

*Stein's secret sharers: great men and
modernist authority*

I INTRODUCTION

Six years before her profile landed on the cover of the September 11, 1933 issue of *Time* magazine, Stein's reflections upon fame, audience, and public visibility appeared in the pages of Kenneth Macpherson's avant-garde film journal, *Close-Up*: "There is no difference between what is seen and why I am a dream a dream of their being usually famous for an indifference to the rest ... I am delightful and very well perfectly well disposed to be observed."¹

The distinction between *Time* and *Close-Up* could hardly be more pronounced: one, representative of mass-market American media and modern advertising, the other bringing "theory and analysis; no gossip" to a coterie of sophisticated readers. The change of venues is significant, for in many ways, the years between her appearance in the two publications saw her incipient emergence as a figure much more "seen" than read, an author of iconic popularity with persistent literary and commercial obscurity. Describing its subject as "[w]idely ridiculed and seldom enjoyed ... least-read and most-publicized," the *Time* article foregrounds the compromise that attended her growing public identity. While in many ways Stein's appearance on *Time*'s cover – its caption reading "Gertrude Stein: My sentences do get under their skin..." – marks her entry into the pantheon of cultural icons, it also recalls the cravings for attention and visibility that characterize her two-part *Close-Up* contribution. In this piece, titled "Three Sitting Here," the eagerness for recognition – to be "seen," "to be observed" – expressed as it is through her "insistent narrative" style produces something of a narcissist's treatise.² Articulating her desire for an audience that "find[s] her charming," the self-portrait could not predict that her status as an icon of literary modernism would forever be at odds with her longing to write without concern for audience, as she put it, "indifferen[t] to the rest."

In many ways, Stein enjoyed a degree of iconicity in America twenty years before *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and the grand 1934 tour that followed. Indeed, the fracture point in her career, when Stein as public persona replaced the earlier recondite modernist, took place when Mabel Dodge marketed both herself and Stein as icons of the modern at the 1913 Armory Show. In March 1913, together with Stein's "Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curonia," Dodge's promotional essay of Stein, titled "Speculations, or Post-Impressionism in Prose," was featured in *Arts and Decoration*, a special issue dedicated entirely to works being shown at the Armory Show. The essay famously announced that "Gertrude Stein is doing with words what Picasso is doing with paint," and promoted Stein as an avant-garde poet inextricably linked to other bohemian artists, most pronouncedly Picasso.

Though Dodge generated good publicity for Stein, promoting her public notoriety *in absentia*, many years would follow before she would receive steady recognition for her work. Following the serial publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which occasioned the *Time* cover, it became increasingly clear that Stein's contrary strains of authorial hermeticism and public viability were not reconcilable. In subsequent works, such as *Four in America*, *The Geographical History of America*, and *Everybody's Autobiography*, as well as in some shorter pieces, a growing preoccupation emerged with the dynamics of power and identity, with figures who garnered fame and embodied his historical moment, with the "great men" of past and present generations. How, her work persistently questioned, did authority implicate and explicate itself through the figure of the general, artist, emperor, and dictator? Did his genius make him consubstantial with powerful men throughout time – or did it render him an emblem of existing cultural energies? In saying "his" and "him," I take the lead from Stein herself, for several works from roughly the last decade of her life (1936–1946) betray a fascination with masculine authority and authoritarian figures inflected by a deeply personal preoccupation with her own fame and influence. Even as Stein self-assuredly claimed her place as the literary genius of her time, she saw history's great men as figures with whom to identify and contend. Perhaps partly induced by increasing authorial anxieties about what she considered the public's "due" recognition of her "genius," and partly by what Ulla Dydo calls her early fascination with "the struggle for power and position,"³ Stein's later work reveals a double relationship to male leaders. The appeal of Napoleon, Ulysses S. Grant, George Washington, or Pétain reveals Stein's concerns

with authority's fetish-presence, the relay of power between naming and identity, and the impact of identification on self-possession.

By turns humorous and ironic, serious and headlong, Stein's poetic treatments of Grant, diverse exploitations of and alignments with Caesar, and frequent identification with Washington are inseparable from her personal attempts to understand her own role in the historical moment. The male leader in her work is mythic and banal, visible and spectral, public but intimately familiar; most importantly, he is hermeneutical: to consider the authoritative image of, say, Hitler or Napoleon is, thus, in many ways to encounter the intricate performance of her own persona. Notably, Stein's self-projections suggest a double motion of identification and parody. Her keen awareness of the harms of "patriarchy," demonstrated early on in "Patriarchal Poetry" (1927), has not been abandoned – nor has her grievance from *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937) that among Mussolini, Franco, Hitler, Stalin, and Roosevelt there is "too much fathering going on."⁴ If we accept the simple rhetorical equation between father figures and authoritarian figures, as this quotation suggests that we may, what we see in her later writing is not so much a *rejection of* but *introjection into* the father's position of authority. How then to become at once one "without resemblances" and "one whom some were certainly following"? In what follows I trace this tension through her work, considering its ideological implications as well as its meaning for Stein's authorial production.

Many scholars have routinely diverted attention from Stein's reactionary political views, emphasizing instead her formal radicalism and its implications for feminist thought. Rather than setting aside these inconsistencies in her oeuvre, this chapter places interpretive focus on both her desire to write for herself and her impulse to identify with some of the geniuses and antagonists of official history. Stein saw history through a highly personal lens; she was not a Vichy collaborationist but a conservative and cultural elitist; and in her private correspondence – much as yet unpublished – we may begin to see some of the contradictions and coexistences at the heart of her politics. This chapter begins and ends with Adolf Hitler, an antagonist who figured centrally in Stein's heuristic encounters with leaders and signals her willingness to experiment with a highly controversial body of icons. As an introductory device, I will look at the temporally adjacent mimicries of Hitlerian authority performed by Charlie Chaplin and Gertrude Stein. Provocatively setting the stage for what will follow, this brief look at *The Great Dictator* and *Mrs. Reynolds*⁵ initiates a discussion of how ambition and fame, creativity and authority

clash and converge. Next, an excursion through her wartime work will allow a close look at Stein's increasing concern with what power *looks like*, with its self-image and self-promotion, with its project of public relations, and, finally, with its extreme demands upon subjectivity. As World War II approached, Stein increasingly turned to leaders and politics. Many of Stein's political opinions are clear from the interpretive context of her correspondence with Bernard Faÿ. Examining their exchanges about great men, politics, and career aspirations sheds light on where Stein stood during the somber years of occupation and how her life in wartime France intersected with some disturbing conservative currents, alliances that were arguably more survivalist than vicious. Investigating these strains in light of histories of great men leads into an extended reading of the text and context of the posthumously published *Mrs. Reynolds*, a story about the "state of mind" of a couple living "under the shadow of two men": Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. Though Mrs. Reynolds does not know Angel Harper herself, she remains psychically fixated upon a series of disturbing incidents from his childhood and the day that he will be "all over." The plot, such as it is, weaves together memories, dreams, and fantasies to create a sense of the psychological burden of Harper's omnipresence. Eventually, this chapter finds Stein herself at Berchtesgaden, Hitler's mountain retreat, where textual acts of mimicry and projection translate into her cavalier imposition into one of Nazism's most highly charged spaces.

