to complain to any one of what happened to her, but nevertheless somehow every one who knew Melanctha always knew how much she suffered" (92). When one encounters the word "trouble" six times on page 92 and 93, and suffer three times, one is led to ask, what kind of trouble has she gotten into and how has she suffered? Why is she so vulnerable to fits of despair?

These two words, as I will demonstrate, are key words to the entire story, and although we are offered clues in these beginning pages, we cannot attempt a complete definition of either "trouble" or "suffering" until Stein has explored through Melanctha's experiences many of the subtle nuances and different meanings of the words.

Stein's first clues do not altogether satisfy the need to define these words, but they do offer insight into the trouble and suffering

Melanctha has experienced. "All her youth was bitter to remember...[Her parents] had found it very troublesome to have her" (90). From descriptions of Melanctha's heavy handed, fierce father, and statements such as Melanctha "was a most disturbing child to manage... [with] a tongue that could be very nasty" (91), one can deduce that the relationship between the two was extremely volatile and often unpleasant. The bloody fight with John the coachman graphically demonstrates her father's fierce violent temper, and Melanctha, who wields her nasty tongue with great dexterity, obviously takes great satisfaction in provoking him. By the time she is twelve he has given up trying to cope with her, and rages at her mother, demanding "Where's that Melanctha girl of yours... Why don't you see to that girl better you, you're her mother!" (94), as if he has renounced having such a difficult child for a daughter.

Thus, before the story itself has actually begun, Stein has given us a vivid picture of Melanctha. At this point, it is much different than the person we were introduced to in the opening paragraphs. Now it is not an altogether sympathetic picture. Melanctha is a person with a passionate nature, generous and patient, but filled with conflicting emotions and yearnings, who has an unpleasant relationship with both father and mother, and is capable of inflicting much pain with her tongue.

PART TWO

Learning Understanding

On page 93, Stein begins the body of the story, by relating the altercation between Melanctha's father and John, the coachman. This

incident marks the beginning of Melanctha's journey into adulthood because it awakens her interest and knowledge of her growing sexuality.

On page 90, the word "power" appeared twice: "the real power in Melanctha's nature came through her... father;" and "she loved very well the power in herself that came through him." What kind of power this is is only suggested until page 93, when John the coachman begins to feel strong the "power in her of a woman." This is the power of sexual attraction, which at twelve, Melanctha is just beginning to feel strongly, and which has been inherited from her father. She knew very early that she has it within her. Now, awakened by this fight which was instigated by both men's awareness of her budding sexuality, Melanctha becomes consumed by interest in her "power.""Melanctha began to know her power, the power she had so often felt stirring within her and which she now knew she could use to make her stronger" (95). It begins to occupy the whole of her consciousness. She is driven by the need to know the ways of men and understand whatever power she has over them. She begins to search the streets to learn and to know. She begins to wander "after wisdom." Melanctha spends most of her time wandering, searching for this wisdom, but she does not know what it is, or really where she will find it.

The hammer words in this period of Melanctha's life appear: "power," "learn," "wander" and "wisdom," used singly or in conjunction.

> In these next years Melanctha learned many ways that lead to wisdom. She learned the ways and dimly in the distance she saw wisdom (96).

> She wandered, always seeking, but never more than very dimly

seeing wisdom (97).

Melanctha tried to learn the ways that lead to wisdom (102).

I have already discussed the various meanings of "wander;" similarly,"learning" has also changed its meaning, but very subtly. As a child, "Melanctha went to school and was very quick in all the learning, and she knew very well how to use this knowledge to annoy her parents who knew nothing" (91). Melanctha had one type of education - "book learning" - but now that learning is not the type of learning she needs to know the natures of men and "the ways the lead to wisdom." This is another type altogether, a more elemental instinctive learning. "Wisdom" in this context very clearly means sexual knowledge and an understanding of how to use the power that her sexuality would give her.

If we return to William James's theory of two kinds of knowledge we can see that at this point in her life, Melanctha has some 'knowledge-about' the world which she has acquired in school. But her vague understanding of her "power" and of the "wisdom" she is seeking is an unarticulated undefined 'knowledge of acquaintance.' She sets out to learn.

The verbs in this section are active verbs. This is a period of movement in Melanctha's life: seeking, searching, attempting to understand. But it is also a period of stasis, because she does not move forward, she does not learn. Stein tells us that she does not "learn to know" -- and we can assume also that "know" here means "know" in the Biblical sense -- because "with all her break neck courage Melanctha here was a coward, and so she could not learn to really understand" (97).

But Stein also notes that Melanctha does not actually step into this 'world of wisdom' because "for her it all had no real value" (97). She knows that this is not the way to get what it is she really wants, and so she backs away and "escapes" from an actual sexual encounter each time. Stein does not define exactly what it is that Melanctha wants, leaving that as undefined in our minds as it is in Melanctha's.

Stein sums up and marks the end of this period:

> And so this was the way Melanctha lived the four years of her beginning as a woman. And many things happened to Melanctha, but she knew very well that none of them had led her on the right way, that certain way that was to lead her to world wisdom (103).

Knowing

Melanctha moves into another period of her life. She meets Jane Harden. The key words in this section are the same as in the first: "power," "learn," "wander," "wisdom," but in this period she is not searching, she is finding. She is sixteen when she meets Jane, who at twenty-three, has had much experience and who is "not afraid to understand." They begin to wander together, only now, for Melanctha it is different, because she is "with a woman who had wisdom, and dimly she began to see what it was that she should understand" (104). Jane has the wisdom of "knowledge about" the world. She is worldly wise, street-smart.

At first Jane and Melanctha wander together, and still they play the same game: the "knowing of [men] and the always just escaping" (104). Then Jane and Melanctha become attracted to each other and stop

wandering and engage in a lesbian love affair which lasts for two years. The homosexuality of this relationship is only alluded to, but, knowing Stein's penchant for "elastic" words, we can read between the lines. "She would be with other people and with men and with Melanctha, and she would make Melanctha understand what everybody wanted, and what one did with power when one had it...In every way she got it from Jane Harden. There was nothing good or bad in doing, feeling, thinking or in talking, that Jane spared her" (106).

Melanctha learns a great deal from Jane. She learns knowledge of the world, men, human nature. She also learns to love. This word "love" gradually, through cumulative action achieves status of a 'hammer word' for this period of Melanctha's life. Until now, this verb was used primarily in the negative: "[she] had not loved herself in childhood... [she] had not loved her father and mother." (90). In fact, she had hated them. She had loved instead, horses and doing "wild things" and the power that had come to her through her father. Now she learns to love deeply. As in the first section, the word "love" appears in conjunction with "suffering" as though the two are directly linked and one cannot occur without the other. As Hilfer writes, "there can be no learning unaccompanied by pain,"[5] but this too is in direct contrast to the suffering she endured under her mother and father. Instead of suffering emotional pain, and instead of fighting against it, here she gives in to the suffering of real love and endures it. This period in her life is very tumultuous, but she finally begins not only to understand what other people want, but how to use her power to get what she wants. She has gained the wisdom she sought. She has progressed from: "slowly she began to see clear before her one certain way that would be sure to lead to wisdom" to "she had come to be very certain,

what it is that gives the world its wisdom" (105) to finally, "[Jane] had taught Melanctha what it is that gives many people in the world their wisdom" (106).

The transition from this period begins on page 106. "Then slowly, between them, it began to be all different." Because of Jane's decline into alcoholism, the strength that she once had is now Melanctha's and they begin to drift apart. Gradually.

This, I believe, is the point where Stein actually begins her use of the 'prolonged present,' with the sentence, "Melanctha began to really understand" on page 106. She is not understanding yet, but moving slowly in that direction. There has been slow movement, a plodding sense of progress hitherto, but page 107 is the first the use of the word "now" to convey the sense of something happening <u>now</u> not only as it unfolds in time for the character, but also for the reader. These events happen gradually, but they are introduced <u>now</u>, as Melanctha and Jane are discovering them. The world is always in the present. The continued use of the word "now" gives the reader a sense of immediacy, particularly when it is repeated hammer-like through the passages of transition.

> Slowly now between them it was Melanctha Herbert, who was stronger. Slowly now between them... slowly now they began to drift apart. .. Melanctha now sometimes quarreled with Jane... Melanctha began now to feel that she had always had world wisdom... now [Jane] was weakened... Now it was Melanctha who was stronger... Melanctha from now on saw very little of Jane (107).

Stein has already begun using the progressive tense which later characterizes what she termed the "continuous present," in her portraits, The Making of Americans, but she does not use it consistently yet. However, this tense is used deliberately in many instances to demonstrate the ongoing nature of the action or state, not yet finished, or still in the process of evolving. For instance, on page 95, Stein writes of Melanctha's adolescence as "Melanctha now really was beginning as a woman," in the present participle in order to demonstrate that this is a process which is not yet completed. The use of this tense implies movement and evolution which use of the simple past, "Melanctha had begun to grow up" or the stative verb "Melanctha was now a young woman" does not. Similarly, "the strength in her of not really knowing" carries with it the overtones of the incompleteness of her knowing which will one day be fulfilled, but has not yet. In one of their first conversations Melanctha tells Jeff, "I certainly did wonder how you could be so live, and knowing everything, and everybody, and talking so big always about everything, and everybody always liking you so much and you always looking as if you was thinking, and yet really was never knowing about anybody and certainly not being really very understanding." The progressive tense can be used to imply that a state of affairs will continue indefinitely, and juxtaposed against the "everybody liking" Jeff, Melanctha is implying that this "never knowing" and "not understanding" will continue too. The sentence "Melanctha was liking Jefferson Campbell better every day, and Jefferson was beginning to know that Melanctha certainly had a good mind, and he was beginning to feel a little her real sweetness" (126) also demonstrates the ongoing evolution, the continuing progress toward a relationship more clearly than "Melanctha began to like Jeff better

and Jeff realized that she had a good mind," would. Used with the adverb "always" it also shows the decline of the relationship, "Now things were always getting worse between them" (188). The progressive tense can also suggest repetition in certain cases, that something has been happening again and again, "You know Melanctha, sometimes I think a whole lot about what you like to say so much about being game and never doing any hollering" (179).[6] The progressive tense in "Melanctha" manages to capture these implications throughout the story, furthering this sense of movement and constant change.

Jane and Melanctha drift apart. The word "power" is abandoned after its use on page 106, and the word "wander," which has not been used since Jane and Melanctha began to be involved only with each other, reappears as Melanctha begins to drift away from Jane.

Searching for Some Thing

The next period of Melanctha's life is alternately movement versus stasis. Again, movement is marked by the "now", and the stasis by its absence.

First there is movement. Melanctha goes on alone. There is a change in her perspective on life. She finds that she has learned wisdom, but that it is not enough. She is now searching for something else, something more. "It was now something realler that Melanctha wanted, something that would move her very deeply, something that would fill her fully with the wisdom that was planted now within her, and that she wanted badly, should really wholly fill her" (108). Stein uses the indefinite pronoun "something" to demonstrate how ill-defined is this "thing" that Melanctha is searching for. She is not sure what it

is. However, casual relationships are not enough. She has experienced one total involvement with another person and does not find satisfaction with anything less:

> She met them, she was much with them, she left them, she would think perhaps this next time it would be more exciting and always she found that for her it all had no real meaning. She could now do everything she wanted, she knew now everything that everybody wanted, and yet it all had no excitement for her. With these men she knew she could learn nothing (109).

At this point, Stein inserts a "summing up" passage. She introduces Jeff Campbell, encapsulates who he is, gives a brief summary of his opinion of Melanctha, and then returns to the topic of Melanctha and her search for a relationship.

We have arrived at a period of stasis. Stein's description does not use the word "now", because there is no progression, in time or in relationships. Stein is dwelling on Jeff and circling back to review what has already been brought out about Jane and Melanctha and Melanctha's past life. Stein tells us that Melanctha's mother is dying and that Melanctha is a kind and competent nurse, then returns to the issue of Jeff, who he is and what he wants out of life. "Power," "wisdom," "learning," and "wandering" have virtually disappeared except for references showing Jeff's awareness of what Melanctha and Jane are like. "He knew a little too of Jane Harden, and he was sure that this Melanctha Herbert, who was her friend and who wandered, would never come to any good" (110). He does not like Melanctha. He has already formed an opinion of her from his talks with Jane. The strength with

which he holds onto his opinion is evident in the sentence "he did not think that she would ever come to any good" which is repeated with variations four times.

Movement begins again on page 114, with the reappearance of "now." Gradually Jeff's opinion of Melanctha evolves as he sees her more often while caring for her mother and gets to know her better. Then, during the night they spend watching together, waiting for 'Mis' Herbert to die, as they sit on the steps talking quietly, he finds that he does enjoy Melanctha's company and conversation and his opinion of her begins to change. He thinks that perhaps she does have a good mind after all. On page 125, Stein recapitulates the slow evolution of his thinking: "at first he had not cared to know Melanctha and when he did begin to know her he had not liked her very well, and he had not thought that she would ever come to any good" (125).

PART THREE

Sometimes a Beginning Feeling

Stein has finally reached the central conflict of the story: the relationship between Jeff and Melanctha. Until page 199, when Stein returns again to Rose, her attention is focussed on the evolution, decline and final dissolution of their relationship. Part Three, which occupies nearly two-thirds of the story, consists of a series of rhythmic cycles in the affair.

Several pairs of words, set in opposition to each other, predominate in this relationship. The word "good" is juxtaposed against its antonym "bad;" "coward" against "brave" and "courageous;" "think" against the word "feel." The positive words "certain," honest,"

"know," and "understand" are juxtaposed against their negative counterparts, "uncertain," "not honest," "not knowing," and "not understanding." These pairs of words, as I will demonstrate, are the key to understanding this relationship and why it finally ends. The words which are important to each character are predominant in how they view and conduct their lives, and consequently, how their thought processes move. As the relationship builds, Stein uses these words to establish the characters and their personalities in opposition to each other. Each of these words is used during the initial conversations between Jeff and Melanctha, but as before, only gradually do they achieve any significance.

The first of these pairs of words, "good" occurred early in the text, used with many of its different meanings, "Rose was a good looking negress (86), John in his good nature (92), "there had been a good deal of drinking" (93). But "good" now takes on particular significance with reference to Melanctha, to Jeff and to their opinion of each other.

We have noted that Stein has given us two sides to Melanctha. On the one hand, in a male-dominated world, as seen through the mirror of male values, Melanctha is certainly not good. She is tempestuous, outspoken, impulsive and headstrong. She is also a fallen woman, a woman who has spent her time down on the docks, in the railroad yards and on construction sites consorting with all types and classes and colors of men. She has tried everything. She has sacrificed proper conduct on the altar of experience. Good or bad, she has tried it. And worse, she has engaged in a lesbian love affair. Unforgivable sins according to society and the mores of any fine upstanding man who is

looking for a mother for his children. One can see a double irony here, in that Stein is being ironic in terms of the general mores of society, but she is also being ironic about these mores as a whole, precisely because she herself was a lesbian and therefore outside the pale of what society considers good and decent.

However, Stein has also shown us that Melanctha is a good person in many ways. She is kind and giving and patient to others, especially to her mother:

> She was... always good and pleasant and always ready to do things for people (106)
>
> It was Melanctha who was very good now to her mother. It was always Melanctha's way to be good to any one in trouble. Melanctha took very good care of her mother (110).

Stein also uses "good" to describe Jeff. She tells us that Jeff is "a serious, earnest, good young joyous doctor... [his mother] loved hard her good, earnest, cheery, hard working doctor boy... Jefferson was very good" (111). He believes very strongly in proper conduct and the correct way to live, which is, of course, directly opposite to the life Melanctha has lived. His philosophy of life is particularly evident in his choice of career - to be a physician who spends his days helping his people, living a life of service, dedicated to improving the quality of life of others.

After the bitterly ironic use of "good" in the previous two stories, the reader has a right to be suspicious of its use in "Melanctha." Stein is again insisting on the "goodness" of Dr. Jefferson Campbell. We are led through past experience to expect irony.

In Jeff and Melanctha's discussions, it is clear that Jeff is

extremely opinionated about what is good and what is bad in life. He speaks often and at great length on this subject of being good and regular in life, and not having excitements all the time. Jeff thinks that "wanting excitement" all the time is bad. Decent colored people don't, and he tells her emphatically that he certainly doesn't like to get excited. He firmly believes he is living life the way it should be lived.

Melanctha and Jeff's opinion of each other differs sharply from the way they view themselves.

At first Melanctha's opinion of Jeff is very low. She doesn't think much of his ideas or his brand of goodness. Instead she feels scorn for his overblown ideas. Very adroitly, she throws his words back in his face, mocking him and his ideas and ridiculing his ideas of the right way to live:

> "You ain't a bit like good people Dr. Campbell, like the good people you are always saying are just like you. I know good people Dr. Campbell, and you ain't a bit like men who are good and got religion... I know you mean honest, Dr. Campbell, and I am always trying to believe you, but I can't say as I see just what you mean when you say you want to be good an real pious because I am very certain Dr. Campbell that you ain't that kind of man at all (120).

However, as Jeff and Melanctha begin to see each other and know each other more, her attitude begins to change. She begins to believe in this goodness and kindness. In this section, the word "power" abruptly shifts to Jeff - his "power" begins to attract her, and she

is drawn to him. Jeff's power is not sexual, it is instead the power of his uprightness and goodness. Immediately before "power" is transferred to Jeff, Stein writes, "And then Jefferson Campbell was so very gentle. Jefferson never did some things like other men, things that now were beginning to be ugly, for Melanctha" (125). She believes that Jeff is unlike the men she has been with previously. He is a good man and will not abuse her. Gradually Melanctha comes to believe that "Jefferson Campbell was all the things that [she] had ever wanted" (125). She tells him, "You are certainly a very good man.... I certainly do know, Dr. Campbell, you are a good man, and if you say you will be friends with me, you certainly never will go back on me, the way so many kinds of them do to every girl they ever get to like them" (127).

Jeff's opinion, however, does not change as radically. His opinion of Melanctha focuses around three key issues:

> He never believed that she was any good (110).
> He did not think that she would ever come to any good (112).
> He never found that he believed much in her having a good mind (114).

Jeff knows what Jane Harden is like and does not approve of her lifestyle, but he has "found a great many strong good things in her, that still made him like her" (113). But, guilt by association makes him pre-judge Melanctha and class her as a bad woman and believe she will always be so. Jane has told Jeff Melanctha has a good mind, and as he talks to her, it is her probing questions and her ability to listen that change his opinion of her. It is Melanctha's "good mind" which he values and which begins to attract him to her. She makes him think hard about his beliefs. He values her intellect, at any rate. He has not

changed his opinion of her character. He thinks she has a good mind, but "It was not her being good, he wanted to find in her. He knew very well Jane Harden was right, when she said Melanctha was always being good to everybody but that did not make Melanctha any better for her" (125). But because of her past, she is not good enough. However, in spite of his principles, he is drawn to her, attracted by the power - the sexual power - she has learned to use. What he thinks he should do and what his emotions tell him are in conflict.

The word "thinking" appears often in their conversations. Jeff spends a great deal of his time thinking. Thinking is juxtaposed against the word "feeling." It becomes clear that Melanctha is the one who "feels" and Jeff is the one who thinks. At one point after Melanctha has made a move toward him physically and he hasn´t responded, she asks sadly, "Don´t you every stop with your thinking long enough ever to have any feeling Jeff Campbell?"(132).

Jeff replies, "No, I don´t stop thinking much Miss Melanctha and if I can´t ever feel without stopping thinking, I certainly am very much afraid Miss Melanctha that I never will do much with that kind of feeling" (132).

Her reply is witty and pointed. "I am certainly afraid I don´t think much of your kind of feeling, Dr. Campbell" (132). They are on opposite poles in the way the relate to the world.

The issue of "knowing" is also a focal point of both their thoughts. But they are preoccupied with different types of knowledge. The excitement which Jeff condemns is what Melanctha´s life has been all about. Jeff speaks of having experience, but this is not the sort Melanctha has had. She remains unimpressed by his position, education

or 'book learning.' She tells him:

> I certainly did wonder how you could be so live, and knowing everything, and everybody, and talking so big always about everything, and everybody always liking you so much and you always looking as if you was thinking, and yet you really was never knowing about anybody and certainly not being really very understanding" (124).

Melanctha's knowledge, as I have shown, has been the knowledge of experience. She has gone searching for wisdom on the streets, the docks, the railyards. It is 'knowledge-about' -- the knowledge of what people want, and what to do with the power within her. Her experience is more real than Jeff's and therefore more valuable. Jeff's knowledge, on the other hand, is strictly cerebral. He enjoys reading, gaining knowledge from books. His relationships, especially with women are without passion, like a brother, and he has never become seriously involved with anyone:

> "Women liked him, he was so strong, and good, and understanding, and innocent, and firm, and gentle. Sometimes they seemed to want very much he should be with them. When they go so, they always had made Campbell very tired. Sometimes he would play a little with them, but he never had had any strong feeling for them" (129).

Jeff's knowledge of women, passion, feelings is a 'knowledge of acquaintance.' He knows very little and does not want to know. One gets the impression that he removes himself and holds himself above life, much as he cares about doing what's best for his people. "He loved his

people and he always did everything they wanted and that he could to please them, but he really loved best science and experimenting and to learn things... Jefferson studied hard, he went to a colored college, and then he learnt to be a doctor" (111). Stein is building in her irony of Jeff gradually by undercutting the statements she made about him when he is introduced. He has an superior and patronizing attitude toward black people -- "his" people. He also has an extremely high opinion of his own goodness his love for these his people, and yet he loves science and experimenting more -- science removed from everyday humanity more than being a physician of people. He also loves learning and knows a great deal about what is in books and how to heal people. But there is no sense of really knowing with the heart. It is passionless and remote. With Jeff, thinking is tied to knowledge and is superior to feeling.

But then he suddenly encounters Melanctha and finds he knows nothing. He awakens to the fact that he does not know very much, that his knowledge of life is only a very dim 'knowledge of acquaintance.' "Jefferson always had thought he knew something about women. Now he found that really he knew nothing. He did not know the least bit about Melanctha" (130). He becomes preoccupied with what he doesn't know and the vast chasm between the two types of experience. He recognizes their polarity and this distance which separates their philosophies of life and says, "I certainly do wonder, if we know very right, you and me, what each other is really thinking. I certainly do wonder, Miss Melanctha, if we know at all really what each other means by what we are always saying...I don't like to say to you what I don't know for very sure, and I certainly don't know for sure I know just all what you

mean by what you are always saying to me" (128-9). He "was not sure that he knew here just what he wanted. He was not sure he knew just what it was that Melanctha wanted." (130). But he thinks he wants very badly to understand.

We notice that many of Jeff´s thoughts and sentences are couched in the negative: "I don´t like..." "I don´t know..." "He was not sure...." We discover that he is very indecisive. He is very certain about himself, his opinions and his hitherto untested ideals. Jeff uses the word "certainly" consistently, mostly when he is trying to establish just how sure he is of himself and his ideas. He says, "I want to see the colored people being good and careful and always honest and living always just as regular as can be, and I am sure Miss Melanctha, that that way everybody can have a good time and be happy and keep right and be busy, and not always have to be doing bad things for new ways to get excited. Yes, Miss Melanctha, I certainly do like everything to be good, and quiet, and I certainly do think that is the best way for all us colored people." (121). His ideals about the right way people "should" live are very definite. But his thought patterns and words paint a different picture than he would have Melanctha believe. There is actually very little he is sure of. He says "Why you see I just can´t say that right out that way to you... I can´t say things like that right out to everybody till I know really more for certain all about you..." (128). When Melanctha pushes him toward a relationship he hides behind the excuse that he is "slow-minded" (128, 129, 133).

There is none of this indecision in Melanctha. The word "certainly" figures significantly in "Melanctha" especially in Melanctha´s speech. It occurs a total of 433 times in the text,

sometimes as often as 17 times per page. It is used particularly by Melanctha, who is very emphatic in her words and her ideas. Whatever she is feeling, she is absolutely certain about that rightness of her feelings. She knows for certain what is and what isn't. She declares. "I certainly do understand you when you talk so Dr. Campbell. I certainly do understand now what you mean by what you was always saying to me....I certainly do see that very clear" (122-123).

Although it is Jeff who speaks of honesty as an important part of leading a good life, honesty is also a characteristic that is important to Melanctha. As her opinion of Jeff changes she tells him, "I certainly do admire you for talking honest to me, Jeff Campbell" (128), to which he replies, "Oh I am always honest, Miss Melanctha. It's easy enough for me always to be honest, Miss Melanctha. All I got to do is always just to say right out what I am thinking. I certainly never have got any real reason for not saying it right out like that to anybody." He is declaring himself, promising that there will never be lies between them.

Melanctha has realized that there is a difference between his thoughts and his words from the beginning. She says very early in their conversations, "You seem to be thinking what you are doing is just like what you are always saying..." (120). She thinks she has hit upon the reasons. She declares:

> You certainly are just too scared Dr. Campbell to really feel things way down in you. All you are always wanting... is just to talk about being good, and to play with people to have a good time, and yet always to certainly keep yourself out of trouble... you certainly are awful scared about

really feeling things way down in you..." (123).

In one sense, Melanctha is right. He is afraid. He won't admit it though. He has a different set of reasons for his actions. In his opinion it is only prudent to go slowly and carefully into anything.

> I certainly don't think I can't feel things very deep in though I do say I certainly do like to have things nice and quiet, but I don't see harm in keeping out of danger Miss Melanctha, when a man knows he certainly don't want to get killed in it, and I don't know anything that's more awful dangerous Miss Melanctha than being strong in love with somebody (123).

He is preoccupied with thinking. He cannot allow himself to feel. He is unable to make a decision about whether to get involved with Melanctha or not. He proceeds to think himself out of involvement. But we have seen there is more to his reluctance than just thinking or being afraid.

Melanctha is also aware that there are other reasons for his reluctance to get involved. In her complexity, she is able to recognize complex reasons for actions in others. At the point where Jeff wonders aloud whether they can really know what the other person means by what they are saying, she flashes out, "That certainly do mean, by what you say, that you think I am a bad one, Jeff Campbell" (128). From the way she blurts this statement out after a relatively innocuous statement on Jeff's part, it is clear that she is sensitive about her past - at least as far as Jeff is concerned. It made no difference to her who she was with or what she did before. But Jeff is preoccupied with

goodness, and, attracted to him as she is, she wants to appear in the best light.

She understands that if goodness is an issue with Jeff, then her past will also be an issue. Melanctha's past is definitely on Jeff's mind as he vascillates, thinking first this and then that. Is she "playing" with him, or is it real? If it is only play, that he does not want any part of this relationship. But he is stung by her accusation that he is a coward and pushes forward.

Unfortunately Melanctha does not realize the depth of his attitudes toward her. Impulsive and courageous, she allows herself to fall in love with him and try to make it work.

So, we have another set of contrasts: Jeff, cerebral, puritanical, obsessed with goodness, thinking; Melanctha, elemental, obsessed with experience, feeling. Stein has built an image of Melanctha as a complex woman - rash, outspoken, one who does what she pleases without thought of the consequences, but kind and generous. She has also painted a portrait of Jeff. If we accept him at face value, he is good, he is steady, he does not like excitement, he is steadfast, if a little slow, but honest and caring and kind. He is the quintessential country doctor.

Gradually, over the duration of 'Mis' Herbert's illness, these two opposites stumble toward a relationship.

Beginning Destroying

Precisely at the point where Jeff and Melanctha are on the brink of establishing something, however, Stein begins to tear down what she has built up.

In the beginning pages of their relationship, from pages 110 until it really blossoms at the death of 'Mis' Herbert, Stein has consistently used the words "good," "think," "feel," "understand," "honest." From this point onwards she uses the same words, but reverses the meanings and connotations she has built up so carefully around these words. She also reverses all roles, character traits and dominance. The words she previously used as hammers in a straightforward manner, she now uses with increasingly powerful and driving bitterness and irony.

In the critical literature there is general disagreement as to why this affair fails.

DeKoven, citing the phrase, "Melanctha Herbert was always seeking rest and quiet, and always she could only find new ways to be in trouble" blames this failure on Melanctha. She writes that Melanctha "is defeated by what is emerging as the fatal flaw par excellence of heroines in women's fiction: a divided self. At crucial times in her life, including the moment when she finally has the full and passionate love she needs from Jeff, she acts against her own best interests, destroying the relationships she has worked hard to build."[7]

Frederick Hoffman also blames the failure on Melanctha. He writes that "when she has finally taught him to be in love with her, she loses interest in him. It is not what she has wanted at all, or rather the realization of what she has vaguely sought proves to be less in quality and intensity than she wished it to be."[8]

Walker, as noted before, maintains that Jeff and Melanctha fail to achieve happiness due to their inability to express themselves adequately and make logical connections in thought. Their "linguistic helplessness" prevents them from truly understanding each other.[9]

Schmitz traces this failure to the opposition between males and females, and attributes Stein's attention to this issues as a Jamesian preoccupation. "Melanctha Herbert's passion for clarity reveals its futility through her disclaiming repetition of certainly. Only her feelings are certain, and these she can not express. What she wants, and what Jeff Campbell wants, is the assurance of definition, the simplicity of male/female, and they do not find it. Melanctha's unspeakable feelings presumably obstruct this resolution... What it is that tortures Melanctha and deters Jeff Campbell is left unsaid. It is, this it, a large and resonant Jamesian it."[10]

To Hilfer, the failure is the result of the different rhythms of personality and emotion and an opposition in values. Jeff is the embodiment of "ethos" while Melanctha is "pathos." He writes, "Much of the running philosophical debate between Jeff and Melanctha centers on ethics: Jeff's belief in a preformulated conventional ethics is opposed to Melanctha's belief in an ethics of intensity that dares the risk of desire. Melanctha scorns Jeff's respectable definition of love ... to Melanctha, Jeff's sort of love is merely a cowardly evasion, not a true good" (157).[11]

I disagree totally with each of these authors, except Hilfer, with whom I agree in part. I do agree that Jeff and Melanctha do not understand each other due to a difference in ethics and rhythms, but I feel that this is an incomplete explanation. I place the blame squarely upon Jeff. I maintain that it is Jeff who destroys their love. It is his personality, his actions, his preoccupations that undermine and finally end whatever they have been able to establish.

From this point onward there is a slow change in the course of

progression in the text. This is a period of stasis for Melanctha and movement for Jeff. Jeff is slowly moving toward love and making a commitment to Melanctha. Melanctha remains constant. She has taken her stand. She is very certain of her feelings for Jeff. During this period of her life she never wanders now unless it is with Jeff. The meaning of "wander" has changed again, from the wandering after sexual wisdom to the conventional meaning of wandering, walking together with no apparent destination and no need for one. Having cast her allegiance, she is content to wait for Jeff to commit himself to her.

But there is a shift in dominance. Whereas in the period of Melanctha's initiation into adulthood and sexuality Melanctha was the student, the learner, Jane the teacher, the roles have been reversed. Now Melanctha is the teacher and Jeff the learner. Stein is further breaking down the image of the country doctor, with his education and wisdom.

Stein does not introduce this theme explicitly until later in the course of the relationships evolution, but the 'hammer words' "know," "understand" are used throughout, and, consistent with her style, she inserts this idea casually long before she focuses on it directly. Jeff stated early that he certainly does "believe strong in loving, and in being good to everybody and trying to understand what they all need to help them." (122). When Melanctha tells him that he does not know or understand anything, he invites her to be the one to teach him. "Perhaps I could learn a whole lot about women the right way if I had a real good teacher" (125).

On page 136, Stein writes that Jeff had "loved all his life always to be thinking, but he was still only a great boy... and he had never before had any of this funny kind of feeling." She continues on this

train of thought on page 137. "He was open, he was pleasant, he was cheery, and always he wanted, as Melanctha once had wanted, always now he too wanted really to understand." Like Melanctha he wants another, deeper kind of wisdom. Before he had toyed with women. Now that is no longer enough.

Stein returns to this theme on page 160, after Jeff and Melanctha have gone through several rounds of their troubles. The schoolboy references are explicit as Jeff teases, "I sure am a good boy to be learning all the time the right way you are teaching me... You can't say no, never I ain't a good scholar for you to be teaching now, Melanctha, and I am always so ready to come to you every day and never playing hooky ever from you... You can't say ever to me, I ain't a good boy to you now..." (160). To which Melanctha replies, "Not near so good, Jeff Campbell, as such a good, patient kind of teacher like me, who never teaches any ways it ain't good her scholars should be knowing, ought to be really having."

Failing Loving

The bulk of the remainder of Part Three is preoccupied with a description of Jeff attempting to learn how to love. Jeff's thoughts are focussed on knowing and understanding Melanctha. In his own mind he works very hard at it.

As the days pass, they are more and more drawn to each other. Jeff is impressed by Melanctha's goodness and sweetness, and he finds that he looks forward to her company. But they continue to talk about "outside things." Something holds them back. Melanctha makes the first move, responding to Jeff's oblique invitation to "teach" him things.

She says "I sure do want to be friends with a good man like you, now I know you... Tell me for true, Dr. Campbell, will you be friends with me" (127).

Jeff, although his attraction has been growing for some time, cannot commit. He replies, "why you see I just can't say that right out that way to you. Why sure you know... I will be very glad if it comes by and by that we are always friends together.. and when I certainly do want to mean it what I am saying to you, I can't say things like that right out to everybody till I know really more for certain all about you, and how I like you, and what I really mean to do better for you" (128).

It is this point that Jeff establishes the pattern of each cycle, which continues throughout the length of their relationship. Melanctha has shaken him to the roots. He feels compelled to be with her, and yet on the brink of commitment he withdraws. When they are together, he is happy and exhilarated. When they are apart, or when he begins to think, he begins to doubt, he nearly thinks himself out of a relationship with her and finds a way to escape from her. But when he is near her again his resolve is shaken and he is happy and is again drawn to her. His thinking stands in the way of feeling and halts any progress in their loving until he can forget his thinking and begin to feel again. It is appropriate to call these cycles "Rounds," as, after awhile, they take on a resemblance to rounds in a boxing match. Each is the same, characterized by a period of happiness, then bitter arguments caused by his indecision, then a resolution in which they make peace with each other and settle their differences. Then another round begins with a period of renewed happiness. Jeff and Melanctha are alternately happy and sad, getting along and fighting bitterly. At first, the two are

evenly matched and engage in spirited conversations. Gradually Jeff wears Melanctha down, she becomes increasingly passive and finally gives up in defeat. And so the rounds go: attraction, indecision, resolution; attraction, indecision, resolution.

In order to clarify the evolution of the relationship it is necessary to step back from the story and impose order on the complexity. The decline and failure of the relationship, and also the reasons for it is more clearly visible when the repetitive patterns are viewed side by side. Then it is possible to follow the passing of love more easily as the reader progresses through the story. First I will list all the rounds and then explain their progression.

There are thirteen rounds in all. Each round has two facets. The first is what seems to be happening on the surface. Stein clearly marks this first facet with the use of "now" and a summing up statement of some sort. The second, revealed by Jeff's thoughts is the reality of where the two stand. The evolution of these second facets clearly reveals what exactly happens to destroy their love.

ROUND ONE

1. Jeff Campbell, when Melanctha left him, sat there and he was very quiet and just wondered... He began to think about what he should do now with her (129).
2. Jefferson was not sure that he knew here just what he wanted. He was not sure he knew just what it was that Melanctha wanted (129-130).

ROUND TWO

1. Things began to be very strong between them. Melanctha

now never wandered, unless she was with Jeff Campbell (136).

2. These months had been an uncertain time for Jeff Campbell. He never knew how much he really knew about Melanctha... He was beginning to feel he could almost trust the goodness in her. But then, always, really, he was not very sure about her (136).

ROUND THREE

1. They had many days now when they were very happy. Jeff every day found that he really liked Melanctha better. Now surely he was beginning to have real deep feeling in him (143).

2. Jeff Campbell, all these months, had never told his good mother anything about Melanctha. He did not know if it was what Melanctha wanted... He never really knew what it was that Melanctha really wanted (142).

ROUND FOUR

1. Jeff saw Melanctha every day now (149).

2. Jeff was a little uncertain all this time inside him (149).

ROUND FIVE

1. Now for a little time there was not any kind of trouble between Jeff Campbell and Melanctha Herbert... They got much joy now, both of them, from being all the time together (153).

2. He never, even now, was ever sure, he really knew what Melanctha was, when she was real herself, and honest. He thought he knew, and then there came to him some moment, just like this one, when she really woke him up... (156).

ROUND SIX

1. And now for a real long time there was no open trouble... (161).

2. Then it came that Jeff knew he could not say out any more, what it was he wanted, he could not say out any more, what it was, he wanted to know about, what Melanctha wanted (161).

ROUND SEVEN

1. There was a weight in Jeff Campbell from now on (171).

2. [Melanctha says,] "You always wanting to have it all clear out in words always, what everybody is always feeling. I certainly don't see a reason, why I should always be explaining to you what I mean by what I am just saying" (171).

ROUND EIGHT

1. From now on, Jeff had real torment in him (173).

2. Now, deep inside him, there was always a doubt with Jeff, of Melanctha's loving... He was helpless to find out the way she really felt now for him (175).

ROUND NINE

1. Always now Jeff wondered did Melanctha love him (177).

2. Jeff always now felt baffled with Melanctha (177).

ROUND TEN

1. Melanctha had begun now once more to wander (184).

2. Jeff did not know whether it was that Melanctha did not know how to give a simple answer. And then how could he, Jeff, know what was important to her (185).

ROUND ELEVEN

1. Jeff Campbell never asked Melanctha any more if she loved him. Now things were always getting worse between them (188).

2. Jeff Campbell knew very well too now inside him, he did not really want Melanctha, now if he could no longer trust her, though he loved her hard and really knew now what it was to suffer (189).