II HITLER ACTS

In quipping to Charlie Chaplin that nature "is commonplace; imitation is more interesting,"⁶ Gertrude Stein did more than rehearse banal commentary on mimesis. The declaration, made at a luncheon on her 1934 American lecture tour, anticipated strategies of appropriation that both she and Chaplin would engage six years later in their respective works on Adolf Hitler. Stein's *Mrs. Reynolds* and Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* attest to their shared preoccupation with the Nazi leader and their interest in dissecting his intricately forged authoritarian identity. Their "Hitler" bears contradictory signs, travestying his own self-enactment in an utter failure to embody national fortitude. Chaplin's Adenoid Hynkel, dictator of Tomania, reduces political expression to livid spasms and guttural anger. In Angel Harper Stein also presents a figure detached from Nazism's ideological underpinnings, though hers is a darkly conflicted dictator, a pensive and effete compromise of the Third Reich's great man of destiny.

Stein banishes the historical embeddedness of his identity, manufacturing a new version for her own purposes. With these counterfeit Hitlers, imitation mingles equivocally with re-imagination: the megalomaniac of the Third Reich is there; so, too, are Charlie Chaplin and Gertrude Stein.

Structured as a series of travesties and misrecognitions, *The Great Dictator* makes impersonation a political tactic. Chaplin's visual calibration of authority was also a project of self-recognition: though he imitates the dictator both *within* the film – as the Jewish barber – and *through* his role as Hynkel, a sense of complicity with Hitlerian identity had haunted him as early as 1927; he explains:

Vanderbilt sent me a series of [Heinrich Hoffmann's] picture postcards showing Hitler making a speech. The face was obscenely comic – a bad imitation of me ... I could not take Hitler seriously. Each postcard showed a different posture of him ... The salute with the hand thrown back over the shoulder, the palm upward, made me want to put a tray of dirty dishes on it.⁷

In reading his reflective presence into Hitler, Chaplin subtracts the force of authoritarian menace and injects humor into the pose – an icon of fascist conviction made familiar to many through the work of Nazi “court photographer” Heinrich Hoffmann. Chaplin's intimate dialogic moment of imitation raises compelling questions about an originary Hitlerian image. For his part, the Führer styled himself as a modern-day Caesar,⁸ his great historical model was Moses,⁹ and he longed to claim lineage with Frederick the Great.

The inspiration Chaplin found in the picture postcards may just as well have derived from a newsreel, or even *Triumph of the Will* – until its release he had been an admirer and friend of Riefenstahl. But the picture postcard, first appearing in 1889 – the year Hitler was born – was a medium whose reproducibility and potential circulation afforded it easy access to the masses. The twin birth of medium and subject allowed the unprecedented generation and dissemination of Hitler's image. The postcard fueled the multivalent “Führer Cult,” naturalizing his authority through a genealogy of power – as in a 1933 picture postcard showing Hitler (*à la* Macbeth) as direct descendant of Frederick the Great, Otto von Bismarck, and Paul von Hindenburg. According to the *New York Times Magazine*, May 6, 1934, the triumverate trope was a popular modus operandi of the commercialized Hitler, who was able to galvanize this “heroic trio” by posing in the manner of his predecessors, or as the article – “Where Heroes Can Be Made to Order” – puts it, “with his hand resting upon a big wolfhound *in the pose previously sacred to Bismarck*, or between

Hindenberg and Bismarck or Frederick the Great.”¹⁰ The falsification of genealogy was, according to Leo Braudy, a strategy employed by leaders from Augustus, “who had created himself from Caesar, Alexander, Cicero and Cato,” to Napoleon, who “likened himself to both Charlemagne and Constantine, Washington and Joan of Arc,”¹¹ and Pétain, who saw himself in the Maid of Orléans. Identification with great men was central to Hitler’s self-fashioning.

Where the Hoffmann postcards market Hitler as a fiery, resolute statesman, others advertised him as a man of earthly qualities, as in one postcard sent from Stein to W.G. Rogers, an American private she and Toklas had befriended in 1917, in which “Unser Volkskanzler Adolf Hitler’ stand[s] in civvies on the shore of an Alpine lake.”¹² Like Chaplin’s image of Hitler poised with a tray of dirty dishes, banality undercuts fascist menace, much like Stein’s presentation of Angel Harper, and in her audacious acts in Berchtesgaden in 1945, standing on Hitler’s balcony with the US Army, pointing – in her words – “as Hitler had pointed” (Figure 4). Her spectacle becomes, then, a coda to the story of her attraction to the politics of mimicry; occupying Hitlerian space while enjoying his coveted vistas, Stein offers jokey self-implication as a commentary on authority and authoritarianism.

III STEIN IN POLITICS

Investigating Stein’s struggle with a public self reveals some of the complexities of her oeuvre, particularly as they relate to the importance that authority and male leadership played in her later writing. For Stein, authoring was by necessity a creative act of pure being, an effort without memory, recognition, or external reflection. In her philosophically dense work *The Geographical History of America, or the Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (1936), Stein wrestles with the idea of crafting a public identity that does not compromise the artistic self: “When a great many hear you that is an audience,” she writes, “and if a great many hear you what difference does it make.”¹³ As in “Three Sitting Here,” Stein designates sensory apperception as central to the progress of her recognition. Cheery aspirations to gain well deserved visibility in 1933 become, in this later work, a more ponderous examination of the complex impact one makes upon actually achieving the desired audience. “Do extraordinary ideas interfere with propaganda and communism and individualism and what are any and all ideas.”¹⁴ This inquiry into the nature and impact



Figure 4 Gertrude Stein at Berchtesgaden

of her own thoughts threads throughout *Geographical History*, throwing into relief the polemical contours of her relationship to power, authority, and audience. Here – and in other works that followed the crisis of celebrity occasioned by *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) – Stein poses the anxious dilemma of publicizing and promoting both herself and her ideas while remaining an autonomous being, or “entity,” as she named it. The unusual trajectory of Stein’s coming into the public gaze becomes clear when we see that rather than fame inspiring the autobiographical works, the autobiographical works themselves summoned and generated her claims to the celebrity. (Far more, to her vexation, than her poetry or plays ever would.) Her status as an avant-garde icon is thus, in part, self-appointed, meant to evince to the reading public the value of her less accessible writing.

Critical treatment of Stein’s work often elucidates this urge toward self-reliant being – and her innovations with form and language – as part of an anti-authoritarian agenda. Much feminist scholarship explicates the relationship between ethics and abstraction in Stein’s work, taking into consideration how her experimental writing critiques official history and the power hierarchies it supports. Her poetry is often regarded as anti-conservative, effectively disordering masculine political agency, as in Ellen

Berry's assertion that the "link between linear narratives and authoritarian control [is] depressingly literal,"¹⁵ or in Marianne DeKoven's appraisal of Stein's writing as an "anti-logocentric, anti-phallogocentric, presymbolic, pluridimensional ... antidote to patriarchy."¹⁶ Analyzing the politics of modernist form, DeKoven discusses critics of various opposing categories, such as anti-modernist and pro-modernist, those who favored the nineteenth-century realist narrative as a mode of politically active expression and those who saw it as embodying "the structures of authority that support imperialism, bourgeois class hegemony, and the male-dominated family." For the latter category, DeKoven explains, certain literary forms serve as "disruptions of realist narrative [and] can also represent, and perhaps function as, disruptions of those structures of authority."¹⁷ So even though scholars may cast Stein as quietist, accommodationist, or simply a shrewd survivor under Nazi occupation, they locate an insurgent expressiveness in her poetic rejection of logic, causation, linear time, and a coherent self, and in her embrace of decenteredness, fragmentation of language, and a subjectivist epistemology.¹⁸