ROUND TWELVE

1. And now surely it was all over in Jeff Campbell (192).

2. Surely now he never any more could know Melanctha. And yet, perhaps Melanctha really loved him (192).

ROUND THIRTEEN

1. As Jeff came nearer to her, he doubted that he wanted really to be with her... Jeff Campbell knew very well now, way inside him, that they could never talk their trouble out between them (196).

2. What was it Jeff wanted now to tell Melanctha... surely he never now could learn to trust her. Surely Jeff knew very well all that Melanctha always had inside her. And yet... (196).

On the surface, with the "now" to convey immediacy, there seems to be movement, a sense of progression, of a building and then declining love affair. This sense of progression is an illusion. If we look carefully at the words in each round, it becomes clear that there has been no progression at all, that their love never really began. The juxtaposition of these phrases demonstrates that there is something in Jeff's mind throughout that sees the trouble between them, something that holds him back. In part it is his thinking process that gradually undermines and destroys any chance at success in love, but there is an

underlying reason for this negative thinking. Jeff has an underlying negative viewpoint toward love and Melanctha. This is revealed in the words Stein uses to describe his thoughts.

We see this love affair through Jeff´s eyes and consciousness. The reader is only privy to Jeff´s thoughts, his fears and uncertainties. His thought patterns and the words that describe them are consistently negative, characterized by "nevers," "nots," "ifs," "yets," and "buts." "He did not know;" "All this time he was uncertain," "He never even now was ever sure;" "he could not say what it was he wanted to know;" "he was helpless;" "he doubted." These words belie the certainty he proudly displays in his speech and show the the negative outlook which was hinted at before and not which colors his attitudes.

This negative stance leads to negative hedging in his thinking which in turn leads to negative conclusions toward Melanctha. Stein shows us his circular reasoning at the beginning of the relationship. As he sits thinking about Melanctha his thought patterns are marked by conjunctions as he reasons his way through to a decision. In the first sentence he uses the conditional conjunction "if:" "He knew if it was only play, with Melanctha, that he did not want to do it." He is very sure (conditional upon Melanctha´s feelings) that if Melanctha doesn´t care then this relationship is not for him. Then he examines another possibility, a contrasting one, and the adversative conjunction demonstrates his consideration of this side: "But he remembered always how she had told him he never knew how to feel things very deeply." His thoughts proceed through the alternatives: "If it was a play he did not want to go on playing, but if it was really that he was not very understanding, and that with Melanctha Herbert he could learn to really understand, then he was very certain he did not want to be a coward. It

was very hard for him to know what he wanted." The next series of thoughts are linked by by additive conjunctions as if each new thought is a logical progression from the former. "He thought and thought and always he did not seem to know any better what he wanted." There is no "so" or causal conjunction to show that the conclusion he reaches is anything other than the logical one: "At last he gave up this thinking. He felt sure it was only play with Melanctha" (130). And so he decides that he does not want any part of her. But when she returns he is swayed by her sweetness and intelligence. "It certainly was very good in you to come back... "Jefferson said at last to her," and the causal conjunction "for" appears again to demonstrate his change of heart "for now he was almost certain, it was no game she was playing." His thoughts continue with the additive conjunctions as if he were almost listing her traits to himself to convince himself the she really is good: "Melanctha really was a good woman, and she had a good mind, and she had a real, strong sweetness, and she could surely really teach him." The adverb "surely" emphasizes his attempt to convince himself that yes, she will teach him love.

This type of thought pattern persists throughout the relationship. A passage on page 137 illustrates another typical progression:

> At first his dark, open face was smiling and he was rubbing the back of his black-brown hand over his mouth to help him in his smiling. Then he was thinking and he frowned and rubbed his head hard, to help him with his thinking. Then he smiled again, but now his smiling was not very pleasant. His smile was now wavering on the edge of scorning. His smile changed more and more, and then he had a look as if he

were deeply down, all disgusted. Now his face was darker, and he was bitter in his smiling, and he began, without looking from the fire, to talk to Melanctha, who was now very tense with her watching" (137).

In the space of a few minutes his own thinking has turned a pleasant moment into a moment of ugliness and bad feelings. And so begins another round of hurt.

We are not granted the luxury of seeing inside Melanctha's mind. We can only witness what she does and listen to what she says. Perhaps this is partly the reason why many readers have believed that Melanctha is the cause of the downfall of this love affair. If one does not notice that the relationship is seen through the eyes of Jeff, who considers himself blameless, it is easy to place the blame directly on Melanctha's shoulder.

We can now proceed through the rounds as the occur, and see exactly how Jeff's negative outlook gradually destroys the relationship and --ultimately -- Melanctha.

Continuing Destroying

During Round One of indecision versus resolution, when Jeff has finished thinking he decides to protect himself. "I certainly will stop fooling, and begin to go on with my thinking about my work" (130) he tells himself resolutely. But then when they begin to talk again he feels differently. He begins to feel that maybe it is different, that maybe he has been wrong and it is not just play with her. For awhile things seem to be going quite well.

Jeff and Melanctha begin to wander together. On one level

"wandering" in this context means merely spending time together walking aimlessly, but in light of its prior uses it could also mean that Jeff and Melanctha have consummated their relationship. There is a period of happiness. But in Jeff's thoughts the word "know" crops up again and again, and the uncertainty that seemed to be resolved shows through and the vascillation continues:

> These months had been an uncertain time for Jeff Campbell. He never knew how much he really knew about Melanctha... He was beginning always more and more to like her. But he did not seem to himself to know very much about her. He was beginning to feel he could almost trust the goodness in her. But then, always, really, he was not very sure about her... he did not know very well what it was that he really wanted. He was very certain that he did not know very well what it was that Melanctha wanted... (136).

Jeff's preoccupation and uncertainty also appear in his monologues with Melanctha. It is important to note that in many cases these are not conversations any more. Jeff is speaking at Melanctha, not talking to here. Stein has told us on page 134 that Melanctha never talks much anymore when they are together. Jeff teases her about it, but she replies, "You think a whole lot more about everything than I do Jeff, and you don't care much what I got to say about it." He replies that when she is just telling people what she thinks they want to hear then he doesn't want to listen, but when she says what's really on her mind then he does. The question remains as to when Melanctha is really saying what's on her mind and when she isn't. He has not established

that he can tell the difference. And does he really listen then?

And so he continues, using her as a sounding board for his doubt. He says, "Sometimes you are a girl to me I certainly never would be trusting... and then certainly sometimes, Melanctha, you certainly is all a different creature, and sometimes then there comes out in you what is certainly a thing, like a real beauty... And then when I got rich with such a feeling (like a real religion) comes all that other girl... and then I certainly do get awful afraid to come to you , and I certainly never feel I could be very trusting with you. And then I certainly don't know anything at all about you, and I certainly don't know which is a real Melanctha Herbert" (138-139). The "and" here is used almost as a causal conjunction instead of an additive. This is the reason why he is afraid and can't get involved. And it is her fault.

Melanctha is very hurt and bitter about all this fickle wavering. In tears, she says, "I was awful ready, Jeff to let you say anything you like that gave you any pleasure. You could say all about me what you wanted, and I would try to stand it, so as to be sure to be liking me, Jeff, but you was too cruel to me. When you do that kind of seeing how much you can make a woman suffer, you ought to give her a little rest... When you want to be seeing how the away a woman is really made of, Jeff, you shouldn't never be so cruel, never to be thinking how much she can stand..." (140).

Jeff is very surprised at her reaction. "Why Melanctha, you poor little girl, you certainly never did believe I ever know I was giving you real suffering" (141). He does not believe that he has been cruel. He discounts her feelings as being childish and silly, by calling her "little girl." He takes her in his arms in a brotherly way and instantly reverses himself, "I certainly never can know anything about

you real... but I certainly do admire and trust you a whole lot now" (141). Melanctha forgives his insensitivity immediately. She persists in believing one day he will love her. She stated this belief earlier when she said, "You see all that, Jeff, better, by and by, when you get to really feeling" (135), and so his cruelty is shrugged off and forgotten.

Round Three begins. A very happy period follows. Ostensibly happy. The uncertainty lingers. "He never really knew what it was that Melanctha really wanted. In all these ways he just, by his nature did, what he sort of felt Melanctha wanted... Now surely he was beginning to have real deep feeling in him" (143).

Surely, this is the real thing. But he is not sure enough to tell his mother. He has kept it a secret from her.

Then all this "beginning toward a real feeling" is sabotaged by Jane Harden. In a conversation with Jeff, Jane dredges up the past and recounts at length Melanctha's men, "white ones and blacks, Melanctha never was particular about things like that." Stein inserts the fact that Jane does not know about the budding relationship, but this seems suspicious in the face of the sly insertion on Stein's part that "Jane was always honest... and now it just happened she had started talking about her old times with Melanctha" (144). The amount of time spent raking through Melanctha's past furthers the reader's opinion that this didn't "just happen." Jeff first got to know Melanctha through Jane Harden, and this is where he formed his initial impression of her and that basic "distrust" of what she is. Even before they actually met he had come to the conclusion that she was no good. It has been his preoccupation with Melanctha's "badness" and her sordid past that has

kept him back. It seems reasonable to deduce here that he has been hoping that Jane will corroborate his fears. And who better than Jane? The phrase "Jane began" - to tell and explain - occurs nine times in the space of one paragraph. Why she would bring this up out of the blue is open to question. One gets the distinct feeling that Jane is being pumped for information. And there is more than a trace of maliciousness in Jane's words when she says "in passing, not that Melanctha was a bad one, and she had a good mind, Jane Harden never would say she hadn't, but Melanctha always liked to use all the understanding ways the Jane had taught her, and so she wanted to know everything, always, that they knew how to teach her" (144).

Jeff's worst fears have come true. Melanctha is truly a bad woman. All his distrust and uncertainty have been well-founded fears. Now he understands clearly who and what Melanctha is and feels sick. All of a sudden Melanctha seems very ugly to him. At last he knows. "Jeff was at last beginning to know what it was to have deep feeling [and] at last he had stopped thinking.... he knew very well now at last, he was really feeling. He knew it now from the way it hurt him. He knew very well that now at last he was beginning to really have understanding. He knew very well that now at last he had learned what it was to have deep feeling" (144). And he is finding it very painful. One gets the distinct impression that Jeff has been searching for a way to sabotage this relationship. But once he has managed he doesn't like it at all.

He breaks off with a letter. He doesn't have the courage even to face her. The word "sick" appears five times in the paragraph describing his reaction to Jane's words, and in a marvelous piece of irony he writes Melanctha a note that he cannot see her because he must

see a "sick patient."

Days go by. After a long time Melanctha writes back and tells him she's had enough and to never come back. In this bitter biting letter Melanctha uses the words and the issues that have been accumulating in their thoughts and in their speech up to this point: " understand," "good," "think," "afraid." In her roundabout way she gets right to the heart of the matter.

She begins by using the words that characterize Jeff's thoughts against him, his need and inability to "understand" her. She is mocking him by using his own words against him with bitter sarcasm, and yet crying out in real pain to ask why he needs to persist in hurting her. "I certainly don't rightly understand what you are doing now to me... I certainly don't rightly understand Jeff Campbell why you ain't all these days been near me." She says she doesn't understand. The next line reveals that she really does. "I certainly do suppose it's just another one of the queer kind of ways you have to be good and repenting of yourself all of a sudden." She is beginning to understand that it is his "goodness" and uprightness in addition to his negative attitude toward her that keep him from a true commitment to her. She goes on to say, "I certainly don't say to you... I admire very much the way you take to be good Jeff Campbell." Goodness, in Melanctha's mind is kindness and patience and endurance. Continually hurting and making another suffer is not in her code of ethics. She tells him she has had enough. She has already suffered three rounds of his resolution/uncertainty and she has had all she can take. "I am sorry Dr. Campbell but I certainly am afraid I can't stand it no more from you the way you have been just acting. I certainly can't stand it any more the way you act when you have been as if you thought I was always good enough for

anybody to have with them and then you act as if I was a bad one and you always just despise me. I certainly am afraid Dr. Campbell I can't stand it any more like that. I certainly can't stand it any more the way you are always changing." In her anger she takes a stab at his vanity and his self-image of a good and upright man. "I certainly am afraid Dr. Campbell you ain't man enough to deserve to have anybody care so much to be always with you. I certainly am awful afraid Dr. Campbell I don't ever any more want to really see you." Then she breaks off the relationship before he can. "Good-bye Dr. Campbell I wish you always to be real happy."

It is useful here to return to Jayne Walker's comments on Melanctha and Jeff's "linguistic impotence." As the letter quoted above demonstrates, Melanctha has splendid control over language. She can use it to rip and tear and stab right to the heart of Jeff's guilt and fears. She is most certainly aware of the ambiguities and possibilities inherent in words and is a master at making them work for her. Stein demonstrated this in the early pages of the story.

> "Melanctha went to school and was very quick in all the learning, and she knew very well how to use this knowledge to annoy her parents who knew nothing" (91).
>
> Her father "often had good reason to be angry with Melanctha, who knew so well how to be nasty, and to use her learning with a father who knew nothing" (92).
>
> "He feared her tongue, and her school learning, and the way she had of saying things that were very nasty to a brutal black man who knew nothing" (103).

This is a third type of knowledge, and also a different type of

power which Melanctha has - the knowledge of how to wield words to her own advantage, to stab and to hurt, but except at the very beginning of their relationship, she has chosen not to use it against Jeff. Here she wields this power and knowledge with great force.

As I have shown, Jeff's inability to understand Melanctha and what each means by what they are saying stems from other factors than inability to express themselves. Yes, they have talked themselves into an impasse, but this is not the result of their lack of verbal acuity, it is from Jeff's unwillingness to understand and accept Melanctha.

Upon receiving the letter, Jeff at first feels self-righteously angry. After all, he never knew what Melanctha wanted, and it was she who had been bad, as opposed to his goodness. He reminds himself of how hard he has tried to be good and kind to her. "He knew very well he had done his best to be kind, and to trust her, and to be loyal to her, and now..." (146) And then, true to form he does another about-face and he is sorry he has hurt her. "Perhaps she could teach him to really understand it better. Perhaps she could teach him how it could be all true." And then the hedge. He has the usual reservations. "And yet how he could be right to believe in her and to trust her" (146). He writes a letter back. The words that have dominated his thought patterns now dominate his letter; it is filled with the repetitions and hedging we have come to expect of Jeff: "certainly," "think," "honest," "coward," "trust," "want." He doesn't think that she is right. He doesn't think she is being very understanding. He doesn't know what it is she wants. He is certainly not a coward. He is driven by his inner integrity to be honest with her, and if she doesn't want him to be honest then there is no point in them talking to each other. And he foreshadows the future of their relationship when he says, "So don't talk any more

foolishness, Melanctha, about my always changing. I don´t change never, and I got to do what I think is right and honest to me" (p. 147).

In this letter Jeff demonstrates very clearly that he is placing the burden of the relationship - and the blame for its failure - on Melanctha. She had to make the first move, he has not attempted - ever - to find out what she wants, he has just "sort of" done what he thinks she wants. When things break down it is her fault, because he can´t understand her. Here again he is placing the blame for their troubles directly upon her. She certainly doesn´t have it right, she doesn´t understand him, and he never really has known what it is she wants. And he returns again to the same old tune about trusting her. His sentences are Rube Goldbergs of self-delusion and blame-mongering. "I certainly don´t think you are just fair or very understanding to all I have to suffer to keep straight on to really always to believe in you and trust you. I certainly don´t think you always are fair to remember right how hard it is for a man, who thinks like I was always thinking, not to think you do things very bad very often" (146). In his mind he is the one who is suffering because he is unable to trust her. She is after all, a fallen woman, a wanderer, a whore. How can she expect him to be trusting and certain of her love? In other words: "you must accept me as I am, but you´re not being fair for being angry when I can´t accept you as you are."

Melanctha invites him to come back, he goes to her, and after telling him gently that he was very bad to her, she fondly forgives him. She excuses him without question. He laughs a little and says "Well, Melanctha, you can´t say, no, never, but that we certainly have

worked right hard to get both of us together for it, so we shall sure deserve it then, if we can ever really get it." If we can believe the sincerity of this statement we must believe that he is totally blind to his actions and their consequences and the toll all this trouble is taking on Melanctha. Melanctha does not contradict him. She agrees that they have had trouble, and goes so far as to say, "I feel so worn with all the trouble you been making for me," (149), but that is the extent of her (rebellion).

And so begins Round Four. Again they are happy. It is summertime, they wander again contentedly. EXCEPT that Jeff is "a little uncertain all this time inside him" (149) because he hasn't bared his chest about why they had this trouble. He decides that he needs to be "honest." The two established at the beginning that they would be honest with each other, so he must adhere to this promise of always being open and honest. He feels he "must tell to Melanctha what it was he knew now, that which Jane Harden... had told him." (150). His mind tells him that this is the only way to know her really. The truth no matter what. So, in the midst of "feeling very close" he tells it all.

She again is bitter and angry and scornful. But he tells her he had the right to know, and all he did wrong was to ask Jane Harden and not Melanctha herself about her past.

The next paragraph introduces the word "struggle" for the first time, and a foreshadowing of what is to come, knowing, as the reader does by now, that this can't be the end of their troubles. "It was a struggle that was as sure always to be going on between them, as their minds and hearts always were to have different ways of working." (153).

Melanctha forgives him again, and so begins Round Five. Only this time we are told that Jeff finally does not do any thinking anymore.

Jeff has made the transition from thinking to feeling. He has finally let go of himself and given in to the feeling and to her goodness and sweetness. "Sometimes Jeff would lose all himself in a strong feeling. Very often now, and always with more joy in his feeling, he would find himself, he did not know how or what it was he had been thinking" (154). The word "love" is re-introduced on page 149, first in reference to Jeff loving summer, and then loving being with Melanctha and then receiving her love. And he is moving in that direction too.

> "Every day now, Jeff seemed to be coming nearer, to be really loving. Everyday now, Melanctha poured it all out to him, with more freedom. Every day now, they seemed to be having more and more, both together, of this strong, right feeling. More and more every day now they seemed to know more really, what it was each other one was always feeling. More and more now every day Jeff found in himself, he felt more trusting. More and more every day now, he did not think anything in words about what he was always doing" (154).

Melanctha showers him with her own love. We have returned to the present progressive tense and the "now." The words that dominate these pages are "love," "joy," "feeling" and "wandering." The relationship is finally moving. At last they have found happiness.

Abruptly, without warning, things change again. The paragraph begins "What was it that now really happened to them? What was it that Melanctha did, that made everything get all ugly for them?" (155). It seems that Stein has stepped out of the narrative to evaluate and comment from a distance. It seems that it is Melanctha, who has destroyed the relationship this time. We can return to DeKoven's

statement that Melanctha's fatal flaw is a divided self. We can deduce that DeKoven has interpreted this incident as being Melanctha's doing. She writes, "At crucial times in her life, including the moment when she finally has the full and passionate love she needs from Jeff, she acts against her own best interests destroying the relationship she has worked hard to build."[12] Closer inspection, and the reader's understanding of Jeff's character reveals something else.

It is important to remember that throughout the story the reader has not been allowed inside Melanctha's head. The narrator has either been omniscient and remote or inside Jeff Campbell. We have only seen the situation from Jeff's point of view, biassed and blind as it is. The thought patterns we have seen have been Jeff's, his vascillating and his self-deception. The only way to see into Melanctha's mind is through her words, and until this time she has never complained or revealed her bitterness or anxiety or anger except briefly, by telling Jeff he has been very bad to her, and then instantly forgiving him. But here the paragraph begins with, "What was it that Melanctha felt just then, that made Jeff remember all the feeling he had had in him when Jane Harden told him how Melanctha had learned to be so very understanding?" It was not something she said, but all of a sudden things have changed from green and warm and lovely to ugly. He can only feel disgust.

But why? What brings on this dramatic change? Has Melanctha really done anything or is it Jeff himself?

If we return to the earlier passages on page 137, when, in the space of just minutes Jeff's mood changes from happiness to scorn to disgust, and to the continuing constant reversals in his thoughts, it

becomes clear that this is just more of the same. As the paragraph continues we find that we are still inside Jeff's head, following the undulations of his thoughts. As usual, the blame is not with him. Again, his mind wheels in the same pattern:

> What was it he used to be thinking was the right way for him and all the colored people to be always trying to make it right, the way they should be always living? Melanctha Herbert somehow had made him feel deeply just then, what very more it was that she wanted from him. Jeff Campbell now felt in him what everybody always had needed to make them really understanding, to him. Jeff felt a strong disgust.... he had only disgust because he never could know really in him, what it was he wanted, to be really right in understanding, for him, he only had disgust because he never could know really what it was really right to him to be always doing, in the things he had before believed in, the things before he had believed in for himself and for all the colored people, the living regular, and the never wanting to be always having new things, just to keep on, always being in excitements. All the old thinking now came up very strong inside him. He sort of turned away then, and threw Melanctha from him (156).

In this passage the same hammer words that have been used throughout the story itself appear: "know," "think,""feel," "understand," with the addition of the phrase "the right way."

"The right way." After the impact that this philosophy had in both "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena" the phrase fairly leaps out of

the page. "The right way." Again, this is the leading force in a character's life, which dictates all he thinks, does and feels. Again it is this preoccupation with virtue and what one assumes is God's will in the mind of one that leads to victimization of another. In their long discussion while Jeff and Melanctha waited for 'Mis' Herbert to die, Jeff revealed his very strong beliefs about how one should live, and the firmness with which he wanted to see the colored people like what is good, in other words, "to live regular and work hard and understand things and that's enough to keep any decent man excited" (117). He was very emphatic about what was good and what was bad. Excitements, drinking, "running around." Jane Harden. And Melanctha. And now, during the course of another long speech his beliefs return. He reminds Melanctha that he believes there are two ways of loving - the good way that families are like and the bad way that animals are. He tells her. "I got a new feeling now, you been teaching to me, just like I told you once, just like a new religion to me, and I see perhaps what really loving is like ... I love you... like a real religion, and then it comes over me all sudden, I don't know anything real about you... and then it comes over me sudden, perhaps I certainly am wrong know, thinking all this way so lovely, and not thinking now any more of the old way I always before was always thinking, about what was the right way for me to live... and then I think... that you are really just a bad one. .. I want to be always right really in the ways, I have to do them... I don't know any way... to find out really, whether my old way, the way I always used to be thinking, or the new way, you make so like a real religion... which way certainly is the real right way for me..." (159). Jeff is showing his indecision again; he is

vascillating now between his feelings for Melanctha and the ethics he has hitherto based his life upon.

Here we have reached the crux of Jeff's philosophy of life and the root of all his troubles with Melanctha. For Jeff, this phrase "the right way" is the hammer, the key to him. "Understanding" has been detached and intellectual. Knowing did not concern feeling. Melanctha has made Jeff feel very deeply. It seems that Jeff has had a profound sexual experience. Melanctha has taken him to new heights. And now "all the old thinking" has returned, and feeling is "bad."The "best way." The "right way." It is apparent, when one takes into account these phrases, along with Jeff's uncertainty throughout and his need to keep this relationship a secret, that he suddenly feels that he has violated all his principles by feeling deeply. Melanctha has supplanted his religion. He has succumbed to "excitements." He has let go of his "thinking" personality and given in to merely feeling.

The next paragraph traces the movement of his thoughts, as they wind in their usual circular way. The word "know" is repeated twelve times, with the negative to stress his uncertainty:

> Jeff never, even now, knew what it was that moved him. He never, even now, was ever sure, he really knew what [she] was,when she was real herself, and honest. He thought he knew, and then there came to him some moment, just like this one, when she really woke him up to be strong in him. Then he really knew he could know nothing. He knew then, he never could know what it was she really wanted with him. He knew then he never could know what it was he felt inside him. It was all so mixed up inside him (156).

The thought patterns in this situation are almost an exact repetition of the machinations his mind went through on page 130 when he was deciding whether or not he wanted to get involved with Melanctha.. It is also an exact repetition of an another incident recounted on page 139, when they were sitting before the fire and he told Melanctha that he in her saw two girls: one "I certainly never would be trusting and it´s what makes me hate so to come near you" and the other: "more tender than the sunshine... and it gives me to feel like I certainly had got real religion."

He is torn between wanting her badly and wanting to throw her from him, between trusting her and not trusting her. The phrase "What was it really that Melanctha wanted with him?" has occurred in conjunction with each incident. The reader will recall that this phrase has appeared again and again throughout the evolution of their relationship on pages 125, 129, 136, three times on 142, and twice on 146 and now again on page 156. The exactness of the repetition tells this must be significant. But this not knowing what Melanctha wants is ridiculous. Melanctha has made it abundantly clear what she wants.

In order to understand what she wants we must now introduce several of the key passages that occurred in the beginning sections of the story.

The reader will recall that on the second page, Stein tantalized the reader with the question: "Why did the subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl Melanctha Herbert love and do for and demean herself in the service to this...Rose?" The question was left unanswered, but in the following pages one particular idea was repeated:

> Melanctha Herbert was always seeking rest and quiet, and always she could only find new ways to be in trouble (89).
>
> Melanctha Herbert was always seeking peace and quiet, and she could always only find new ways to get excited. (92).
>
> And Melanctha all her life loved and respected kind and good and considerate people. Melanctha always loved and wanted peace and gentleness and goodness and all her life for herself poor Melanctha could only find new ways to be in trouble (93).
>
> ...and all her life Melanctha wanted and respected gentleness and goodness and this man always gave her good advice and serious kindness, and Melanctha felt such things deeply, but she could never let them help her or affect her to change the ways that always made her keep herself in trouble (99).
>
> She found [Jeff] good and strong and gentle and very intellectual, and all her life Melanctha liked and wanted good and considerate people (109).
>
> Melanctha Herbert all her life long, loved and wanted good, kind and considerate people. Jefferson Campbell was all the things that Melanctha had ever wanted (125).

Each of these sentences consists of two different thoughts joined by a coordinating conjunction: Melanctha sought rest AND she only found new ways to be in trouble. Stein does not use the adversative conjunction "but" or "yet" to show that the trouble Melanctha finds is contrary to what one would expect in her life. Stein uses instead the additive conjunction which here implies that this "trouble" or "excitement" are

foregone conclusions and unavoidable ends.

If we follow the evolution of these sentences we notice that Stein makes it clear what Melanctha wants. She wants love. But she always manages instead to find trouble. When she falls in love with Jeff the second half of the phrase "and she could only find new ways to be in trouble" disappears. Jeff is the embodiment of all she has ever wished for in life. She neither received love from nor given love to her parents. The word "hatred" abounded in the description of her relationship with them.

We must return to page 108, to the time Melanctha begins to wander on her own again. "It was now something realler that Melanctha wanted, something that would move her very deeply, something that would fill her fully with the wisdom that was planted now within her, and that she wanted badly, should really wholly fill her." It was at this time that she met Jeff and she "came to want him very badly... so badly that now she never wandered" (109). She has "always loved and wanted peace and gentleness and goodness..." (93). Finding that in Jeff (he was "good and strong and gentle") (109), she is willing to put up with his vascillating in the hopes that he will eventually give up his fears and come to her as wholly as she has come to him. She has for Jeff, the "real strong hot love... that makes you do anything for somebody that loves you" (122).

She tells him. Again and again.

> You are certainly a very good man, Dr. Campbell, I certainly do feel that more every day I see you. Dr. Campbell, I sure do want to be friends with a good man like you, now I know you. You certainly... never do things like

other men, that's always ugly for me" (127).

"...Like you, Jeff Campbell, and you certainly are mother, and father, and brother, and sister, and child and everything, always to me. I can't say much about how good you been to me, Jeff Campbell, I never knew any man who was good and didn't do things ugly, before I met you to take care of me" (135).

After one particularly cruel session of accusations about Melanctha's nature, she says to Jeff, "I know you are a good man, Jeff. I always know that, no matter how much you can hurt me.... Oh, Jeff dear, I love you always, you know that now, all right, for certain." (160).

She shows him, not only in her actions - "Every day now, Melanctha poured it all out to him, with more freedom" - but also in her continuing forgiveness, in her denial that he has been bad to her. One can only conclude that he doesn't know what she wants because he doesn't want to know.

This word "bad" begins to creep into their conversations during the reconciliation period after the Jane Harden episode. When Jeff returns to her after the bitter exchange of letters, Melanctha says, fondly, "Well you certainly was very bad to me, Jeff Campbell," to which he replies, "Melanctha, honest, I think perhaps I wasn't real bad to you any more than you just needed from me." Jeff's self-righteous superiority allows him not only to say that he had had a right to dole out cruelty, and believe it, Melanctha's desperate need for love forces her to accept this and him.

Two rounds later, in Round Five, when he has thrown her from him

in disgust and hurt her again, he says, "I didn't mean to be so bad again to you, Melanctha, dear one... I certainly didn't never mean to go to be so bad to you, Melanctha darling... I certainly am all sorry, hard, to be so bad to you, Melanctha darling" (157).

This time she lashes out with the truth. "I suppose you are always thinking, Jeff, somebody had ought to be ashamed with us two together, and you certainly do think you don't see any way to it, Jeff, for me to be feeling that way ever, so you certainly don't see any way to it, only to do it just so often for me" (157). In other words, since she has no shame, he has to feel it for her, and make her do penance for her lack of shame. Melanctha goes on to say, "You certainly anyway trust me now no more, did you, when you must acted so bad to me." It is clear to her that he doubts her and her loyalty and fidelity. She asks him to finally admit that he has never trusted her, and when he does, she says that this time she will never forgive him.

Jeff launches into another endless monologue about wanting badly to do the right thing, telling her he can't help it that he feels this way. He refuses to take responsibility for himself or his emotions and doubts. And Melanctha replies that she can't help him in "that kind of trouble [he is] always having" and goes on to say, "All I can do now, Jeff, is to just keep certainly with my believing you are good always, Jeff, and though you certainly do hurt me bad, I always got strong faith in you, Jeff, more in you certainly than you seem to be having in your acting to me, always so bad, Jeff... I certainly don't think I am right for you, to be forgiving always, when you are so bad, and I so patient, with all this hard teaching always" (161).

He asks forgiveness and she replies "Always and always, you be sure Jeff, and I certainly am afraid I never can stop with my forgiving

you always are going to be so bad to me, and I always going to have to be so good with my forgiving." There is real sadness in that statement, and a sense of hopelessness, as if she has a given up believing that he will change. There is also a sense of passivity, that there is nothing she can do about it except to wait. Jeff merely laughs and says, "I ain't going to be so bad for always... Melanctha, my own darling."

Understanding Suffering

Here Stein has completed her about-face and reversed the goodness of Jeff and the badness of Melanctha. Jeff, who has prided himself on his goodness and purity and uprightness has treated Melanctha appallingly throughout. He has been vicious; he has wrenched her back and forth between his "Yes, I do's" and "No, I don't's;" he has accused her of being another Jane Harden; and he has degraded her by keeping their affair a secret and refusing to acknowledge their relationship. His need to appear "good" and hang on to his principles have kept him from treating Melanctha decently, honestly and humanely.

In the very beginning of their "friendship," Melanctha remarked that Jeff was different from other men because he never did "things like other men, that's always ugly for me" (127). On page 154, this theme in Melanctha's mind is reiterated during a period of happiness, in a time when joy is the predominant emotion. "He poured it all out back to her in freedom, in tender kind ness and in joy, and in gentle brother fondling. And Melanctha loved him for it always, her Jeff Campbell now, who never did things ugly, for her like all the men she always knew before always had been doing to her." (154) The bitter irony with these phrases is that Jeff has been ugly to her. He has not

beaten or abused her physically or sexually, but he has abused her emotionally and mentally.

Melanctha, on the other hand, has turned the other cheek each time. She has forgiven him, she has poured out her love for him when he will allow it, and when he turns nasty and accusatory, she never replies in kind. Throughout their relationship she has responded in practice what he believes in theory.

This last terrible argument marks the beginning of the decline of the relationship. Stein begins Round Six with the statement, "And now for a real long time there was no open trouble"(161).

BUT...

"Then it came that Jeff knew he could not say out any more, what it was he wanted, he could not say out any more, what it was, he wanted to know about, what Melanctha wanted"(161).

He still does not know what Melanctha wants. Shades of Lena. This "did not know" is repetitious of "The Gentle Lena" but in Jeff's case it is not naivete, but unwillingness. He cannot see it. And Melanctha has had enough.

The word "honest" returns to the fore. Jeff said at the beginning that he was always honest, and that it was very easy for him to be honest. Later he felt forced to be honest, no matter how badly it hurt Melanctha's feelings. Now he feels that he can't be honest any more. She can no longer tolerate the endless discussions about how uncertain he is, how he sees two different persons in her, how badly he wants to do the right thing. He must keep his opinions to himself. His innate sense of honesty and rightness feel betrayed and he is uneasy.

The words that mark this next period are "feeling," "bad," "honest," "uneasy" and "loving," "suffer," "trust." From the abuse Jeff

has meted out to Melanctha to her feelings about the relationship "bad" has changed its meaning. Melanctha has "bad feelings" and is immersed in "bad suffering." She has terrible headaches now. And the headaches come when Jeff "would talk a long time to her about what was right for them both to be always doing" (161). Now "Melanctha somehow never seemed to hear him, she just looked at him and looked as if her head hurt with him."

At last Jeff is feeling very strong about her. But now, because she is "not strong enough inside her to stand any more of his slow way of doing" he feels uneasy and cannot be honest with her anymore. He does not "know enough, what was his real trouble with her" (164). He feels that he cannot be honest about his doubts and uncertainty. He cannot tell her that he still does not trust her, and that he is wavering toward living "the right way." Now he really loves her. "Always now he felt in himself, deep loving." (164). "He knew now that he had a good, straight, strong feeling of right loving for her, and yet now he never could use it to be good and honest with her" (164). And so, alas, these days are not joyful anymore.

He begins to doubt whether she loves him at all or whether it is just show. It is her fault that he cannot be honest anymore and he has to hide his feelings. They have a long senseless argument about courage and bravery where he dredges up the old ideas about people being courageous just by "living regular and not having new ways all that time just to get excitements" (167). To Jeff, it is more courageous to live "the right way" than to always be seeking excitement. In other words, he is the one who is brave, and Melanctha is the coward. There is irony here to when the reader recalls that before Melanctha learned

the "wisdom" of the world, she was a coward. She did not become involved with men because it meant nothing to her. Now Jeff is telling her that she is a coward because she is willing to take a chance on him.

They sit by the fire in "unloving silence" and at last Melanctha, who all this time has put up with Jeff, speaks her mind. "I certainly do wonder why always it happens to me I care of anybody who ain´t no ways good enough for me ever to be thinking to respect him."

The similarity between this statement and the key passages which have come before is striking. "Melanctha all her life loved and respected kind and good and considerate people." At first she had believed Jeff to be good, kind, loving, in other words, "all the things [she] had ever wanted" but in the face of the way he has been treating her, she no longer respects him. She has spent her life searching for goodness, always finding trouble, and this trouble comes in the form of a man who is no good.

At last the truth is out. Jeff gets up and he is silent. But Melanctha does not stand by her words. When he prepares to leave she retracts her statement instantly , telling him that she never meant what she said. Then she asks him "be good to me a little tonight when my head hurts so" (169). This love, however feeble, in any form, any quality, and kind, is better than none at all.

The ensuing conversation is remarkable. Jeff says, "I certainly been thinking you really mean what you have been just then saying to me."

Melanctha says, "But you say all the time to me Jeff, you ain´t no ways good enough in your loving to me, you certainly say to me all the time you ain´t no ways good or understanding to me."

Jeff's reply to this statement is nearly unbelievable."That certainly is what I say to you always, just the way I feel it to you Melanctha always, and I got it right in me to say it, and I have got a right in me to be very strong and feel it, and to be always sure to believe it, but it ain't right for you Melanctha to feel it. When you feel it so Melanctha, it does certainly make everything all wrong with our loving. It makes it so I certainly never can bear to have it" (169-170).

It is all right for him to feel that he is bad, and it is all right for her to agree with him, so long as she forgives him instantly. But for her to say that he is bad is wrong. And for her to believe it is to destroy the relationship.

Of all the things Jeff has disbelieved about what she says, this is the one statement he chooses to believe. He has not believed that she cares, that she loves him, that her steadfastness, fidelity and forgiving are true signs of her caring.

Again, he chooses to blame Melanctha for their failure to achieve understanding and harmony.

Melanctha tries again to mitigate, asking him to forget what she has said, but when she goes to sleep he begins again his thinking, which he has not done for a very long time. Melanctha wakes up screaming from a nightmare that he has gone away forever and pleads with him never to go away again.

Round Seven begins. But now things have changed between them. Joy has disappeared. Love has virtually disappeared, except for references in conversation and such instances as"Melanctha loved him to be there," which does not refer to the feeling between them. "Not loving" and

"unloving" and "all wrong with our loving" are beginning to replace the good feelings. "There was a weight on Jeff from now on" (171).

Melanctha interprets this weight as never having forgiven her for the earlier argument, and she again asks for forgiveness, but Jeff tells her that this isn't a matter of forgiving at all, but a matter of what she is really feeling. He tells her, "It's just only what you are feeling for me, makes any difference to me. I ain't ever seen anything since in you, makes me think you didn't mean it right, what you said about not thinking now any more I was good, to make it right of you to be really caring so very much to love me." He has latched onto what Melanctha said in the heat of the moment, and it has colored everything she has said since, and his attitude toward her. One almost gets the impression that he has been watching, waiting for another instance of her thinking he was the bad one.

Another pointless circular argument ensues. It is important to follow the train of this argument because it reveals what is happening between them. Melanctha tells Jeff that he has no right to be asking her to explain what she said in the heat of an argument, when she was tired and sick with one of her terrible headaches. He responds in anger that she has no right to use her headaches as a weapon against him. "You certainly ain't got no right to be always holding your pain out to show me." Then he goes on to say, "You act always like I been responsible all myself for all our loving one another... you act like as if it was me made you just begin it all with me. I ain't no coward... I certainly am right ready always... to stand all my own trouble for me, but I tell you straight now... I ain't going to be as if I was the reason you wanted to be loving and to be suffering so now with me" (172-73).