To confront Stein's political conservatism – which increased as she got older¹⁹ – is thus to enter into a story fraught with irreconcilabilities, moments of counterintuitive insight, and not a little consternation. Janet Malcolm goes far in tackling some of these contradictions in *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice* (2007) by asking, and then seeking to answer, the question "How had a pair of elderly Jewish lesbians escaped the Nazis?"²⁰ Malcolm's incentive to write was the conspicuous absence – "egregious evasion," as she put it – of any reference to being a Jewish lesbian in Toklas's *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954). As Malcolm notes, Stein scholars have not addressed the poet's conservatism, questionable wartime positions, or objectionable affiliations critically palatable until quite recently. The work of John Whittier-Ferguson, Wanda Van Dusen, Barbara Will, and Zofia Lesinska is prominent in this effort. Lesinska detects critical myopia in interpretations of the war autobiographies, contending that "those critics who have most recently attempted to reclaim Stein's wartime writings have found it necessary either to depoliticize their content or to exonerate collaborationist attitudes in general."²¹ At stake, then, in the way we read her conservatism or sanctuary under Vichy rule is the integrity of Stein scholarship and the ability to intellectually fathom her body of work. The critical focus on memory, everyday routines and the comfort of ritual, or the sensory experience of time, will, from another angle, reveal an author who did not especially see herself as "Other" (namely, "marginalized Jewish lesbian"),

but fairly regularly aligned herself with male heroes at the pinnacle of their careers: Washington the father of our country, not Washington revolutionary hero; Napoleon the emperor of France, not Napoleon of Waterloo shame; Pétain the savior at Verdun, not the “crazy man” he later becomes.²² These “great men” are Stein’s secret sharers.

Many of Stein’s associations and opinions are right-wing, nationalist, often deeply problematic: she was loath to advocate social and labor reform; had many friends in the Croix de Feu (an organization of World War I veterans opposed to “undesirables” and in favor of repressing Jews, Marxists, and Freemasons); and maintained a long friendship with Pétain loyalist Bernard Faÿ. Stein’s literary and ideological collaborations with Faÿ, such as her editorial treatment of his many works on history and literature, and his reciprocal attention (and affection) for her writing and career resulted in an alliance based in part on reactionary opinions and nostalgia for great men.

In publicly advocating the nomination of Hitler for the 1934 Nobel Peace Prize, Stein previews the kind of gallows humor that appears later on the balcony at Berchtesgaden. Such absurd remarks about Hitler flaunt Stein’s whimsical, sardonic approach to disagreeable subject matter. Coming about a year after Hitler rose to power, her declaration in the *New York Times Magazine*, May 6, 1934, was audacious, to say the least: “I say that Hitler ought to have the peace prize, because he is removing all the elements of contest and of struggle from Germany. By driving out the Jews and the democratic and Left elements, he is driving out everything that conduces to activity. That means peace.”²³ While Edward Burns and Ulla Dydo explain that this “proposal ... is ironic, a point of black humor,”²⁴ we may take the remark seriously in one sense: by speaking as she does of Nazism, Stein establishes irony as a framework for her creative and intellectual negotiations with the menace of Hitler. Her comment – made as the Nazis were banishing Jews like herself from schools and universities, the press, broadcasting industry, and the arts – reveals a risky fascination that even mockery cannot camouflage; despite its protective shield, as Joseph Brodsky has suggested, “Irony doesn’t lead you out of the problem or beyond the problem. It just keeps you in the same frame. When you make jokes about something awful, you continue to be captive of this terrible thing.”²⁵ Stein’s enduring fascination with Hitler reveals some of the wisdom of Brodsky’s diagnosis. Irony *would* be one of her most persistent weapons against the Nazi threat, but rather than affording her psychic distance, it often kept Stein and Hitler, at the level of representation at least, “in the same frame.” Such off hand remarks are

certainly in a category separate from the truly objectionable things Stein did during the war, but they are compelling for what they anticipate of the attraction to taboo that would culminate with her juvenile but ominous Hitler of *Mrs. Reynolds*.

Deeper than the sensationalism of such “political” claims was Stein’s attraction to embodied authority, which underlies the figuration of her own public identity and structures her explorations of fame, historiography, and audience reception. Isolating these tropic strands in her work of the 1930s and 1940s, one finds something far more complex than pronouncements on Hitlerian achievement or the mythmaking of Pétain: one discovers a sustained interest in what history and the contemporary imaginary canonized as ideal leadership; one finds questions, commentary, and examples concerning how these leaders should be imitated, criticized, or obeyed; and, finally, one comes across analogies and rhetorical connections among heroes divided by centuries. What we do *not* get is a sense of Stein’s ethical concerns as they relate to the nature of authority. Drawn to representation and imaginative play, Stein never interconnects her own political leanings, her unorthodox poetics, and the ideological implications of her unique brand of hero worship.

For all her focus upon transcendent writerly authority, Stein sustained a deep interest in and rhetorical affiliation with male archetypes of military, political, and artistic accomplishment. Her projection onto figures such as Washington and Caesar was, in many ways, an affirmation of and at cross-purposes with the desire to author a self, as she put it, with “no resemblances.”²⁶ Braudy describes this contradiction as a central dilemma of fame, explaining that “[i]n part it celebrates uniqueness, and in part it requires that uniqueness be exemplary and reproducible.”²⁷ Circulating throughout her work, these leaders come to embody her drive to be authoritative, to be recognized as critical to the history of literature and ideas, while sustaining the uniqueness of “what is happening inside.” Aligning herself with history’s heroes, Stein creates tension between the struggle to present an authentic figure of modernism and the need to track her accomplishments in a genealogy so as to formulate a diachronic sense of her genius. John Farrell’s *Freud’s Paranoid Quest: Psychoanalysis and Modern Suspicion* diagnoses such “flights” as quintessentially modern symptoms often manifesting in the elaborate fantasy that one is, for example, Napoleon or Caesar.²⁸ Farrell explains:

As much as any paranoid, Freud identified himself, in his nature and in his intellectual form of daring, with the most exalted figures of history: the biblical Joseph, Moses, Oedipus, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, William the

Conqueror, Columbus, Leonardo, Copernicus, Kepler, Cromwell, Danton, Napoleon, Garibaldi, Darwin, Bismarck, and, inadvertently, even Zeus. This was the company in which he habitually posed. Yet beneath all of Freud's self-aggrandizement there was a powerful and gnawing sense of inferiority and of thwarted ambition, a sense of being resisted and disliked.²⁹

Farrell's assertion that "[t]he dominant figures of modern culture exhibit a strange susceptibility to delusions of grandeur" resonates with Stein's unswerving belief in her own genius. As if overcompensating for her inability to find satisfaction with a public that she felt had "thwarted" her, Stein decrees her own posterity. Tinged with self-parody, Stein's grandiose pronouncements illustrate her self-image as a poet and her keen aspirations for a reputation of epic literary value: "I have been the creative literary mind of the century";³⁰ "I am one of the masters of English prose";³¹ "I can remember becoming a legend again and again between babyhood and fourteen";³² "Slowly and in a way it was not astonishing but slowly I was knowing that I was a genius";³³ and, recalling the genealogy of leaders, "Think of the Bible and Homer think of Shakespeare and think of me."³⁴