Melanctha replies, "But ain't you certainly ought to be feeling it so, to be right... Did I ever do anything but just let you do everything you wanted to me. Did I ever try to to make you be loving to me. Did I ever do nothing except just sit there ready to endure your loving with me...But I certainly never... did make any kind of way as if I wanted really to be having you for me." (173).

Who is right? They both think they are. Jeff says he didn't start it, Melanctha says that all she ever did was sit and wait for him. Melanctha made the first physical move toward Jeff, but in his invitation to her to be his "teacher" he also made a move toward her. It was mutual attraction and mutual action.

It is Melanctha who is right. She has done nothing except sit and endure him and his fumbling toward what he feels is love, which in actuality is a twisted, selfish and pious abuse.

Jeff is ready to storm out, but Melanctha again gives in, then he feels sorry for her and they are at peace again. Maybe.

The decline continues. Round Eight begins. This round is another period of transition, marked by the 'prolonged present' with the use of "now" beginning again:

> "Melanctha was now always making him feel her way... Melanctha acted now the way she had said it ways had been with them. Now it was always Jeff who had to do the asking. Now it was always Jeff who had to ask when would be the next time he should come to see her. Now always she was good and patient to him and now always she was kind and loving with him" (174).

The same hammer words fill the pages: "know," "understand," "doubt." But now it is a different struggle. The word "torment" replaces "uneasy." "From now on, Jeff had real torment in him." He is tormented by the question whether it was true that he was the one who made all this trouble for them. He is thinking hard. The familiar vascillation continues. He does not know whether he is right or wrong. He knows for certain that Melanctha is wrong. He feels resentment and anger toward her, then he feels again her sweetness. He is torn apart again with doubt, asking himself burning questions. "What could he know, who had such slow feeling in him. What could he ever know, who always had to find his way with just thinking. What could he know, who had to be taught such a long time about what was really loving" (174).

Then a different type of doubt creeps in. He now doubts the depth and reality of her love for him. "Now, deep in side him, there was always a doubt with Jeff, of Melanctha's loving. It was not a doubt yet to make him really doubting, for with that, Jeff never could be really loving, but always now he knew that something, and that not in him, something was wrong with their loving" (175). This is not his problem. It is not something in him. It is something in Melanctha. Does she really love him, or is she just pretending for his sake, because that is her nature? This question now torments him. He asks her for reassurance again and again, feeling like a beggar, that she is giving it "not out of her need, but from her bounty to him" (175). He tells her that if this is the case then he wants no part of this.

Melanctha treats him like a child, telling him he is foolish and a bother. "Oh you so stupid Jeff boy, of course I always love you. Always and always Jeff and I always just so good to you. Oh you so stupid Jeff and don't know when you got it good with me... Yes I love

you Jeff, how often you want me to tell you" (177).

But the reassurance falls on deaf ears. Again, Jeff listens to his own uncertainty, and not to her words. "Yes Jeff Campbell heard her, and he tried hard to believe her. He did not really doubt her but somehow it as wrong now, the way Melanctha said it. Jeff always now felt baffled with Melanctha. Something, he knew, was not right now in her. Something in her always now was making stronger the torment that was tearing every minute at the joy he once always had had with her" (177).

What joy? They had joy, once in a while, when Jeff stopped thinking and allowed himself to receive the love she was willing to give. But now again, he is letting his mind and his thoughts bring trouble to them. And, as usual, he is blaming it on her. This trouble is not his responsibility. It is something in Melanctha that is tearing them apart. It is not his fault. Now it is not just a niggling doubt, it is continuous real doubt. "Always no Jeff wondered did Melanctha love him. Always now he was wondering..." (177). He goes on with his thinking, and suddenly one night, lying in bed thinking, he realizes the truth. It all comes clear. He says, "I ain't a brute... Its all wrong the way I been worried thinking. We did begin fair, each not for the other but for ourselves, what we were wanting. Melanctha Herbert did it just like I did, because she liked it bad enough to want to stand it." So far his reasoning is clear, and the reader can accept what he says. It is true that they both entered into the relationship for their own selfish reasons, because they both wanted it. But then he goes on to say, "I certainly don't know now whether she is not real and true in her loving. I ain't got any way ever to find out if she is

real and true now always to me." Now we know that he is back on his old theme. He doesn´t, has never believed her. Her word is not enough. There is no way to really know. He goes on to say, "she certainly don´t remember right when she says I made her begin" and this is true, she began of her own accord, but he continues with the second half of his reasoning, "and then (that) I made her trouble. I been the way I felt it honest." And here is his own refusal to accept or see what he has done to destroy this relationship. He was always honest, belaboring his doubts, about Melanctha, about her character, and about what is the right way to live. He goes on, and one almost feels as if he´s ranting to himself in the darkness, about having to stand up for one´s own trouble. In other words, accept blame and responsibility for one´s own actions. The irony here is glaring. He has never accepted either. Then he falls back to sleep, "Free from his long doubting torment" and sleeps the sleep of the just.

The next day he delivers a lengthy sermon to Melanctha on the virtues of of bravery and accepting one´s share of trouble in life with dignity, without "hollering" about it, and bringing attention to oneself so that others will feel pity.

Melanctha again gets to the heart of the matter and tells him the truth. "I know what you mean now... You make a fuss now to me because I certainly just have stopped standing everything you like to be always doing so cruel to me. (180). She goes on to say, "You ain´t got no right kind of feeling for all I always been forgiving of you."

But he doesn´t listen. He has fixed now upon the idea of bravery in suffering. She is not the only one to suffer, he tells her, to which she replies, "Well, and ain´t I certainly always been the only person knows how to bear it. No... I certainly be glad to love anybody really

worthy, but I made so, I never seem to be able in this world to find him." This last phrase is the logical evolution of the phrases, wanting peace and love but finding only trouble.

Jeff's answer is remarkable in its blindness and blame casting again. He tells her, "No... you certainly Melanctha never going to any way be able ever to be finding of him. Can't you understand Melanctha, ever, how no man certainly ever really can hold your love for long times together. You certainly Melanctha, you ain't got down deep loyal feeling, true inside you, and when you ain't just that moment quick with feeling, then you certainly ain't ever got anything more there to keep you." How he can say that it the face of her steadfastness as opposed to his unsteadfastness is unfathomable.

Then follows a long argument on the theme of remembering. This particular episode is confusing to many readers because early in the story Stein slipped in the sentence "Melanctha never could remember right." She has always been a terrible story teller, managing to leave out large pieces of the tale so that it becomes a totally different story than what really happened. And now here is Jeff accusing her of remembering incorrectly.

Who is right? They are using the word "remember" differently. To Melanctha, remembering is holding on to the good feelings even through the bad. She says, "No, Jeff Campbell, it certainly ain't that way with me at all the way you say it... I am always knowing what it is I am wanting, when I get it. I certainly don't never have to wait till I have it, and then throw away what I got in me, and then come back and say, that's a mistake I just been making, it ain't never at all like I understood it, I want to have, bad, what I didn't think it was I

wanted." (183). Here she is using her power with words, mimicking Jeff and throwing his words back in his face. She says, I certainly don't think much of the way you always do it, always never knowing what it is you are ever really wanting and every body always got to suffer.. I don't certainly think there is much doubting which is better and the stronger with us two" (183).

"Remembering" also means living for the moment, which is what Jeff accuses Melanctha of doing. According to Bridgman, Melanctha's life lacks the continuity that a systematic and accurate memory can provide. Melanctha's response to this is "you don't remember nothing till you get home with your thinking everything all over." As Bridgman notes, "rather than displaying appropriate spontaneous reactions, [Jeff] behaves cruelly and clumsily, which in retrospect he regrets. "You go home Jeff Campbell and you begin with your thinking, and then it certainly is very easy for you to be good and forgiving. Bridgman explains that Melanctha speaks on behalf of immediacy. Her name for it is "remembering right." "For her, the human way to live is "to remember right just when it happens to you, so you have a right kind of feeling.. real feeling every meant when its {sic} needed."[14] Again this is movement versus stasis. Remembering in Jeff's sense is static and dead. Bridgman writes in Melanctha's defense that "Stein came to justify spontaneous composition as living in the present at the front edge of time. It seemed to her superior to living in historical memory, feeding on the aftermath of an existence of which one was never more than partially aware." Melanctha, with her faulty remembering, is living on the front edge of time.

At this point Jeff almost leaves her. He gets ready to storm out the door. But he doesn't. At the last second he again changes his mind

and takes her in his arms and tells her tenderly that he honestly and truly thinks she is wrong. And they "are good" to each other for awhile and then he leaves. Good here has taken a sexual connotation, and this is another irony, that Jeff, with his puritanical beliefs can be good to Melanctha only in sex.

Beginning Wandering

Round Nine. Now the tables have turned. Melanctha can never say outright what she thinks without Jeff jumping up ready to storm out, and so she is reduced to passive resistance. She does not fight, she avoids confrontations and long harangues by either surrounding herself with people, or just plain avoiding Jeff.

Movement begins again. The word "wander" appears again. "Melanctha had begun now once more to wander. Melanctha did not yet always wander, but a little now she needed to begin to look for other" (184). But the verbs are not in the progressive tense anymore. Instead they are in the simple past. "Melanctha had begun..." It is not an evolution toward wandering, away from Jeff. The move has been made. The action implies the decision is final. Stein's characteristic restraint and the understatement with which she describes Melanctha's act of giving up hope and searching elsewhere for love in others, has distracted readers from the real impact of this turning point. But in the face of the pain and suffering that has led to this point, the starkness of the prose is all the more striking. After so many months of always waiting and suffering at the hands of Jeff, she can not stand it any longer. She has had enough. She seeks friendship and comfort in the company of others. Always before she waited for Jeff. She always had time, waiting

patiently for him to make up his mind to come see her. Now she finds other things to do, and is often too busy to see him. "Now, Jeff you know I certainly can't be neglecting always to be with everybody just to see you. You come see me next week Tuesday Jeff, you hear me. I don't think Jeff I certainly be so busy Tuesday." This wounds his pride greatly, and he again feels like a beggar. The repetition, Jeff "was not sure yet that he really understood what it was Melanctha wanted" occurs again, but this time it is true he doesn't. Now she is really lying when she says she "certainly did love him just the same as always, only sure he knew now she certainly did seem to be right busy with all she certainly now had to be doing" (185). He does not ask. He feels he doesn't have the right to interfere. "All Jeff felt a right in himself to question, was her loving." (186). Which he has. Ad infinitum. Ad nauseum.

The word "suffering" reappears. Now they have changed places in their suffering. It is Jeff now who is suffering at the hands of Melanctha.

At this point the authorial voice intrudes into the story with an evaluation of what Stein designates as two natures: tender hearted versus passionate. Jeff is the tender-hearted, the type who never feels strong passion, and when this type does suffer they lose their tenderness, and their compassion for others who suffer. They become hard. They feel that if suffering is not so terrible for the, and they can bear it, then why can't others?

Melanctha, on the other hand, is one with a passionate nature. These are ones "who have always made themselves to suffer, that is all the kind of people who have emotions that come to them as sharp as a sensation. Suffering does them good because they always become more

tenderhearted and kind.

This authorial intrusion, inserted near the end of the relationship, gives us the key to both characters. This explains Jeff's reaction to Melanctha. And it also explains why Melanctha "always finds trouble." A passionate person, she feels everything deeply, plunges into feelings and suffers because of them. And thus she becomes more tender-hearted and giving and - by extension - caring and good to others.

Jeff, the tender-hearted one, ostensibly good, has no feelings to spare for others in their suffering.

The alienation and drifting apart continues. Melanctha continues to surround herself with more and more friends so that at first she and Jeff are almost never alone, and then so she has no time to arrange to even see him, and then finally she even misses appointments to see him.

Here too the tables have turned. Now it is Melanctha who does most of the talking and Jeff is silent, listening.

Somewhere along the line, although it is impossible to pinpoint where, Jeff has made the final commitment. His doubt is finally gone. All the words which have been associated with Jeff have been turned around. "Now every day with it, he knew how to understand Melanctha and he still had a real trust in her and he still had a little hope that some day they would once more get together.... but now they never any more were really trusting with each other.... He never doubted yet, that she was steady only to him, but somehow he could not believe much really in Melanctha's living....Jeff was no longer now in any doubt inside him. He knew very well now he really loved Melanctha."

The second half of this paragraph demonstrates clearly that

without a doubt it is Jeff who cannot remember. "In the days when they used to be together, Jeff had felt he did not know much what was inside Melanctha, but he knew very well, how very deep always was his trust in her;" It was his very lack of trust that brought them to this point. Now, however, "he knew [her] better, but now he never felt a deep trust in her. Now Jeff never could be really honest with her. He never doubted yet, that she was steady only to him, but somehow he could not believe much really in Melanctha's loving." The old familiar hedging -- the "and" and the "buts" demonstrate the depth of his self-delusion, when he can contradict himself within the space of a thought. He doesn't doubt her, but he can't believe that she really loves him.

Melanctha's patience has worn to the breaking point. She tells him "I never give nobody before Jeff, ever more than one chance with me, and I certainly been giving you most a hundred Jeff, you hear me" (187).

His reply is that if she really loved him she would give him a million chances. Her reply is a repetition of a thought that has been building slowly throughout. "I certainly don't know as you deserve that anyways from me" (187).

The word "deserve" has cropped up here and there in their conversations, and now it comes out full force. When he persists, she cuts him off short. "I am awful tired of all this talking now, you hear me" (188). And silences him. She has finally had enough of listening.

Ending Loving

After this point Jeff never asks whether or not she loves him anymore. Round Eleven. Things get worse and worse. Now it is Jeff who is patient. He knows that it is his turn to endure. He hears rumors

that she has begun to wander again, but even though he sees Jane Harden he doesn't ask because "Jeff was always loyal to Melanctha."

Stein's bitterness and irony in this passage are so blatant as to be almost overpowering. We are still within Jeff's mind, but the outright dis-honesty, self-delusion and self-pity, in the face of how abominably he has treated her make him utterly contemptible. This is clear as Stein records his continuing blind stupidity. "Jeff Campbell knew very well too now inside him, he did not really want Melanctha, now if he could no longer trust her, though he loved her hard and really knew now what it was to suffer" and "Now he knew he never any more could really trust her" (189).

He is continuing to fool himself, and believe that he is the good man who has done nothing to harm her. He is now the martyr, the wounded and wronged lover.

His convictions deepen. The word "know" appears again. Now he <u>does</u> know. He knows that he does not want her. He knows that Melanctha never did love him. But he is not bitter about it, "he was bitter only that he had let himself have a real illusion in him" and that "he had not got this new religion really, and he had lost what he before had to know what was good and had really beauty." He has also finally achieved wisdom. After some uncertainty - a little doubt as to whether she did or did not really love him - he returns again to the belief that she had never really had "real greatness for him." After she fails to appear at a prearranged meeting, he writes her a long letter telling her "I love you now because that's my slow way to learn what you been teaching, but I know now you certainly never had what seems to me real kind of feeling" (191). He tells her that no man can ever trust in her

because she can never remember and she can never be honest. He attempts to justify his actions, and perhaps we can speculate that he is not only trying to justify them to her but to himself. It is Jeff who can't remember.

Now he has reached the bottom. "Jeff Campbell could not think now, or feel anything else in him" (193). He remains for awhile in solitude, and then one day he returns to "what he knew was the right way" (193) and goes back to work. But without feeling. This word "feeling" appears six times in the space of one paragraph, as Jeff is remembering some of the things he had been feeling with Melanctha. And shame wells up in him as he remembers. "Always he blushed hot to think things he had been feeling... sometimes he shivered hot with shame when he remembered some things he once had been feeling" (194). Melanctha was right. He is and always has been ashamed of his feelings. Another of her statements has come true.

He goes on without feeling until one day in spring he sees a girl passing who looks like Melanctha. And then he remembers how he felt and feels suddenly how stupid he was to throw her from him. All the old circular vascillation return. All the important words reappear again. He "thought," he "wandered", he was "certain" and then in "doubt." He hurts himself physically "so that he could be sure he was really feeling, and he never could know what it was right, he now should be doing." So he writes her a letter, she says come to him and they have a reconciliation, but it is a fruitless repetition of the old pattern. She declares her love, he doesn't believe her. Melanctha knows that he doesn't. "I love you too Jeff, even though you don't never certainly seem to believe me." "Certainly" occurs seventeen times on page 197 and twelve times on 198. Both of them are declaring their love

in terms of great certainty. But it is only self-delusion. This word appears most often in times of doubt and uncertainty.

Round Twelve. Nothing has changed. Jeff sees Melanctha, but they never talk any more. "Jeff Campbell knew that he had learned to love deeply, that he always knew very well now in him, Melanctha had learned to be strong to be always trusting , that he knew too now inside him, but Melanctha did not really love him, that he felt always too strong for him. That fact always was there in him, and it always thrust itself firm, between them" (199).

That fact. That fact has not been confirmed except within Jeff's mind. From this point on they see each other often, but "Jeff Campbell was never any more a torment to Melanctha, he was only silent to her." There is no talking at all any more. She has surrounded herself with people so that he can no longer be near her alone.

It is at this point in the story that Stein brings us round full circle to Rose. Melanctha spends more and more time with Rose, and they wander together. But the relationship with Jeff dies an excruciatingly slow painful death. Jeff sees Melanctha once again. Melanctha admits that she has been the one who was bad to put him off for several days for no reason. Her reason in the same one that has motivated her actions all along. "Only you always certainly been so bad Jeff, and such a bother to me, and making everything always so hard for me, and I certainly got some way to do it to make it come back sometimes to you. You bad boy Jeff..." But the fact remains that she has always allowed him to. She continues to take him back whenever he comes around.

Round Thirteen. The two are happy together for awhile, then the

same pattern sets in: they are happy, then they are silent, and then sad and then very quiet. Melanctha tells him three times that she still loves him, but goes on to admit, "but not the kind of way of loving you are ever thinking it now Jeff with me. I ain't got certainly no hot passion any more now in me. You certainly have killed all that kind of feeling now Jeff in me. You certainly do know that Jeff, now the way I am always, when I am loving with you." Melanctha has changed places with Jeff. There is no more of that "strong hot love that makes you do anything for somebody that loves you" (122). Now she still loves him, but it is with the passionless friendly caring Jeff once displayed to other women. Jeff mistakes this lack of passion for not loving. He was right that she did it out of kindness and friendship. Now all she has left is the brotherly caring that Jeff was only able to give before he met Melanctha.

Jeff is very hurt, so hurt "that it almost killed him." He does, really and truly love her, "he certainly did know now what it was to have real hot love in him, and yet Melanctha certainly was right, he did not deserve she should ever give it to him." At this point the reader finds it hard to believe that Jeff is taking responsibility for her pain. He isn't. In the next breath he says, "You can't help it, anybody ever they way they are feeling." He couldn't help it. It wasn't his fault, and now it isn't Melanctha's either.