While her specific interest in cultural icons relates to her fascination with genius, picking up as it does the threads of her own sense of superiority – what she called "*la gloire*" – her interest in historical figures persistently focuses on the embodied presence of the leaders. Physical characteristics – real and imagined – transform them from conceptualizations of military might, diplomatic brilliance, and political savvy into people who worry and suffer, consume and age, err and forget. Stein's leaders are participants in a counterfactual history, in which biographical facts are subject to arbitrary revision. She changes Woodrow Wilson's birthplace ("Here we have Woodrow Wilson born in the state of Michigan/Woodrow Wilson was born in Virginia"³⁵); fabricates childhood phenomena for her Angel Harper (Hitler); endows Pétain with mythical origins; and casts Washington as a novelist and Grant as a religious leader. Stein arrogates authority over biography, supplanting official narrative with subjective meaning. Her game of identifying her friends' resemblances to historical figures complicates the notion of authority as a self-same entity with a unique image and biography. What does she mean by saying that W.G. Rogers had a "really and truly" Lincoln look, that Toklas's birthday was horoscopically proximate to "the king of Spain and Hitler," or that Mildred Aldrich bore a physical resemblance to Washington?³⁶

Stein's effort to work out an epistemology of embodied authority is played out not only through such games of winkingly absurdist impersonation,

but also by her musing on the failure of those actually *in* power to look the conqueror's part. The complexities of authority's legibility resonate in her 1940 essay for *The Atlantic Monthly*, "The Winner Loses: A Picture of Occupied France." Ostensibly a celebration of Pétain's capitulation to the Germans, "The Winner Loses" shows Stein's real-life observations of the Nazi soldiers in her village of Bilignin leading her to interrogate the authenticity of power's public image. What Germany would offer as the next generation of great men conspicuously fails to correspond with highly mediated images; for, the effects of "radios cinemas newspapers biographies [and] autobiographies,"³⁷ she suggests elsewhere, tend to corrupt and compromise the expectations of visual experience. Stein's confrontation with German soldiers becomes an instructive exercise in perception and an opportunity to examine her preconceived ideas about individual and type, entity and identity. What she, as a consumer of images, has come to expect clashes with the empirical reality right before her eyes. Such is the lesson of "The Winner Loses," where Stein records how the Germans, heretofore circumscribed by the pronomial "*eux*," become living beings challenging what she had anticipated of the enemy's appearance: if they do not *look* like a formidable enemy, can they necessarily profess the force of one? Realizing "that enemies are not what they seem," Stein must reconcile "living" reality with images "created for you by publicity": "It was not real, but there they were; it looked like photographs in a magazine, but there they were."³⁸ Confusion arises because the Germans look exactly as one *should* expect, at the same time that they appear strangely unmodified by the quotidian environs of Stein's own village. The uncanniness of seeing "quantities of soldiers in gray uniforms"³⁹ moving along the main street stirs feelings analogous to those aroused by her own struggle to produce a public self. The dream condition that complicates the visible, objectified self years before in "Three Sitting Here" – ("There is no difference between what is seen and why I am a dream...") returns in the convoluted epistemology of German public identity. Despite threats of German omnipresence – "they, the Germans, might be anywhere"⁴⁰ – Stein insists that she and Toklas "*never dreamed* we would see them with our own eyes."⁴¹ The abrupt transformation from passive magazine consumer to historical witness jars and unnerves her. A moment of recognition that recalls an earlier query about the obfuscations of publicity – "But now well now how can you *dream* about a personality when it is always being created for you by a publicity"⁴² – Stein's discomfort brings out a polarization between the creative self (as "dreamed") and the public one (as "photographs in a magazine"). Such mediatized representations are what one is used to but also

what one's own grasp of reality would never construe. "Everything about them was exactly like the photographs we had seen except themselves; they were not the least bit like we thought they would be."⁴³ To Stein, photography's capacity to represent accompanies an inevitable loss: the images she and Toklas had seen facilitate the initial recognition but appearance and lived reality prove incommensurate. Photography captures "identity," fixing its subject in a social and temporal context and thus interfering with the effort to "know" a "thing" – or add to it one's cognitive authority. Stein proves skeptical about mediated exposure, seeing that even Nazism's elaborate mobilization of images can be betrayed by the insights of one's own perceptual experience.

Stressing the complicated relation between Nazism's cult of the image and the banal certainty of soldiers buying candies and silk stockings, Stein peels back the imbricate layers of authority's play with perception. Because, up to the Armistice, she had served as "audience" to the Nazi soldiers' manufactured image of power, Stein now recognizes them only "in relation to" their very own spectacles – not "in themselves." Part of the consternation comes from her preconceived notion of what conquerors are meant to "look like." Fluent in the histories of "great men," Stein is compelled to interrogate the assumptions she has made about the look of leadership and domination. Her formulations about discrepancies between expectation and reality had prompted her to remark in 1936 that "nobody looks as they look like, they do not look like that we all know that of ourselves and of any one,"⁴⁴ in a sense anticipating her observation four years later that "[The German soldiers] did not look like conquerors; they were very quiet." In this synesthetic remark, Stein willfully confuses sensory apperception for preposterous effect (perhaps alluding to Hitler's strident radio addresses): so much does she associate Germans with noise that she expects this displeasing quality to be visible. In this observation a poetic avowal from *Lifting Belly* becomes a lived experience: then, as now, she believes, "All loud voices are seen."⁴⁵

IV REVIVING GREAT MEN

Stein's interest in consolidating her own authority while examining that of prominent political and historical figures appears in correspondence from Bernard Faÿ, a French university professor, scholar of American intellectual history, and confidante to Pétain during the Vichy government. Stein and Faÿ had been close friends since the 1920s. He had helped to secure Stein's country house in Belley and they sustained a strong

relationship throughout the war years. By World War II, according to Dydo and Burns, Faÿ “may have been her single most important French friend of the last fifteen years.”⁴⁶ James Laughlin, poet, editor, and founding publisher of New Directions publishing house, described the deep amity between Faÿ and Stein, as well as the discomfiting political opinions they shared:

I would probably never have met Gertrude if her best friend Bernard Fay had not found me appealing at the Schwimmban in Salzburg and had Gertrude invite me to Bilignin ... When Bernard Fay came down for weekends from Paris there was really good conversation. The two old friends knew each other so well they could play off each other's interests and eccentricities ... But an exchange one night troubled me. They got on the subject of Hitler, speaking of him as a great man, one perhaps to be compared with Napoleon. How could this be? The Führer's persecution of Jews was well publicized in France at that time.⁴⁷

Faÿ and Stein were enchanted by great men, and enjoyed dissecting political icons, dismantling their images and making an intellectual game out of identifying the natural affinities among them. They also shared a deep interest in the architecture of career-building, cultivating one another's authority and constructing their own model of professional collaboration; with implicit interest in their own paths to success, they encouraged each other's professional momentum. He promoted her by translating, editing, assembling bibliographies, writing dedicatory pieces, reviewing, and lecturing on her work at American colleges and universities. Stein's American lecture tour in 1934 was made possible largely by the efforts of Faÿ, who regarded the trip as an opportunity for her to publicize herself and bond with the American public. His appointments teaching and lecturing in the United States provided invaluable connections, enabling his dedicated effort to solidify Stein's stature. Encouraging Stein to visit America, Faÿ effused that her autobiography would “establish a contact between you and the mass of American public such as no other writer now has,” while regretting elsewhere that she had not delayed the publication of “*Americains d'Amerique*” (*The Making of Americans*), a work for which he “might have been able to create some useful propaganda in Paris. Anyhow I'll do it.”⁴⁸ Indeed, Faÿ doggedly promoted and endorsed Stein, using his critical reputation and connections to situate her in the public eye.

For her part, Stein composed the grammatical portrait “Bernard Faÿ”⁴⁹ in 1928, in which parts of speech and “articles” have an insistent presence, as does language of appreciation such as “advice,” “patience,” “amiably,” and “delight.” Though Faÿ had not yet translated “Melanctha,” as he would

in 1930, or the *Autobiography* and the *Making of Americans*, as he would in 1933, Stein clearly associates him with translating, grammar, editing, and making sense. Characteristic of her portraits, the title does the work of informing us of the subject. The portrait opens by pointing to its own medium and to the usefulness of words. Throughout, Stein's eagerness to be published and Fay's dedicated service to that aim are pronounced: "An article is when they have wishes;" "He said sense. What is sense;" and "There is hope with a." The metaphor of cultivation reflects Stein's gratitude for his effort. The great care and attention Fay paid Stein's work and his efforts to consolidate her intellectual and cultural positions emerge in references to articles being "trimmed," to trees, and to tending, "weeding," planting, and "carefulness." Stein further expresses appreciation by stating "Thank you/Chapter One," and "To refuse to stop to end," "With all my heart," "very precious," and "The making of never stop." Stein's line breaks privilege the letter "A," which invokes "Fay" through rhyme, visually pronouncing Fay's prominent position in her work. Stein also references Fay's role as a historian, as one who places a premium on verifiable truths ("What is a fact"). Like "I judge judge," her intrepid assertion in "If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso," Stein's declaration that "The own owned own owner" claims a degree of authority over her subject. Less proprietary than in the former poem, the line in Fay's portrait appreciates their chiasmic sharing over the dominion of ideas, the kind of reciprocity that takes place in the work of editing and translation. This portrait represents the finest parts of the Stein–Fay relationship, as she cherishes his steadfastness and encouragement, as well as his justification of her ambition. Above all, the portrait provides a compelling glimpse of their affinity for each other and for language, a bond that predates the venal politics that would later frame their relationship. Stein was a committed supporter of his highly political pursuit of a tenured appointment as Chair of American Civilization at the Collège de France in Paris, a position he secured on February 29, 1932. According Dydo and Burns, Stein admired his academic credentials (he had a Harvard degree and had held posts at Columbia) and valued the entrée his university affiliations afforded her.³⁰

The 1996 publication of *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder*, edited by Dydo and Burns, and Wanda Van Dusen's "Portrait of a National Fetish: Gertrude Stein's 'Introduction to the Speeches of Maréchal Pétain' (1942)"³¹ brought much-needed attention to Stein's war-time activity. More recently the work of Barbara Will has put a finer point on the Stein–Fay relationship with all its irreconcilabilities, among them

the thorny issue of anti-Semitism.⁵² Faÿ's well-known anti-Semitism casts a strange light on the logic of Stein's unflinching loyalty. He shared the aspirations and political commitment of Vichy's *État français* and Pétain, whose expressions of anti-Semitism were sinister in the extreme. Faÿ's remarks on the "intuitive mobility" of the Jewish race and its "preference for the potential and emotional" over "reality"⁵³ were doubtless not lost on Stein, a close reader of all his political writings. His memoir, *Les Précieux*, dedicates an entire chapter to her and, though written in 1966, after he was jailed for collaboration with the Nazis, Faÿ still makes no effort to hide his fascination with Stein's Jewishness. He recalls that, upon meeting her in 1924, Stein "was quite corpulent and vigorous and resembled a 2nd century Roman emperor who might have had Jewish blood ... Her fine face shone with authority and intelligence";⁵⁴ indeed, *Les Précieux* refers to her Jewishness and qualities of an Israelite almost as many times as it refers to her genius. According to Malcolm, Faÿ experienced with Stein a certain racial *frisson*, an anti-Semite's "thrill" or "transgressive fantasy of friendship with an exceptional Chosen Person."⁵⁵ One letter starkly bears this fetishization out, expressing as it does his affection for, as he put it, "my friends the Jews."⁵⁶

What was the nature of this bond between them? Faÿ's letters to Stein reveal a connection based upon ambition and strategies of advancement, as well as admiration and disdain for the professional trajectories of famous men living and dead. Faÿ speaks with urgency of the need for icons of power: "All our great men need a revival, I feel," he insists in a 1930 letter to her, "Why could we not start it?"⁵⁷ In many ways his biographies of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington – into which Stein put many editorial hours – were already supporting this effort. In a letter to Stein dated May 20, 1931, Faÿ bemoans the work of editing what would become *George Washington: Republican Aristocrat* (1931), expressing an almost obsequious degree of appreciation for her work on it. He writes: "I had to spend 10 solid days to correct the proofs and mss. of G. Washington. It nearly made me sick – and thoroughly convinced me of the greatness and surprising value of the work you performed on this manuscript. I shall never thank you enough."⁵⁸

Interpreting America's first president was a way of exchanging opinions on issues of identity, power, and political conservatism. Even while researching Washington for "Scenery and George Washington, a Novel or a Play" (1931), Stein anticipated the insights of Faÿ's work: "It will interest me a lot to know what you do with George Washington," she quipped, "a very typical George."⁵⁹

Like Stein, Faÿ plotted leaders along continuums, pairing them up for their shared leadership qualities or seeing them as bookends for historical chapters. One letter toys with the title “De Washington à Bonaparte” or “Washington et Robespierre,” anticipating both Stein’s jokey idea in *Paris France* of titling an artbook “From Bismarck to Hitler” and the Plutarchan parallels she draws between many leaders, including Washington and Pétain. Faÿ’s fascination with Franco-American relations, echoed in his relationship to Stein, informed much of his work, as did his craving for a new heroic age of daring, bold thinking. At moments, his award-winning book, *The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America: A Study of the Moral and Intellectual Relations Between France and the United States at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1927) reads like an homage to Stein:

It seems that from 1775–1800 there reigned an impassioned intellectual union between the two countries ... France and the United States were dazzled by each other. The best minds of both countries threw themselves recklessly into the friendship. The two countries loved each other for their differences. These they often misunderstood even while admiring them greatly ... If we consider it from an intellectual point of view it is above all a mirage, a story of love.⁶⁰

Faÿ was captivated by Franklin (in their country house, Toklas and Stein kept a “charming coloured English engraving of Benjamin Franklin demonstrating one of his discoveries on a lake in an English park”⁶¹), using his wide-ranging familiarity with American culture to bolster his provocative study of the Founding Father. Critics issued high praise for his Franklin biography in 1929; the *New York Times* reviewer held it as superior to any other American effort, explaining: “It excels in presenting Franklin not simply as a great American, but as one of the great men of his century.”⁶² Though Faÿ examined his subjects with impressive intellectual depth – his study of Franklin’s Masonic affiliations was remarkable – he enjoyed indulging in catty assessments of personal appearance. Of this propensity, one critic said, “M. Fay seems to assume that all politicians show their trade in their lineaments.”⁶³

Faÿ wrote extensively about American civilization, publishing popular pieces about the European fascination with America and its men – Ford, Morgan, Wilson, and Chaplin, whom he described as “Four myths [that] fascinated the European mind.”⁶⁴ His characterizations of American political figures are provocative, unorthodox, at times corny, as when he says that Hoover “might have been a traveler in pneumatic plugs come to sell his wares to pretty women who were expecting a representative of Jean Patou or of Mlle. Chanel,” or that Ford, had he “been born in a small

country ... would have ended by making watches or machines for perpetual motion."⁶⁵ For all of his seriousness and dedication to history, Fay – like Stein – relished pointing out the folly, as in this undated letter to Stein:

yes people are funny just now. They take all this politics so damn seriously – They are punished: they had stupidly believed that politics would make them happy and love the world. It never does – Not even with Caesar. Not even with Louis XIV. Not even with Washington. It's a failure – as such funny and tragic – but never really serious – What is serious is the rest, life, and the creation of the human mind.⁶⁶