We return to the 'prolonged present,' almost as if to prolong, to draw out in the reader's consciousness the agony of this painful affair. Now Jeff feels real pain. The present progressive tense has not reappeared. Now the simple past and the stative are prevalent. "Now Jeff knew very well what it was to love Melanctha. Now Jeff Campbell knew he was really understanding. Now Jeff knew what it was to be good

to Melanctha. Now Jeff was good to her always" (204). The repetition of the hammer words here hold a bitter irony. The "now" could easily be replaced with "finally", now that it's too late. He has achieved "real wisdom" from the experience of loving hard and losing, but, he is a man, good to the end; it does not make him bitter, because "he knew he could be good, and not cry out for help to her to teach him how to bear it... Jeff knew now all through him that he was really strong to bear it." The word "brave" is not used here, but we can almost hear Jeff thinking it. He is brave n the face of this terrible suffering. He does not holler or show his pain. Like Melanctha, he suffers in silence.

Stein uses the word "understand" in the next paragraph. "Every day Jeff Campbell understood Melanctha Herbert better." And now he "sees" that she can't love him the way he wants her to, that strong hot love. He does not see that at one time she did.

They drift apart. He does not want to see her anymore, but he knows that he will always love her, he will always be loyal to her, even though she is not a religion to him anymore.

Twice in this last drawn out scene we encounter the phrase which seemed objective at the beginning and now has taken on an insidious subjectivity. "Melanctha Herbert had no way she ever really could remember." and "That Jeff must remember always, though now he never can trust her to be really loving to any man for always, she never did have any way she ever could remember." He knows that the failure of their love is Melanctha's fault because she cannot "remember right." He is blaming her to the last.

They part at last. He tells her "If she ever needed anybody to be

good to her, Jeff Campbell always would do anything he could to help her. He never can forget the things she taught him so he could be really understanding." (203).

Jeff returns to his old life, living regular and doing "everything the way he wanted it to be right for himself and all the colored people." (206). The word "learn" and "good" crop up once more. "He had learned to have a real love in him. That was very good to have inside him." He uses this new-found knowledge, strength and goodness to help his fellow man in their suffering.

CHAPTER FIVE

"MELANCTHA" - Part Two

We have seen the relationship between Jeff and Melanctha come full circle. Doomed from the start, it ends in failure and each goes on alone. The words Stein introduced to characterize the two followed them through their relationship to take on different meanings and brutal irony at the end.

At this point we can to proceed forward to the end of Melanctha's life by returning to the beginning of the novella and examining all the various other types of repetition that have been accumulating over the past 130 pages. The phrases and sentences which have been repeated throughout, viewed together with the repetitions of words, will complete the portrait of Melanctha.

PART FOUR

Alone Again

In this last section, with Jeff no longer in Melanctha's life, the perspective shifts away from Jeff's point of view to Melanctha's. We witness the remainder of Melanctha's life primarily through her eyes.

As noted above, Stein began "Melanctha" in media res, starting with Rose and the death of her baby. On the first page she writes of the death of the child due to Rose's carelessness:

> The child though it was healthy after it was born, did not live long. Rose Johnson was careless and negligent and selfish, and when Melanctha had to leave for a few days, the baby died. Rose Johnson had liked the baby well enough and perhaps she just forgot it for awhile, anyway the child was dead and Rose and Sam her husband were very sorry but then these things came so often in the negro world in Bridgepoint, that they neither of them thought about it very long (85).

This paragraph is repeated verbatim on page 225. We have returned to the opening scene of the text with an exact re-statement of the entire scene, with differences so slight as to be negligible.[1]

> The baby though it was healthy after it was born did not live long. Rose Johnson was careless and negligent and selfish and when Melanctha had to leave for a few days the baby died. Rose Johnson had liked her baby well enough and perhaps she just forgot it for a while, anyway the child was dead and Rose and Sam were very sorry, but then these things came so often in the negro world in Bridgepoint that they neither of them thought about it very long (225).

Calvin Brown classifies this type of repetition as "the frame." It is classified thus because of its function, which is to set off an episode by framing it between a statement of some sort and a repetition of that statement. The purpose here in "Melanctha" serves, Bauer asserts, as a "kind of hinge, opening and closing the doors of the entire narrative."[2] It is, as are all repetitions in "Melanctha," designed to

catch the reader's attention, alerting the reader to the fact that the story has come full circle back to where it started, to emphasize that nothing has changed, nothing has been gained, and Melanctha is where she was when she began - alone and unloved.

A second significant passage was first introduced on page 87: "Sometimes the thought of how all her world was made, filled the complex, desiring Melanctha with despair. She wondered often, how she could go on living when she was so blue" (87).

In the following two paragraphs the word "blue" is repeated four more times, to hammer home the depth of Melanctha's despair, and also to establish the tone of depression which pervades the entire novel, and cheapens and belies the periods of "joy" and "happiness" which Jeff and Melanctha experience ever so briefly during their relationship.

This passage is repeated again on page 89, "Melanctha wondered often how it was she did not kill herself when she was so blue. Often she thought this would be really the best way for her to do."

The fact that this passage is repeated so closely after the first occurrence leads the reader to predict that possibly Melanctha will, in fact, kill herself, despite Rose's cheery no nonsense pep talks. On page 87, Stein writes

> Rose Johnson did not see it the least bit that way. "I don't see Melanctha why you should talk like you would kill yourself just because you're blue. I'd never kill myself Melanctha just 'cause I was blue. I'd maybe kill somebody else Melanctha 'cause I was blue, but I'd never kill myself. If I ever killed myself Melanctha it'd be by accident, and if I ever killed myself by accident Melanctha, I'd be awful sorry."

This passage is repeated nearly verbatim, setting up a frame within a frame:

> Rose Johnson never saw it the least bit that way. "I don't see Melanctha why you should talk like you would kill yourself just because you're blue. I'd never kill myself Melanctha cause I was blue. I'd maybe kill somebody else but I'd never kill myself. If I ever killed myself, Melanctha it'd be by accident and if I ever killed myself by accident, Melanctha, I'd be awful sorry..."[3]

The exactness of the repetition could lead the reader to conjecture that this repetition could possibly be a "key passage" in the book: "one of the fundamental ideas.. or sometimes, the single idea on which the entire work is based."[4]

This is a reasonable possibility. However, the story does not bear this out, as I will demonstrate, even though the repetitions of "Melanctha was so blue..." continue. This repetition is abandoned after page 89. The feeling of despair Melanctha feels does not occur in any period of her life until Round Seven, when her relationship with Jeff is failing. At this point Melanctha actually cries out in despair, "I am always my head, so it hurts me it half kills me, and my heart jumps so, sometimes I think I die so when it hurts me, and I am so blue always, I think sometimes I take something to just kill me..." (172). Her outcry marks the beginning of the real depression that was intimated by the two repetitions in Part One of the text. The repetition of Melanctha's emotional state heightens the reader's experience of her pain and suffering, and intensifies the sense of its

prolongation over the entire remainder of her life.

The pain goes on. The phrase is repeated again and again during the final section of the story:

> Sometimes the thought of how all her world was made, filled the complex, desiring Melanctha with despair. She wondered, often, how she could go on living when she was so blue. Sometimes Melanctha thought she would just kill herself, for sometimes she thought this would be really the best thing for her to do. (211).
>
> Then Melanctha would get very blue, and she would say to Rose, sure she would kill herself, for that certainly now was the best way she could do (226).

Rose reiterates this theme in one of her conversations with Sam her husband. "And then Sam, sometimes, you hear it, she always talk like she kill herself all the time she is so blue" (229). The fact that Rose tells us that Melanctha brings up the subject continually, even when the authorial voice does not tell us, intensifies the impression of deep sorrow.

This passage is repeated in variation twice more on the second to the last page, just before Melanctha's death. In the first Rose actually puts into words the question which was implicit at the beginning:

> "I expect some day Melanctha kill herself, when she act so bad like she do always and then she get so awful blue. Melanctha always says that the only way she ever can think it a easy way for her to do... I certainly do think she will

> most kill herself sometime, the way she always say it would be easy way for her to do. I never see nobody ever could be so awful blue" (235).

This time Stein answers the conjecture immediately. "But Melanctha Herbert never really killed herself because she was so blue, though often she thought this would be really the best way for her to do. Melanctha never killed herself, she only got a bad fever and went into the hospital where they took good care of her and cured her." The adverb "really" here implies that perhaps even if she didn't commit suicide outright, her state of depression could and probably did cause her run down state which led to her illness, subsequent hospitalization and eventual death.

This terrible depression that was hinted at in Part One and literally forced upon the reader's consciousness throughout the whole of Part Three is perhaps the leading cause for Melanctha's death. But it is not the "key passage." It is not <u>the</u> fundamental idea upon which the work is based. This state of depression is ultimately an effect in itself which, in turn, is subsequently a cause for another state: death. The real heart of the story, the key to Melanctha, the cause of all her troubles, lies elsewhere, in a passage we have already discussed above. In paraphrase: All her life Melanctha wanted peace and quiet, and loved and respected goodness, and all her life she found nothing but trouble.

As we have noted, this passage was repeated many times throughout not only Part One but also throughout Parts Two and Three, through Melanctha's affair with Jane and then her affair with Jeff. In Chapter Four we focussed on the first half of the phrase and noted the

evolution of the sentence from Melanctha's desire to what she perceives as the fulfillment of that desire. Now we can focus on the second half of each sentence:

> Melanctha Herbert was always seeking rest and quiet, and always she could only find new ways to be in trouble (89).
>
> Melanctha Herbert was always seeking peace and quiet, and she could always only find new ways to get excited. (92).
>
> And Melanctha all her life loved and respected kind and good and considerate people. Melanctha always loved and wanted peace and gentleness and goodness and all her life for herself poor Melanctha could only find new ways to be in trouble. (93).
>
> ...and all her life Melanctha wanted and respected gentleness and goodness and this man always gave her good advice and serious kindness, and Melanctha felt such things deeply, but she could never let them help her or affect her to change the ways that always made her keep herself in trouble (99).
>
> She found [Jeff] good and strong and gentle and very intellectual, and all her life Melanctha liked and wanted good and considerate people (109).
>
> Melanctha Herbert all her life long, loved and wanted good, kind and considerate people. Jefferson Campbell was all the things that Melanctha had ever wanted (125).

We noted that Jeff was the embodiment of her wishes and that this 'key passage' was dropped when she felt that she found the object of her desire, except in a sort of echo which kept repeating in Jeff's

thoughts: "He never really knew what Melanctha wanted."

It is critical to again point out the conjunction which links the two clauses together. In the first three sentences Stein uses the coordinating conjunction "and" as if Melanctha's finding excitement and trouble are merely the next step in a sequence of events. The adversative conjunction "but" would have given these pairs of thoughts entirely different meanings, implying that although Melanctha wanted peace and happiness an unexpected twist of fate led her to sorrow. But the "and" here implies that finding trouble is a logical and expected continuation of the pattern her life has taken. This implication is particularly apparent in the sentence, "Melanctha always loved and wanted peace and gentleness and goodness and all her life... Melanctha could only find new ways to be in trouble" (93).

In the next repetition Stein varies this conjunction to "but:" "Melanctha felt such things deeply, but she could never let them help her." Here Stein replaces "and" with "but." This adversative conjunction placed in juxtaposition to the previous three repetitions does not contradict the meaning implied, it instead reinforces it. "But" here is used in the contrastive sense to mean that in spite of the fact that she wanted gentleness and goodness she could never let them affect her, which implies a helplessness on Melanctha's part, the inability to change the course of her life. Taken together, these sentences display Stein's determinism, that Melanctha was born to this fate and she cannot change it or help herself.

Stein links this key passage to the other significant repetition of Melanctha's depression on page 199, at precisely the point when she brings Rose Johnson back into the story:

> Then, too, Rose had it in her to be sorry for the subtle, sweet-natured, docile, intelligent Melanctha Herbert who always was so blue sometimes and always had had so much trouble. Then, too, Rose could scold Melanctha, for Melanctha Herbert never could know how to keep herself from trouble (199).

Here Stein uses the causal conjunction "because," to demonstrate again Melanctha's helplessness in the face of her own character which leads her to get involved in relationships which give her nothing but trouble.

This phrase, at the turning point in Melanctha's life provides a link between all the key repetitions previously made and a bridge between all those which occur from then on. I shall examine each in turn.

First, this variation is a logical step in the evolution of the phrases beginning with "Melanctha wanted...." Here Stein is reinforcing the helplessness of Melanctha even further by employing the causal conjunction "for" to show that this is the reason why Rose needed to scold Melanctha. The "never" here also strengthens this impression of Melanctha's inability to direct her own life. "Never could know" is distinctly reminiscent of Lena, and her powerlessness.

The evolution continues:

> "Always Melanctha Herbert wanted peace and quiet, and always she could only find new ways to get excited." (207)
>
> "...and all her life Melanctha loved and wanted good and kind and considerate people, and always Melanctha loved and

> wanted people to be gentle to her, and always she wanted to be regular, and to have peace and quiet in her, and always Melanctha could only find new ways to be in trouble" (212).

At this point we need to focus on the second half of this phrase, "Melanctha could only find trouble." Now Stein begins to pick up all the threads she has been spinning and weave them into one:

> Rose was always now with Melanctha... Rose always was telling Melanctha Herbert the right way she should do, so that she would not always be in trouble. But Melanctha Herbert could not help it, always she would find new ways to get excited. Melanctha was already now to find new ways to be in trouble. And yet Melanctha Herbert never wanted not to do right. Always Melanctha Herbert wanted peace and quiet, and always she could only find new ways to get exited (207).
>
> And so it was Melanctha Herbert found new ways to be in trouble (208).

Stein qualifies the last phrase:

> "But it was not very bad this trouble, for these white men... never meant very much to Melanctha. It was only that she liked it to be with them... and it was just good to Melanctha, now a little, to feel real reckless with them.

In these last repetitions Stein is not just implying Melanctha's inability to change herself. She states outright, "Melanctha could not help it," and then employs the adversative conjunction "yet" with the

additive conjunction, as if to say: and yet she didn't want to be bad. She wanted to do right. But "trouble" is her only fate.

The next repetition drives this implication even further home with the causal conjunction: And so the result of her actions is that she finds only trouble.

In these repetitions Stein uses the words "excitement" and "trouble" interchangeably. Melanctha finds both. It seems that Melanctha finds "excitements," which, if we return to Jeff's usage of the word, means the opposite of living "the right way," in other words, the way good colored people should live. "Excitement" is indecent living - free and easy sex, gambling, drinking, -- all the vices of modern living. The type of excitement she is finding leads only to "trouble."

At this point we can clearly and completely define the word "trouble." "Trouble" is involvement with men. "Trouble" is the heartache and pain caused by rash actions and jumping recklessly into relationships that have no hope of lasting. "Trouble" is also allowing oneself to be vulnerable and open to others. It is this trouble that leads to "suffering." The "trouble" and "suffering" Stein alluded to in Part One are the pain of loving "too hard and much too often" (89). Melanctha, as Stein told us in the beginning is "sudden and impulsive and unbounded in some faith," the faith that someday someone will fill her with love and answer her needs. "And then she would suffer and be strong in her repression." Again the "and" to imply that this is a foregone conclusion. That someone never comes along, and she remains unfulfilled.

At this point, in order to gain a complete picture of the way in which Stein is picking up the various threads of repetitions and

weaving them together to create a whole, we must return to the story and examine this evolution as it is woven into the fabric of the story itself.

"Friends"

Stein begins Part Four with the phrase, "Melanctha Herbert, now that she was all through with Jeff Campbell was free to be with Rose and the new men she met now." (207). Stein uses the word "free" as if to suggest that Melanctha has really and truly made a break with Jeff and that she can continue her life without being shackled and dragged down by Jeff.

But the optimism intimated in one paragraph is shattered in the next by another repetition of the phrase "always she would find new ways to get excited." Melanctha could not help it. It is her fate. This repetition is couched in the modal, to set the stage for the future. She would never be free of this need to get excited. This is intensified with the reiteration of the same phrase in the following paragraph, with the adverb "always." "Always she could only find new ways to get excited." She is not free. She is bound, if not by Jeff, by her own character and personality traits of which she cannot break loose.

Rose scolds and nags her to act "right" and not to consort with white men. The next repetition of "finding trouble," carries with it the clause that this was not bad trouble because none of these men meant much to Melanctha. In the next sentence we see Melanctha rationalizing away the fact that she is with white men: "It was only that she liked it to be with them... and it was just good to

Melanctha... to feel real reckless with them." In other words, her behavior is not bad because it doesn't mean anything. It's just a release of energy.

The following short section paints a picture of a fairly pleasant existence. On the surface, Melanctha's life seems to have settled in a pattern that could almost be called happy. The word "pleasant" occurs twice, along with a description of hot summer days, laughter and Melanctha acting with the same reckless abandon as she did when she was younger. Perhaps she has recovered from the crushing defeat of the affair with Jeff.

But then Stein inserts the phrase "And then Rose was so sorry for Melanctha, when she was so blue sometimes, and wanted somebody should come and kill her." The person the world sees is only a facade. The happiness that shows on the surface is not there underneath.

The next paragraph is crucial:

> "And Melanctha Herbert clung to Rose in the hope that Rose could save her. Melanctha felt the power of Rose's selfish, decent kind of nature. It was so solid, simple, certain to her. Melanctha clung to Rose, she loved to have her scold her, she always wanted to be with her. She always felt a solid safety in her. Rose always was, in her way, very good to let Melanctha be loving to her. Melanctha never had any way she could really be a trouble to her. Melanctha never had any way that she could ever get real power, to come close inside to her. Melanctha was always very humble to her. Melanctha was always ready to do anything Rose wanted from her. Melanctha needed badly to

have Rose always willing to let Melanctha cling to her."

This paragraph strips away the pleasant surface to show what is really there. The carefree happy Melanctha is clinging to Rose, needing somebody, anybody to care for her. "Scolding" in this context is similar to the cook scolding Lena: it is an expression of caring. None of the relationships Melanctha involves herself in mean anything to her, but she is still desperately searching for love, and in Rose she hopes to find a safe caring. The demanding selfishness of Rose is much easier to bear than solitude. This paragraph finishes with another repetition of "sometimes Melanctha thought she would just kill herself, (211)." Here again we are given a graphic glimpse of the utter despair that Melanctha is feeling.

Two pages later, Stein reiterates the phrase, "Melanctha loved and wanted people to be gentle to her... " and then tells us again that "Melanctha needed badly to have Rose, to believe her and to let her cling to her. Rose was the only steady thing Melanctha had to cling to and so Melanctha demeaned herself to be like a servant to wait on, always to be scolded, by this ordinary, sullen, black, stupid, childish woman" (213).

Stein is finally answering the question which she asked on page 86: "Why did the subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl Melanctha Herbert love and do for and demean herself in service to this coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish Rose..." (86) On that page Stein set up a contrast of positive traits in Melanctha - subtle, intelligent, attractive - against the negative traits of Rose - coarse, sullen, unmoral, promiscuous Rose.

Why did Melanctha demean herself? She needed to. She needed

desperately to have someone love her. Rose has a different kind of power than Melanctha's father. Rose has the power of appearing to be a pillar of strength for Melanctha. She has the power of seeming to be the answer to Melanctha's needs. She has the power of knowing what Melanctha wants and how to use Melanctha's vulnerability to her advantage until Melanctha is of no more use to Rose.

The passages displaying Melanctha's desperate vulnerability tie in with the other key repetition "Melanctha all her life wanted and respected gentleness and goodness... and loved and respected kind and good and considerate people." Because she is so vulnerable, Melanctha is willing to accept even the crumbs of kindness which Rose throws to her, the semblance of caring demonstrated by the scolding and dictating of Rose and belied by her coarseness in her treatment of her own child and her friendship to Melanctha.

We must return to Stein's theory that there are two types of people: those who need to love and those who need to be loved. Melanctha needs - desperately - to be loved. And now her need is so great that anybody will do. And Rose allows her to take care of her in return for a pittance of caring in the form of scolding.

There is such pathos in the pain and suffering in those terse sentences! More than through the repetitions of her "blue-ness" and desire to kill herself, we learn through the starkness of the prose; we get a graphic glimpse of the depth of Melanctha's despair. To need to cling to anybody, not the least of which is one as unlikable and unsavory as Rose, is to reach the bottom.

But we need to go even deeper than that, to ask the question why does Melanctha need love so badly that she will sacrifice herself and all she is and has for these crumbs of "love."

Stein answers this question too, in the course of a conversation between Rose and Sam. Rose is continually telling Sam to be kind to Melanctha. She explains that "she had such a bad time always with that father, and he was awful mean to her always that awful black man, and he never took no kind of care ever to her, and he never helped her when her mother died so hard." Then she comes to the crux of the matter. "One day Melanctha was real little, and she heard her ma say to her pa, it was awful sad to her, Melanctha had not been the one the Lord had took from them stead of the little brother who was dead in the house there from fever."

So there it is. The suffering intimated throughout, laid bare. To be begrudged her existence because she is alive instead of a better-loved younger brother. Now the reader can understand such sentences as "Melanctha Herbert had not loved herself in childhood. All of her youth was bitter to remember" (90). We can also understand she "had not loved her father and her mother" and also why "they had found it very troublesome to have her... [because of] a tongue that could be very nasty." That bitterness is not misplaced, nor is it the product of an over-active mind.

Rose continues her story. "She always is being just so good to everybody and nobody ever there to thank her for it. I never did see nobody ever Sam... like that poor Melanctha always has it, and she always so good with it, and never no murmur in her, and never no complaining from her, and just never saying nothing with it." Her words here echo a theme which has occurred at the beginning of the story: "It was never Melanctha's way, even in the midst of her worst trouble to complain to any one of what happened to her, but nevertheless somehow

everyone who knew Melanctha always knew how much she suffered" (92).

Melanctha has spent her life, not only trying to find the love she was not given from her parents, she has also tried valiantly to turn that ugliness around and bring some good into the world. She will not impose her suffering on others.

Another sentence which was repeated throughout, furthers the theme of Melanctha's goodness, kindness and caring. "Melanctha did everything a woman could" (pp. 85, 110, 125, 139, 222, 224).The sentence was always repeated in connection with Melanctha's care of her mother and of Rose. Uncomplaining, unstinting of her own energy, Melanctha works herself to the bone caring for others.

This suffering in silence brings a brutal irony to Jeff's false heroics, to his lectures on being game and "not hollering" when he tells her, "I know all about how you are always making a fuss to be proud because you don't holler so much when you run in to where you ain't got any business to be, and so you get hurt, the way you ought to" (166). Jeff, whose mother loved her boy well, does not know what real pain is.

Jem

Stein has answered all the reader's questions and completed the picture of Melanctha. But the story is not finished. Her life continues to wind down, and the pattern of entering into a relationship and then being abandoned is repeated twice more.

Melanctha has come to rely emotionally upon Rose. She clings to Rose. Stein has given us a contradictory set of descriptive adjectives concerning Rose, who is "coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black, childish... unmoral, promiscuous and shiftless" (86). Most of the

adjectives are negative, except the word "decent," but Stein has explained that trait away with the insertion, "... she needed decent comfort. Her white training had only made for habits, not for nature" (86). Although she was raised by whites and now belongs to a church, she does not care for religion, she merely uses it and the appearance of being religion to her own ends. And it has fulfilled her needs. While the attractive Melanctha has failed to find a suitable husband, the sullen stupid promiscuous Rose has found one. She marries Sam, "a good man... kindly, simple, earnest steady" (211).

After her marriage, Rose continues to use Melanctha. Melanctha does everything Rose needs but Rose is "shrewd in her simple selfish nature" (214) and does not ask her to come live with them. She is perfectly willing to use Melanctha for her own purposes, capitalizing upon Melanctha's need for the "safety [Melanctha] always felt when she was near her" (215).

But still, this friendship does not fill Melanctha's need for total love. She begins "to feel she must begin again to look and see if she could find what it was she had always wanted." That love which she has been denied. The word "wander" appears once more as she sets out again to search.

Then she meets Jem on the street. A sprightly exchange of words takes place, but she "escapes" before talk advances to action. She sees him several days later, and "soon [begins] to like him." (217).

It seems that Melanctha has finally met her man. Jem is everything she could have wished in a man. He is "a dashing kind of fellow... a straight man... [and] and reckless man... He knew how to win out" (217). Better yet, "Jem was more game even than Melanctha.

Jem always had known what it was to have real wisdom. Jem had always all his life been understanding."

He is successful, he knows how to win, and he has power, the power of success, the power of sexual attractiveness. Here we encounter another different version of what Melanctha wants. "Always all her life, Melanctha Herbert loved successful power." (217). This sentence is another variation on the theme of what Melanctha wants in life. One gets the impression that she is so overwhelmed by this dashing, handsome man that she has lost sight of her real purpose and her goals. Bauer has pointed out that "the Jem Richards pattern is both an intensification and a repetition of the horsetamer mystique foreshadowed in the naive, tentative overtures extended to Melanctha by John, the Bishops' coachman, whose attention to Melanctha so angers her father. With John and Richards both what essentially happens is that Melanctha stumbles into relationships she cannot tame. John and Richards are likened to horses and the "wild life/wildlife" image that repels Jeff Campbell as much as it attracts Melanctha."[5]

The impression of overpowering infatuation is verified in the repetition of the phrase "Melanctha's joy made her foolish" (219, 220, 224); "Melanctha's love for Jem had made her foolish" (219); and "She was mad and foolish in the joy she had there" (219).

Melanctha throws herself completely into this relationship. "Now in Jem Richards Melanctha found everything she had ever need to content her... Jem Richards was a straight decent man, whom other men always look up to and trusted. Melanctha needed badly a man to content her." At last she has found true love. Jem begins to talk of marriage and gives her a ring to show the they are engaged. The words "joy" and "love" dominate these pages.

The foolishness referred to in the repetitions is the foolishness of happiness. In her delight, Melanctha lets out her joy, talking and telling everyone that she is engaged to be married to this fine upstanding man. "Melanctha Herbert never thought she could ever again be in trouble" (220).

But the affair is short-lived. Jem, that lucky man, finds that his luck has fun out. He has trouble with his betting, he is unable to pay his debts and there is the possibility of him going to jail. Melanctha, still carried away with love for him, tells him that she will always love him and no matter what she will wait for him and marry him. She talks too much. The phrase "Melanctha's love had surely made her mad and foolish" appears again, and the second repetition is completed by the clause, "she should be silent now and let him do it." Jem is a proud man, "not a kind of man to want a woman to be strong to him, when he was in trouble with his betting. That was not the kind of a time when a man like him needed to have it."

So Melanctha's foolishness has another facet. It is her strength in adversity. This is her recourse in trouble. Stein repeats another characteristic of Melanctha which she gave us in Part One: "She was only strong and sweet and in her nature when she was really deep in trouble, when she was fighting so with all she had..." (92). Melanctha is "never so strong and sweet and in her nature as when she was deep in trouble, when she was fighting so with all she had " (222). Which is what a proud man like Jem does not want. So he sees her less and less as he struggles to make up his debts and recoup his losses. Melanctha occupies herself with taking care of Rose, whose baby is due. She tries not to be foolish in the sense of bragging like Rose had done, jumping

the gun as if marriage was a certainty with Jem. Now she is silent, hoping.

Now Stein repeats a phrase that dominated the entire relationship with Jeff, only at this point the tables have turned. "Melanctha did not know what it was Jem Richards wanted." This time there is no irony. Melanctha is genuinely perplexed. Jem is being as unreliable as Jeff. He does not like it when she talks about marriage, but when she says, "All right, I never wear your ring no more Jem, we aint´ not any more to meet ever like we ever going to get really regular married," then Jem did not like it either. What was it Jem Richards really wanted?" (223). So poor Melanctha takes to wearing his ring around her neck, and now it is she who vascillates between trust and doubt. "And so Melanctha sometimes was really trusting, and sometimes she was all sick inside her with her doubting." (223).

The relationship continues to decline. Jem and Melanctha have long talks, but the pattern of happiness versus bitterness, quarreling and then reconciliation continues a la Jeff. The only comfort Melanctha can find is taking care of Rose "till she was so tired she could hardly stand it" (224).

Rose´s husband Sam, who has stood by and seen all this take place, now begins to feel sorry for Melanctha. "Sam Johnson began now to be very gentle and a little tender for Melanctha" (226). She has had such trouble in her life, that as time goes on his feelings become more and more favorable. "Sam Johnson always, more and more, was good and gentle to Melanctha" (228). There is no irony in the use of "good" in reference to Sam. He is gentle, decent, honest and kind, one of the few in the entire story. He begins to defend Melanctha when Rose talks her down. In the passage on page 229, we see the workings of Sam´s mind

as he speaks. He finds that defending Melanctha is bad policy and attempts to talk himself out of a corner. The paragraph begins, "At first Sam tried a little to defend Melanctha... and Sam liked the ways Melanctha had to be quiet to him... when she was there and heard him talking, and then Sam liked the sweet way she always did everything so nicely for him." Then he quickly qualifies and reassures Rose that there is nothing more to it than that: "but Sam never liked to fight with anybody ever, and surely Rose knew best about Melanctha and anyway Sam never did really care much about Melanctha. Her mystery never had had any interest for him. Sam liked it that she was sweet to him... but Melanctha never would be important to him." We find him hastily backing away from her defense under the heat of Rose's wrath. He reassures Rose: "All Sam ever wanted was to have a little house;" he agrees with Rose, "Jem Richards was a bad man to behave so to her, but that was always the way a girl got it when she liked that kind of a fast fellow;" he finally bows out of the whole conversation. "Anyhow Melanctha was Rose's friend, and Sam never cared to have anything to do with the kind of trouble always came to women, when they wanted to have men, who never could know how to behave good and steady to their women" (229).

The following paragraph traces the next step in Sam and Melanctha's relationship. "And so Sam never said much to Rose about Melanctha... now he began less and less to see her. Soon Melanctha never came a more to the house to see Rose and Sam never asked Rose anything about her." The understatement in the sentences give the impression that Stein has merely glossed the surface of many harsh words and harsher feelings about the subject of Melanctha in that

household.

Jealous Rose now thrusts Melanctha from her. She finds more and more reasons not to have Melanctha around: she doesn't need help, Sam is tired, Sam doesn't like people around when he eats dinner. She begins sending Melanctha away before Sam comes home from work. Melanctha does not understand what is happening. She needs this friendship so desperately that she does not dare broach the subject and ask why Rose is doing this to her. "Melanctha dared not ask Rose why she acted in this way to her. Melanctha badly needed to have Rose always there to save her. Melanctha wanted badly to cling to her and Rose had always been so solid for her." (231) But one day Melanctha stays a little later and meets Sam who speaks kindly to her. The next day Rose will not even let her come in the house.

Her speech is unspeakably cruel. Rose, like Jeff, turns things around so that it is Melanctha's fault. "I certainly don't... think you got any right ever to be complaining the way I been acting to you... nobody ever been more patient to you than I always been to like you." The words "honest" and "trust" appear. Rose declares that Melanctha has never been honest to her. Rose can never trust her. People have been talking, telling her about Melanctha. Rose self-righteously asserts that she has always tried to make Melanctha act decently and do the right thing.

There is gross irony here. Stein has only used the word "promiscuous" as an adjective to describe Rose. Rose, was just as free and indiscriminate in sex as Melanctha, but merely for the purpose of having sex. "Wisdom" and "experience" had no place with such a person whom Stein has characterized as "decent, sullen, ordinary, ...[an] unmoral, promiscuous shiftless" woman (210). She is the epitome of the

type of person Jeff would call "bad," one who "does it like an animal" (124). Rose, who "kept company, and was engaged, first to this colored man and then to that, and always she made sure she was engaged, for Rose had strong the sense of proper conduct." (88). And now Rose presumes to sit in judgment upon Melanctha and abandon their friendship in the name of decency.

There is also gross irony in Rose's use of the phrase "the right way" when she has scolded Melanctha about her behavior and the types of men she has been consorting with. Rose is passing judgement upon Melanctha for acting just as she acted before she married Sam. From her secure position as a married woman she can now ignore her past life and condemn her friend who is still living in that same manner as before:

> "No Melanctha... you never can have no kind of a way to act right, the way a decent girl has to do, and I done my best always to be telling it to you Melanctha Herbert, but it don't never do no good to tell nobody how to act right; they certainly never can learn when they ain't got no sense right to know it, and you never have no sense right Melanctha to be honest... you don't know never the right way, any kind of decent girl has to be acting...

Thus, because Melanctha has no sense of "proper conduct," Rose does not want any part of her anymore. "Me and Sam, we don't never any more want you to be setting your foot in my house here..." (233). And she shuts the door in Melanctha's face.

Melanctha is absolutely devastated by Rose's rejection. She "stood like one dazed, she did not know how to bear this blow that almost

killed her." This phrase is a repetition of the description of Jeff's feelings when Melanctha tells him finally that she has "no hot passion any more," that he had finally "killed all that kind of feeling" (203). "Jeff Campbell was hurt so that it almost killed him." But this first occurrence is ironic. Jeff has no right to be hurt so. The final denial of love by Melanctha was a direct effect of all his actions and lack of action until that point. Melanctha, on the other hand, has only one friend, and that is Rose. To be repudiated so summarily is a shattering blow:

> "Melanctha Herbert was all sore and bruised inside her. [She] had needed Rose always to believe her, [she] needed Rose always to let her cling to her, Melanctha wanted badly to have somebody who could make her always feel a little safe inside her, and now Rose had sent her from her" (233).

The next passage again reiterates that it is love that Melanctha has been searching for all this time. "Melanctha wanted Rose more than she had ever wanted all the others. Rose always was so simple, solid, decent, for her." Her loss is unimaginable. "Melanctha was lost, all the world went whirling in a mad weary dance around her. [She] never had any strength alone ever to feel safe inside her." (234). She needed so terribly to have someone care, fuss over her and scold, that without that one anchor in her life, she is totally cast adrift.

Rose has delivered the final blow. "Melanctha knew now, way inside her, that she was lost, and nothing any more could ever help her." (234).

But even now her troubles are not over. Jem too abandons her. Melanctha knows that he will. She can feel it coming, but after the

loss of Rose has no strength to even fight it or plead. Jem´s cruelty is equal to Rose´s. He sets her up by asking her if she still cares for him, and when she wants to know why he asks such a question he replies, "Because I just don´t give a damn now for you any more Melanctha" (235).

The loss of Jem is a blow, but it is Rose´s friendship that hurts the most. "Rose Johnson had worked in to be the deepest of all Melanctha´ emotions" (234).

Melanctha goes into her final downhill slide into deep depression and final death. She never sees Rose, Jem or Jeff again, and so finally dies in a hospital for consumptives, alone, denied of the one thing she wanted most in life - love.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

After having determined the need for a theory of repetition that provides a basis with which to study repetition in literary texts, I developed, in Chapter One, a theory of repetition through a discussion of the theories of textlinguistics, cohesion in English, and the phenomenological and transactional theories of reading. This theory was based upon the notion that all discourse is an act of communication with a sender, a receiver and a message.

Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five were analyses of the individual novellas in Three Lives: "The Good Anna," "The Gentle Lena," and "Melanctha." All three stories embody Stein's view of determinism - that one's life does not change. Life to the three women is repetitious, not repetitive. Their lives did not increase in force, their actions and emotional states were repeated with less impact at each recurrence, to no particular end, until they each died lonely alienated deaths, remarked and remembered by few.

Although in "Melanctha" the progressive tense and the seemingly overlapping cycles in the affair of Jeff and Melanctha created the illusion of movement and progress there was actually no movement at all - merely a continuous recurring of self- defeating and ultimately fatal behavioral patterns.

We have seen how the repetitions have worked together in the three stories. The process of reading through the work, allowing the

repetitions to shape the evocation of the text has created a profoundly different interpretation than has hitherto been reached. Now, by noting some of the repetitions which carry not only through the three stories but across, we can see how Stein has created not three distinct disparate novellas, but instead has created a densely packed cohesive whole. In the following pages I will discuss several of these repetitions in turn and show how they changed meaning from story to story and gradually accumulated a different tone and resonance from the flat, one-dimensional meanings they had at the beginning.

The first word is "good." We first encountered the word in the title "The Good Anna" as a ´tag´ for Anna. Over the course of the story "good" took on ironic overtones because it was used in many instances where Anna was not being good. However, in her own eyes, because she lived with such dedication to making life good for others and living "the right way," the irony was mitigated and lessened to a gentle irony, levelled at Anna, but not with harshness or derision.

"Good" next appeared in "The Gentle Lena," as a tag for nearly everyone except Lena: Mrs. Haydon, the Kreders, the cook, Herman. This use of good was a grim and bitter irony because of all the characters, only the cook had any semblance of goodness, and she was the most inconsequential of all, and the least able to help Lena out of her situations. "Good" was also used as an adjective to describe what life would be like for Lena and Herman if they obeyed the wishes of those who knew better. Life in America was good for awhile, until Lena allowed herself to be forced into a prearranged marriage. This marriage proved to be nothing but relentless agony at the hands of the "good" Mrs. Kreder. The marriage was good for Herman, however, and the birth of his children brought him new life and the motivation to

achieve independence from his parents. Marriage brought Lena nothing but pain, sorrow and a lonely, pointless death.

We next encountered the word "good" in "Melanctha." Melanctha as an impulsive, tempestuous, sharp-tongued girl who had engaged in many sexual encounters before she met Jeff, was not "good" by the conventional definition of a "good" woman. In fact, she is a "bad" woman, a fallen woman - a slut. And yet, she is kind, caring, attentive and a good nurse to her mother and to Rose. She cares for them conscientiously without thought for her own needs. On the other hand, we have Jeff Campbell, the "good" doctor, with his firm beliefs in the way people should live, his upstanding moral sense, his dedication to 'his' people, and his fervent desire for them to lead "good" lives. It is Jeff, as we have seen, who has caused the failure of the relationship, killed Melanctha's love for him, and in the course of their love affair, abused her terribly, because he cannot trust her. (Her past, you know. After all...) It is in "Melanctha" that Stein's bitter irony is the must apparent, levelled at the hypocrisy of those who claim to be good and yet mete out senseless pain to others without realizing or taking the blame for their hurt.