In her own unhistorical treatment of historical figures, Stein revises the Plutarchan form, which compared the personalities of one Roman and one Greek figure, such as Demetrius and Antony, but does so by demoting political accomplishment and focusing on personalities, not histories. According to Plutarch, even “sometimes a matterless moment, an expression or jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever.”⁶⁷ Like Fay's impulse to read the “lineaments” of politicians, Stein eschewed ideological critiques for the small biographical detail, locating human meaning in what traditional historiography overlooks. But the analogies she drew were less often parallels than metonymic chains or intersubjective clusters into which she inevitably inserted herself, as in the case of Washington who, like Grant and Napoleon, presented an iconic figure offering a readily inhabitable heroic subjectivity. Not only does Stein bear a resemblance to Washington – in also being born in February and (according to her brother) being “impulsive and slow-minded”⁶⁸ – but Pétain also is similar to the “first president of the United States” because “he too is first in war first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”⁶⁹ Moreover, she explains, “like Benjamin Franklin [Pétain] never defended himself, he never explained himself, in short his character did not need any defense.”⁷⁰ Her writings repeatedly return to great men, configuring them as inexhaustible sources of meaning whose precise qualities are never fully articulated.

According to Richard Bridgman, “*Four in America's* ambitious analysis of the American character was probably inspired by Bernard Fay's lectures on ‘Franco-American things’.”⁷¹ Her chapter dedicated to Washington in *Four in America* (1931–1934)⁷² does much more to ironize notions of a reified historical imagination than to elucidate what it truly would mean

if Washington had been, as she puts it, a “writer that is a novelist” rather than “father of his country.”⁷³ That she would choose to transform the quintessential American icon into a writer designates the various trajectories of identification at work in her fascination with him. Likening her authorial sensibility to his, Stein pronounces: “George Washington was fairly famous because he wrote what he saw and he saw what he said. *And this is what I do.*”⁷⁴ There is a certain insistence in this observation, for if Washington were “fairly famous” for writing and seeing and saying, so Stein should be. Speaking of *his* success with an intellectual pursuit analogous to hers, Stein predetermines her own success. Aligning her work with Washington’s vocation as a writer, Stein by extension gains access to the more elusive force of his cultural and political authority. Her difference from one such as Washington is effaced as she affords the leader the authority she has gained (as a novelist) and, in doing so, implies a shrewd appropriation of his own. If a leader can be a writer, she seems to ask, why not a writer a leader?

But rather than telling the reader what Washington the novelist wrote, Stein delivers a primer on her philosophy of the hero, whose identity and genius is determined largely through his name. Assuring her reader that “[t]his was the way George Washington was,”⁷⁵ Stein confusingly insists that whether general or novelist, he would have been no different. Transcending all contingency and historical determinism, Washington could never be other than who he was; thus, she maintains, “George Washington was and is the father of his country.”⁷⁶ Sustaining this vital core of his identity, Stein is free to present an unfamiliar Washington, one whose everydayness had gone overlooked by previous biographers. Explaining these radical reinterpretations, Dydo suggests that Stein “rejects historical biographies of national figures such as Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson” because they are “linear chronological narrative[s].”⁷⁷ Perhaps we may also see her reinterpretations as a way of winnowing genius from biographical determinism. Abstracting national figures from their personal stories, Stein foregrounds their status as icons embedded in myth rather than historical fact. Her vehement tone urges the reader’s belief in this thoroughly undocumented work, while accruing authority through her own unorthodox recapitulation of Washington’s life story:

Everybody knows what he did and what he did not do.

But does everybody know that he wrote novels too. I wonder. I wonder if everybody knows that. But they will. They will because I will tell them the way that he did that.⁷⁸

Subordinating history and biography to aesthetic experimentation, Stein jealously guards her epistemological advantage. She approaches her subject in the pose of a trained historian revealing new and privileged insights into history's great men: "Napoleon could not write a novel, not he. Washington could. And did. Oh yes I say so. And did."⁷⁹ Applying poetic insistence to historiographical inquiry, Stein imitates the practice of icon canonization even as she takes it to task.

Despite the persistence of such banal details as Washington's enchantment with baby clothing and his dislike of the French pronunciation of "George," *Four in America* was seen by Thornton Wilder, for one, as a work of valuable critical insight: "I have been corresponding with the [Yale] Librarian about you. His name is [Bernard] Knollenberg and he's just published a book about George Washington which will require every preceding Life to be revised. I have directed him to *Four in America* for some lights he would not otherwise obtain."⁸⁰ Washington's hard-wired identity transcends what Stein's Radcliffe teacher William James designated as "geographical environment" and resides, according to Stein's highly idiosyncratic premise, in his name. Declaring in her chapter on Grant that, "names have a way of being attached to those that bear them" in that they "denote character and career,"⁸¹ Stein forces "Grant," "Washington," and others to erase their own signification. Transcending historical flux, the name participates in the very nature of the named but works from this reciprocal relationship toward an independence of its own; fetish-like, the name seeks a sacred and determined quality in and of itself. Just as important as "character and career" is the authority invested in these names and what it means for Stein to invoke them with such liturgical regularity. Of course, to "have" or "make" a name (for oneself) also denotes concern with posterity and public attention, but Stein undercuts this notion somewhat by suggesting that one's name is not *made* but rather *establishes* or *makes* its bearer. Naming is thus endowed with profound determining power, a certain hidden order; might one assume that language also enjoys a purchase over the objects it names?

Such interrelations between naming and authority achieve an ominous tone when we consider that in *Mrs. Reynolds*, Stein re-names Hitler. The effect – like Chaplin's Adenoid Hynkel – is willfully flimsy, purposefully absurd. In keeping the initials, the act of renaming does not go all the way toward reincarnation, nor does it seek to transcend impersonation: "[T]he name I gave the hero used the same initials," Stein wrote in correspondence to her Random House publisher, Bennett Cerf, one

month after Hitler's suicide, "but it might be nice to use his name."⁸² In the novel, Harper's name carries a toxic freight, its ubiquity frightens and sickens the protagonist: "There is said Mrs. Reynolds no escaping hearing his name ... It would said Mrs. Reynolds make my teeth hurt to hear his name."⁸³ By using only his initials, Stein sustains a degree of distance from the real-life subject but also raises questions about the name determinism she so passionately argues for in *Four in America*. If names dictate "character and career," what does it mean to rename the leader of the Third Reich Angel Harper?

According to Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Jewish writers during and after the war avoided invoking Hitler's name altogether, choosing instead to rename him or to reduce him to initials. He explains, "[I]t is almost as if the name remains under a powerful taboo and is referred to, if at all, most often in oblique and indirect ways."⁸⁴ Stein's decision to give her character "the same initials" suggests a bit of Steinian wish-fulfillment – that the leader would actually be different (as *Four in America* suggests one may) – and prevents "Hitler" from accruing the sort of incantatory meaning earned by Grant or Napoleon. Absurd though it seems to suggest that renaming leaders may alter the trajectory of history, from the very first biographies on the Nazi leader, extensive theories concerning Hitler's name gathered the momentum of myth. As early as Rudolf Olden's pre-war biography, wild hypotheses around the determinism of Hitler's name perpetuated speculation not unlike Stein's. Explaining "that Hitler's father had changed his name from Schicklgruber to Hiedler," Olden suggests: "I have heard Germans speculate that whether Hitler could have become the master of Germany had he been known to the world as Schicklgruber ... Can one imagine the frenzied German masses acclaiming Schicklgruber with their Heils?"⁸⁵ By the same token, the idea of these masses shrieking Harper with their Heils sounds like something akin to an accusation or character evaluation.