The word "trouble" reached across all three stories. Again, in "The Good Anna," it was a gentle irony, because most of the "trouble" Anna encountered was trivial and silly. "Trouble" also had condescending overtones at the beginning of "Lena," because her "troubles" were also trivial, such as her absolute helplessness in the face of sea sickness. This initial meaning of "trouble" tended to mitigate and lessen the impact of the trouble Lena began to suffer as a result of her marriage, but as the story progressed, however, and the

reader became aware of the terrible effects this "good" marriage was having on Lena, "trouble" began to take on new meaning.

"Trouble" in "Melanctha" initially seemed to mean problems with men, problems which, from the wording of the sentences, she seemed to deserve, because, more often than not, she went out of her way to find it. "Trouble" gradually took on new meaning over the course of the long, ugly affair with Jeff which Melanctha ended in a a desperately lonely state. At the end of the story we could define "trouble" as suffering the pain of loving, needing and wanting to be loved, without having it be returned in equal measure, if at all. Melanctha eventually died from this kind of trouble.

"Suffering" also carried across the stories. Each woman suffered in a different way, Anna not the least because it was self-imposed by her need to please and live in the right.

"Power." All three were powerless, trapped by their lives and circumstances to a certain fore-ordained station in life. Anna had power in her own sphere - the house, but beyond her little universe, she had no control. Lena had control over nothing, not even herself. She was used, abused and discarded by those who had more authority or influence than she did. Her life was unmitigated helplessness, subject to the moods and whims of all others. Melanctha had power. This was the power of sexual attraction. It was not the power she wanted or needed. The "power" was shifted to Jeff, and she lost her own. She had no power to control Jeff, nor her own emotions, nor the lives of others.

"The right way." This is singularly the most brutal of all the words or phrases encountered in Three Lives. It is this little phrase, this idea entrenched in the minds of the characters that leads them, or others, to their deaths. It is Anna's fervor for "the right way," which

drives her to work herself to death. This phrase is only used twice in "The Gentle Lena," once in regard to the right way to dress, and the second concerning Herman's teaching his children "the right way" to do things. A variant occurs when Lena tells her aunt that she will do whatever Mrs. Haydon thinks is right for her. The impact is lessened by the trivial uses to which it is put, and yet, conversely, the ugliness of the phrase is heightened, because of the character's seeming disregard for the impact this "right way" of thinking and doing has on the life of Lena.

In "Melanctha" Jeff's obsession with the "right way" of living again achieves monstrous proportions in the face of the distorted ethics which lead him to treat Melanctha so abominably.

It is odd that, of all the repetitions, critics have missed the one that has the most impact on the lives of the three women. Of all the other traits of the characters in these stories, it is this fixation in the minds of people which leads to the downfall of the three. Carl Wood, one of the few who have noticed this phrase, writes:

> While none of the individuals who play principal roles in [the lives of Anna and Melanctha] is without defects, there is nothing really evil about any of these secondary characters, and they intend no harm to the protagonists. In fact, the people who hurt the protagonists most - Mrs. Lehntman, Jeff, and Rose - have the best intentions toward them and intitially do them more good than any of the other characters. The fault for the protagonists' unhappiness, therefore, cannot be fairly assigned to life as it affects them through these secondary characters..."[1]

Wood goes on to describe Mrs. Haydon as a domineering aunt who is determined that Lena should have the good things in life, and presumably out of the goodness of her heart, arranges Lena's wedding.

Although I agree with Wood that such characters as Jeff, Rose and Mrs. Haydon do not overtly intend harm to Lena and Melanctha, I believe that he is missing the impact of these characters upon Lena and Melanctha. Their twisted, blind, and selfish fixation on "the right way" directly contributes to these women's deaths. Anna's own preoccupation with this idea also locks her into self-defeating cycles of behavior.

At a higher level of repetition than lexicon, Stein has also repeated patterns of behavior. Anna remains in the same circumstances her entire life, going from one position to another as housekeeper, never wanting or seeking anything else. Lena remains a passive, unimportant and all but forgotten shadow who is used by others for their own ends. Melanctha spends her life seeking love, going from one relationship to the next, finally seeking solace in the friendship of a woman, who also fails her.

Emotional states rarely change. After the one relationship which Anna establishes in her infatuation with Mrs. Lehntman, she does not find any other romance. She spends her life giving and attempting to make others happy, but she never gives of her love, nor does she find a solid permanent relationship. Lena's emotional state is either the placid somnolence of her pleasant pre-marital existence, or the terrible helpless misery after she marries Herman. She does not conquer or help her helplessness or her emotions. Melanctha's emotions are on either end of the spectrum - sometimes "impulsive and unbounded..."

(89) and then strong in her suffering and repression. Her life also ends in lonely misery.

Bauer writes of "Melanctha:"

> And how is life? Life is a series of repetitive junctures which turn us back repeatedly to gates through which we have already passed. And yet, paradoxically, life and its actors move ahead, i.e., 'wander.' Stein creates the impression of change and movement in the relationships of her characters in 'Melanctha,' but we are given the impression Melanctha and Jeff, at least, can never really break out of their set cycles of personality, experience, and emotional states."[2]

We can logically extend this thought to all three women. They never do break out of their cycles. Their lives remain essentially unchanged, except in a slow downward spiral toward lonely deaths.

We have noted that some critics who have focussed on one word or phrase to the exclusion of others have evoked incomplete readings of the stories, while others have missed the point entirely.

But yet, the sympathetic readings of such critics as DeKoven and Frederick Hoffman have nonetheless captured the essence of the sheer unmitigated and unrelieved pathos and suffering to which these women have been subjected. In Anna's case, much of her victimization was due to her own fervor to live a life of goodness and giving. Lena and Melanctha were both victims of the blind and singularly cold-hearted and uncharitable fervor of others to live "the right way. At times Stein's bitterness over the monstrosity of the character's self-righteous manipulating has been overwhelming.

On an even large scale, each seem to have lived fruitless, pointless lives. Anna's is the most fulfilled, but even though her need is to give and love, her love is never returned in measure. All three die lonely painful deaths, Lena and Melanctha remembered by no one.

Three Lives is not easy reading. Nor is it particularly pleasurable. At times, the grimness is relieved by Stein's display of wit and humor, but not often.

These three stories have been consistently underrated in the critical literature. I feel that this lack of attention should be redressed, and this study has been one step in that direction.

Stein's careful use of repetition demonstrates a mastery over words not hitherto credited her. This is not repetitious writing from sheer laziness or the inability to find different, more appropriate words. It is instead, the attempt to capture, through the repetition of words, phrases and behavioral patterns, the repetition that is life and the repetitious prisons in which these three women live out their lives. The repetition in the writing was meant to be paradigmatic of the cyclical nature of these women's personalities and lives doomed to exist without love and respect. In my estimation, Stein succeeded.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1

Cynthia Secor, "The Question of Gertrude Stein" in American Novelists Revisited: Essays in Feminist Criticism ed. Fritz Fleschman, (G.K. Hall, Boston, 1982) p. 299.

2

Marianne DeKoven, A Different Language, (Madison, Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Randa Dubnick, The Structure of Obscurity: Gertrude Stein, Language and Cubism (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1984); Jayne Walker, The Making of a Modernist: Gertrude Stein from Three Lives to Tender Buttons, (Amherst, University of Mass. Press, 1984); Lisa Ruddick, "'Melanctha' and the Psychology of William James," Modern Fiction Studies, 28(4) (Winter, 1982-83); Anthony Channell Hilfer, "Stein's Melanctha: An Education in Pathos" in his book The Ethics of Intensity in American Fiction, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

3

Gertrude Stein, Three Lives, (Norfolk, Conn: New Directions, 1933). All further refrences to these works will be made parenthetically with page numbers in the text. References will be cited as follows: "The Good Anna," (TGA); "The Gentle Lena," (GL) and "Melanctha," (M).

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M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, Cohesion in English, (London, Longman Group Ltd., 1976); and Waldemar Gutwintski, Cohesion in Literary Texts, (Mouton, The Hague, 1973).

5

J. Hillis Miller, Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels (Cambridge, Harvard U. Press, 1982).

6

Gillian Brown and George Yule, Discourse Analysis, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). p. ix.

Chapter One INTRODUCTION

1

Calvin S. Brown, Repetition in Zola's Novels, (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1952).

2

Halliday and Hasan, p. 293.

3

Sergej Gindin, "What is a Text as a Basic Notion of Text Linguistics" in Papers in Text Linguistics. Vol. 29: Text Versus Sentence ed. Petofi, (Hamburg, Helmust Buske Verlag, 1979) p. 35.

4

D. M. Levy, "Communicative Goals and Strategies: Between Discourse and Syntax." in Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 12: Discourse and Syntax, (New York, Academic Press, 1979).

[5] Tomas Mayordomo, "On Text Linguistic Theory´ in Petofi, p. 4.

[6] Ibid, p. 7.

[7] Donald G. Ellis, "Language, Coherence, and Textuality," in Conversational Coherence: Form, Structure and Strategy, ed. Robert T. Craig and Karen Tracy, (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1983),p. 224.

[8] Halliday and Hasan, p. 4.

[9]Ibid. p. 303.

[10] Louise Rosenblatt, The Reader, The Text, The Poem, (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) p. 54.

[11] he Cooperative Principle developed by Grice presents the following terms: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. The conversational conventions, or maxims supporting this principle are: Quantity - make your contribution as informative as possible, not more, not less; Quality - make it true; Relation - make it relevant; Manner - make it clear: be perspicous, avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief , be orderly. From H. P. Grice, "Logic and conversation," in P. Cole & J. Morgan eds. Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts (New York: Academic Press, 1975). Stein particularly violates the maxim of manner.

[12] Gertrude Stein, "Rue de Rennes" in Two: Gertrude Stein and her Brother (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1951).

[13] Gertrude Stein, "Susie Asado" Geography and Plays (Boston), 1913.

[14] Gertrude Stein, Tender Buttons, (New York: Claire Marie), 1914.

[15] Gutwinski, p. 159.

[16] Halliday and Hasan, p. 288.

[17] Robert deBeaugrande, Text, Discourse and Process: Toward a Multidisciplinary Science of Texts (Norwood: Ablex Press, 1980) p. 133.

[18] Geoffrey Leech, "´This Bread I Break´ - Language and Interpretation," A Review of English Literature, VI (1965), 66-75.

[19] Halliday and Hasan, p. 289.

[20]Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 67.

[21] Ibid p.111

[22] Ibid p. 115.

23 Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns of communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974). p284.

24 Thomas Ballmer,in Petofi, "Words, Sentences, Texts and All That," p. 24.

25 Iser, The Act of Reading, p. 126.

26Gerald Prince, Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative, (Berlin, Mouton, 1982), p. 103.

27 Donald Sutherland, Gertrude Stein: A Biography of her Work, (New Haven: Yale U. Pres, 1951) p. 48. Sutherland here is operating under the mistaken notion that reading proceeds word for word in a linear sequential order. It is not my purpose here to discuss the mechanics of the reading process, but to point out that although he is incorrect in that sense, he is correct in the sense that Stein did want her reader's to pay attention to the individual words she foregrounded through repetition.

28 Iser, Act of Reading p. 17.

29 Ibid, p. 108.

30 Bruce Kawin, Telling It Again and Again: Repetition in Literature and Film, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 4.

31 Gertrude Stein, "The Gradual Making of The Making of Americans", in Lectures in America (New York: Random, 1935). p. 214. It is not inappropriate to use the statements Stein made concerning The Making of Americans in reference to Three Lives because, although Making of Americans was written and published after Three Lives it was begun in 1903, and discontinued until after Three Lives was finished. The thought processes followed through.

32 Ibid. p. 213.

33 Michael Hoffman, The Development of Abstractionism in the Writings of Gertrude Stein. (Philadelphia: Univ. Of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), p. 54.

34 Michael Hoffman, Gertrude Stein, (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1976) p. 30.

35 Hoffman, Development of Abstractionism p. 69.

36 Norman Weinstein, Gertrude Stein and the Literature of Modern Consciousness (New York, Frederick Ungar, 1970) p. 14.

37 Leon Katz, "Weininger and the Making of Americans" in Twentieth Century Literature 24 (Spring, 1978) p. 19.

38 Kawin, p. 7.

39 Alfred Lee, How to Understand Propaganda (New York: Rhinehart, 1952) p. 132.

40 Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition," in Lectures in America (New York: Random, 1935) pp. 171-2.

41 Kawin, p. 124.

42 Stein, "Portraits and Repetition," p. 179.

43 Kawin, p. 123.

44 Stein, "Portraits and Repetitions" p. 185.

45 Thornton Wilder, "Introduction " to Gertrude Stein, Four in America (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1947), p. vi.

46 Stein, "The Gradual Making..." p. 213.

47 James Mellow, Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein and Company (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974). p. 71.

48 According to Carl Wood, this epigraph was not writen by LaForgue, but was instead written by Stein. Stein, writes Wood, "seems to have studied and distilled Laforgue's thought and style into a statement particulalry adapted to her own artisitic purposes." Carl Wood, "Continuity of Romantic Irony: Stein's Homage to Laforgue in Three Lives, Comparative Literature Studies 12(June, 1975) pp. 152-153. Wood interprets the word "malheureuse" to mean unhappy, and although this interpretation certainly applies to the lives of these three women, I would not limit the meaning strictly to "unhappy" but rather extend it also to mean "unfortunate." In keeping with Stein's penchant for ambiguity and her ability to use words in contexts where they can mean more than one thing at a time, both meanings are particularly applicable.

49 Steiner, Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978) p. 64.

50 James Miller Jr., ed., James' Theory of Fiction, (Lincoln, Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1972). p. 198.

51 Malcolm Brinnin, The Third Rose: Gertrude Stein and Her World (Boston: Little, Brown, 1959) p. 59.

52 For a complete list of form types of repetitions, refer to Emile Lawrence, Repetition and Parallelism in Tennyson, (London: Oxford U. Press, 1910).

53 Brown, p. 5.

54 Ibid, p. 7.

55
Ibid, p. 33-34.

56
Ibid, p. 23.

57
In his study of repetition in Zola's novels, Brown found thirteen different types of repetition. Most of these are evident only when examining the whole of Zola's literary words side by side. Four of these in particular are found in the three stories in Three Lives; one which will be noted in the course of the separate chapter, is found in "Lena" and another in "Melanctha. Others may become evident when Stein's works are examined together. later works might exhibit others. We can conjecture that many of these were not used in Three Lives because they were not relevant to the work at hand.

58
Frederick Hoffman, p. 32.

59
Hilfer, p. 152.

60
DeKoven, p. 31.

61
Iser, The Act of Reading p. 40.

62
Brinnin, p. 58.

63
DeKoven p. 29.

64
Weinstein, p. 53.

65
Stein, p. 31.

66
M. Hoffman, p. 71.

67
Walker, p. 24.

68
Ibid, p. 27.

69
Ibid, p. 33.

70
Frederick Hoffman, p. 33.

71
Charlene Siegfried, Chaos and Context: A Study of William James (Athens, Ohio Univ. Press, 1982), pp 14-15.

72
Richard Bridgman, Gertrude Stein in Pieces, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 56.

CHAPTER TWO - "The Good Anna"

1
Jayne Walker, The Making of a Modernist; Michael Hoffman, The Development of Abstractionism in Gertrude Stein; Carolyn Faunce Copeland, Language and Time and Gertrude Stein, (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1975). As Copeland points out, there is a good deal of repetition of themes, characters and situations of Flaubert's story of

Felicite´. She also demonstrates the same types of repetition between Q.E.D and "Melanctha." I have made no attempt to demonstrate any repetition outside of Three Lives. For further discussion of this idea, see also Marjorie Perloff, "Poetry as Word-System: The Art of Gertrude Stein" in American Poetry Review (8:5, Sept/Oct. 1979). p. 33-43 and Richard Bridgman, "Melanctha," American Literature, 33, (November, 1961), 350-359.

2 Marilyn Gaddis Rose, "Gertrude Stein and the Cubist Narrative" in Modern Fiction Studies, 22 (1976-77), pp. 543-545.

3 Bridgman, p. 49.

4 DeKoven, p. 30.

5 Frederick Hoffman, p. 28.

6 Carl Wood, "The Continuity of Romantic Irony: Stein´s Homage to Laforgue in Three Lives, Comparative Literature Studies 112 (June, 1975) p. 147.

7 Brown, p. 7.

8 Ibid, p. 33.

9 William James, Psychology: The Briefer Course (New York: Henry Holt and co., 1892), p. 172.

CHAPTER THREE - "The Gentle Lena"

1 Bridgman, p. 51

2 Frederick Hoffman, pp. 28-29.

3 DeKoven, p. 31.

4 Walker, p. 25.

5 DeKoven, p. 31.

6 Brown, p. 31.

7 Ibid, p. 53.

8 Walker, p. 25.

CHAPTER FOUR - "Melanctha" - Part One

1 Weinstein, p. 57.

2 Francis Russell, Studies in Twentieth Century Obscurity (Aldington:

The Hand and Flower Press, 1954). This is a particularly useless essay, ill-informed and poorly thought out. For further commentary on this subject, see Michael Hoffman, The Development of Abstractionism in the Writings of Gertrude Stein; Dubnick, The Structure of Obscurity; DeKoven, A Different Language; Richard Kostelanetz, "Gertrude Stein: What She Did" in Helicon Nine: A Journal of Women's Arts and Literature; 5 (Fall, 1981), pp. 7-21, among others.

3 DeKoven, p. 41.

4 DeKoven, p. 31.

5 Hilfer, p. 151.

6 For a more detailed analysis of the progressive tense please refer to W. H. Hirtle, Time, Aspect and the Verb, (Quebec, Le Presses De L'Universite Laval, 1975).

7 DeKoven, p. 31.

8 Frederick Hoffman, p. 31.

9 Walker, p 26.

10 Neil Schmitz, "Portrait, Patriarchy, Mythos: The Revenge of Gertrude Stein", Salmagundi (Winter, 1978), p. 74.

11 Hilfer, pp. 155-161.

12 DeKoven, p. 31.

13 Bridgman, p. 61.

CHAPTER SIX - "Melanctha" - Part Two

1 In the second paragraph "Child" has changed to "baby," "The baby" to "her baby," the appositive "her husband" has been deleted from "Sam her husband."

2 Dan Bauer, "Creative Repetition in Gertrude Stein's 'Melanctha' in Fu Jen Studies, Literature and Linguistics, 14 (1981) p. 32. This small essay is one of the most intelligent and helpful articles written on the subject of repetition yet.

3 The only difference her is that "did not see it" has been changed to the more absolute "never saw it" and in the second paragraph one appositive "Melanctha" has been left out.

4 Brown, p. 53.

5 Bauer, p. 35.

CONCLUSION

[1] Carl Wood, p. 154.

[2] Bauer, p. 41

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