In suggesting that he and Stein undertake a "revival" of "great men," Fay nods toward historical explanations that favor authority and genius over environmental context. History, in Fay's understanding, is palpably embodied, motivated, and moved by those single-minded enough to act as executors of its force. Stein's own fetishized heroes do not usually partake of the vicissitudes of human agency or memory; self-reflection does not shape their phenomenal world. The controlling will is essentially that of Stein, who cuts Napoleon, Grant, and others from her own cloth. Her great men embody a gleeful sense of freedom from the time-bound meanings imposed by historical accounts, becoming icons outside the flow of history and ideological implication.

V HERO WORSHIP

While signal explorations of the great man theory, from Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes and Hero-worship and the Heroic in History* (1840) and Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Representative Men* (1850) to William James's "Great Men and Their Environment" (1880), preceded the rise of twentieth-century totalitarianism, their focus upon Napoleon, Grant, Bismarck, and Frederick the Great informed modernist theories of authority. To Carlyle and James, the hero embodied a zeitgeist, and was capable of activating and galvanizing the spirit of a nation and a generation. Already by 1940, the application of Carlyle's ideas to theories of Führer worship were plentiful; by 1947 one of Hitler's first biographers described the final moments in the Reich chancellory in Berlin by detailing that "Goebbels read aloud to Hitler from the latter's favorite book, Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*."⁸⁶ Carlyle's lengthy treatment of the great Prussian hero was attractive to Hitler for obvious reasons; in it, Carlyle expresses a deep veneration for German history and for the notion that great men build and control history.

Fourteen years after James published "Great Men and Their Environment" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Stein would begin studying with him at Radcliffe's Psychological Laboratory, looking at psychophysiological models of human behavior. Though her impressions of his work on great men is not known, Bridgman describes her admiration for James himself as "a full-blown case of hero-worship," whose disciple's tributes include an essay praising James as "a strong man willing to fight, to suffer and endure."⁸⁷ Her interest in classifying personality types – such as "resisters" and "yielders" – and her budding interest in genius, in its own way, affirms many of James's ideas concerning the essential nature of the hero. His divergence from the sociological philosophy of Herbert Spencer eventually led James to redouble his defense of individual genius. According to Spencer, "the geographical position of the various races" designates the hero, rendering "physiological forces" inconsiderable in the face of "sociological pressures."⁸⁸ By way of response, James tempers this "obsolete anachronism,"⁸⁹ asserting that the "geographical environment ... can *only* foster and further" or "thwart and frustrate," but can never wholly determine; men such as Washington and Grant, he insists, "simply rose to their occasions."⁹⁰ Where Spencer insisted on setting and time-bound context, James countered with rhetoric of charisma and genius. Responding to critics, James would follow "Great Men and Their Environment" with "The Importance of Individuals," declaring

unequivocally that one's satisfaction as "a hero-worshipper" (and he is a self-proclaimed one) entails "communing with kindred spirits."⁹¹

In some ways the romantic tendencies of James's hero of immanent authority run counter to interpretations of authority in which Stein sought solace in the chaotic years leading up to World War II. Much is made in both *Wars I Have Seen* and *Mrs. Reynolds* of Stein's strong attraction to astrology, mystic prediction, and other preternatural interpretive systems. Stein repeatedly turned to the divination in Leonardo Blake's *Hitler's Last Year of Power* (1939) and the *Last Year of the War* (1940), in which the English astrologer pronounces, "Men only think they are the makers of history," but "[a]ctually there is being staged in Europe to-day the greatest puppet-show in the history of man."⁹² Unable to triumph over "his Saturn," Blake predicts, Hitler will become "its plaything." Blake's is a contrapuntal epistemological approach toward authority whose influential presence in Stein's work indicates a strain diametrically opposed to James's "great citizen." While James's Napoleon demonstrates the "fermentative influence" of genius, Blake's Napoleon abides by the dictates of a "mid-heaven" Saturn. With Blake and James two modes of thought confront one another: Blake's heroes are pawns to a cosmic order that to James bears no influence upon the cultivation of genius. With Blake, leaders are moored to their historical context, far from James's atemporal order, in which leaders correlate and enlink like so many typological brethren. Like her teacher, Stein believed history's icons were invested with a timeless, interior "bottom nature" that transcends circumstance – cosmic, political, national, or otherwise – and acts as the congealing stuff of great figures.

For Stein, history itself was a record of leaders and thinkers, the powerful and the charismatic, the gifted and the ideal. Dislodging figures from epistemological solidity, Stein often reduced Napoleon, Grant, and others to ahistorical composites of authority. Her microcosmic, intimate perspective was not lost on friends and biographers. As John Malcolm Brinnin put it, she had "little concept of the forces that propelled men to power, she analyzed personalities with little regard for the movements of which they were executives."⁹³ More to the point was Eric Sevareid's remark that Stein "did not understand Fascism; she did not understand that the moods and imperatives of great mass movements are far stronger and more important than the individuals involved in them."⁹⁴

Not surprisingly, Carlyle's imaginative historical narratives held great appeal for Stein. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* boasts that "she is one of the few people of her generation that has read every line of Carlyle's

Frederick the Great.⁹⁵ But Stein's conception of the leader was not always consistent, for even as the leader's authority permitted a stable, interior bond with other leaders – villains or heroes – his embeddedness in his own “century” could never be entirely transcended. She spoke of centuries as entities necessary to be killed off as one would assassinate a brutal dictator or menacing rival:

and the worst of it all is that the one that says he is trying to kill the century that has to be killed is the last piece of the century that has to be killed and often the most long-lived, such as a Napoleon, a Hitler or a Julius Caesar the century has to be killed and they are the embodiment the most persistent end of it.⁹⁶

But the desire to embody time quickly gives way to the narcissistic desire to transcend it. After sentencing Hitler, Napoleon, and Caesar, Stein centralizes her own participation in time's bidding, proclaiming that, “between babyhood and fourteen, I was there to begin to kill what was not dead, the nineteenth century.”⁹⁷ Taken as commentary on her earlier decree, this claim enacts a strange mode of identification, in which the power to “execute” comes at the ambivalent cost of aligning with the triumvirate of dictators: like them, she seeks to “kill off the century.” In this sense, “killing off” becomes at once an arrogation of authority, a movement into the recently vacated seat of power, *and* a heroic uprising against the tyranny of historical meaning.

In the course of discussing great men, Stein and Faÿ anointed Franklin D. Roosevelt as their ambivalent anti-hero. As such, Faÿ's *Roosevelt and His America* (1933) often reads like a deeply subjective effort to understand the president's iconic status. By turns sardonic and sincerely curious, Faÿ admires Roosevelt's “acumen” and “instinct for public opinion,” confessing to a rather affectionate attraction to his “delightful manners; his beautiful, grave and well-pitched voice,” finally, describing “his graceful, simple but dignified gestures [as] extraordinarily attractive and convincing.”⁹⁸ But the sanguinity quickly becomes disingenuous, tempered as it is by barbs about Roosevelt's “shrewdness” and “dictatorial laws.” Faÿ abandons objectivity toward his subject, lapsing into denunciation and parading his disdain of Hoover and Mrs. Harding. Stein praised the volume in a 1934 review for the *Kansas City Star*, using the article as an opportunity to admit her own guilty weakness for the opposition: “[T]he Democratic party seduces one, and that is because they only elect a President when by some chance they have a very exceptional man to elect and a very exceptional man is seductive; you can't help being seduced by a very exceptional man.”⁹⁹ Stein's comment is illuminating as a confessional of her

own readiness to compromise political loyalties in the face of personal charisma. She suggests a willingness to be wooed, a certain satisfaction with the possibility of a leader's successful enchantment.

Stein shared Faÿ's contempt for Democratic political policy. Judgments of Roosevelt's leadership, reputation, and appearance fill his letters, suggesting Stein's receptivity to these ideas. From 1933 to 1934 Faÿ sent Stein reports of American political vicissitudes, seething and gloating and even confessing his own peculiar attraction to Roosevelt, whom he describes as "more powerful than a king ... he is polite and imperious, affectionate and arrogant, supple and despotic," concluding: "He is enjoying a great time, he is grand to look at."¹⁰⁰ In pointing out Roosevelt's visual appeal, Faÿ damns with faint praise, as in a letter written in 1933: "what a success as a living thing and as a handsome thing. It's really the greatest esthetic achievement of the last three or four centuries."¹⁰¹ For Stein and Faÿ the performance and embodiment of authority was an *idée fixe*: how to consolidate and negotiate power; how to promote and frame one's public image; and how one regarded historical and contemporary figures of power.

Stein and Faÿ were also deeply preoccupied with issues of audience and influence, literary production, and the public sphere. Faÿ not only promoted Stein to an American audience, but he also undertook translations and projects aimed at importing Stein into French literary circles. As he discusses in *Les Précieux*, Faÿ co-translated *Making of Americans* (925 pages in quarto) with Renée de Seillere. His description of this effort is suggestive, however, as cutting, not translating, concerns him most: "Nous nous mimes donc à traduire en coupant, puis à couper, couper, couper en traduisant."¹⁰² The result was *Américains d'Amérique*, 260 pages in octavo. According to Faÿ, Stein was thrilled with his work, reading it all in one night and announcing how pleased she was – with no mention of its great reduction. Even more notable is Faÿ's cloyingly praise-ful preface to the English translation, which casts Stein as more object of fascination than intellectual peer, more fetish than friend. He (again) relates his first meeting with Stein as a transformative moment. Her laugh, her voice, everything that surrounds her (dogs, roses, "Picassos") adds up to a tableau of quasi-spiritual perfection: "Every time I came near her it seemed to me that life and things became more precise, that light was shining frankly on everything and with her I had the pleasure of talking as if words had a meaning and as if the meaning of everything, words and things, were pleasant."¹⁰³ He remarks that "She never stopped inventing, creating, changing and adding,"¹⁰⁴ crafting an image of tireless

devotion. Faÿ also offers an analysis of the intimacy between writers and their words, with implications that are suggestive for his understanding of translation; he writes:

There is no *thing* on earth which is capable like the word to be at the same time a real thing and a part of the man. All the other things escape from us and free themselves from our domination; only the word is ours and necessarily bound to us ... nobody can use again our words and nobody can build his life on the words which have been the life of someone else.¹⁰⁵

Faÿ describes words as the irrefutable property of the writer; as such, the relationship between writer and words is one into which translation can intervene only so far. The power of the writer, as expressed in “domination” and “bound,” is unrivaled; the translator serves the writer and cannot lay claim to the writer’s words. Sontag’s characterization of translation as a system of dissemination or “valuable cognitive – and ethical – work out” “thought to bring a benefit to the translator”¹⁰⁶ provides a different lens through which to regard the act of translation. Faÿ extols the writer’s proprietary relationship to his writing, assigning a self-effacing role to the translator. Sontag is not convinced of this transparency, seeing translation as implicated in ethical issues and enmeshed in the translator’s self-interest. Translation is hardly the value-free act Faÿ proposes. “To translate thoughtfully, painstakingly, ingeniously, respectfully, is a measure of the translator’s fealty to the enterprise of literature itself.”¹⁰⁷ Sontag speaks of honoring the integrity of the original, of presenting the translation “intact, without loss,” posing a question of keen relevance to Faÿ’s translations: “How far is the translator empowered to adapt – that is, recreate – the text in the language into which the work is being translated?” Translation conveys the production of versions, of relationships between the foreign and the familiar, of disjunctions between genuine and adaptation, and the idea of an inevitable measure of loss. Faÿ’s insistent “couper, couper, couper” enunciates the significant changes he made to *Américains d’Amérique*, and the priority he held in creating a radically different edition of her work.

“A Political Series,” Stein’s 1937 essay on Roosevelt, takes aim at the folly of his liberal welfare platform and lavish re-election budget. According to Stein, American patterns of obedience that began in World War I continued to keep the people attracted to strong national leadership: “The difficulty about Hitlerism and Fascism and Rooseveltism is that everybody is used to it even before they really hear what they are told to do.”¹⁰⁸ Despite identifying a “steady tendency to dictatorship”¹⁰⁹ from the first

to second Roosevelt administrations, Stein was far from consistent in her critique of authority figures. Indeed, her support of Franco's regime reveals a discomfiting arbitrariness in her condemnation of authoritarianism. Faÿ, on the other hand, was unswerving, expressing anticipatory glee at seeing "mr. Roosevelt as a declining star," and, perhaps with Stein's earlier admission in mind, cautioning her against any deep-seated attraction, "Beware of your Republican Faith!" one letter urges, "If you should become a Democrat I disavow you!"¹¹⁰

Faÿ's letters map the contours of a politically opinionated Stein, of a writer deeply considering how to craft and control a public identity. These letters – far less neutral than those exchanged with other prolific correspondents such as Thornton Wilder or Bennett Cerf – elucidate Stein's personal concerns with image construction and circulation, and with her perceived literary value. In the context of their relation, the boundaries between promotion and translation blur, as do the distinctions between translator and translated. The measure of Stein's gratitude emerges in an inscription to Faÿ that adorns the frontispiece of *Lectures in America*: "TO BERNARD WHO COMFORTINGLY AND ENCOURAGINGLY WAS LISTENING AS THESE WERE BEING WRITTEN." Faÿ's adoption of Stein's "cause" was not an unreturned favor. Where Faÿ gratified Stein's practice of self-projection onto famous men – "it was fun making a Plutarchan parallel of Woodrow Wilson and Gertrude Stein," he teases in a 1934 letter¹¹¹ – she would later seek to raise Pétain to a level of respectability for an American audience. With her agreement in 1941 to introduce and translate Pétain's speeches, Stein had a chance to complement his attention. According to Burns and Dydo: "Faÿ not only hoped that Stein's name would add to American support of Pétain but also expected that a translation by a distinguished writer and long-time resident in France might for Americans add luster to the marshall's book and personality. No doubt Faÿ hoped in turn it would assure Stein's safety in wartime France."¹¹² In a letter dated September 15, 1941, a self-assured Faÿ describes his valuable connection to the Vichy leader: "I spend a week every month in Vichy to call on the Marshall and advise him how to run his business, He is very nice, and says 'yes, yes' – and I go home feeling great..."¹¹³ Four months later, Stein met Faÿ in Lyon, where, according to Dydo and Burns, they very likely made arrangements for her to undertake the Pétain translations.¹¹⁴

Stein fully dedicated herself to the work of introducing and translating thirty-two of Pétain's speeches from French to English,¹¹⁵ considering the *Atlantic* as a possible publishing venue. Bilignin's weekly newspaper,

Le Bugiste, presented her Pétain project as the *agon* between two authorial protagonists: "It wasn't easy to find the English equivalent for the 'brevitas imperatorial' but this rivalry between the two languages stirs her; now she feels she's going to win, she abandons herself to her subject, to her hero, she admires the importance of his words and the significance of the symbol."¹¹⁶ *Le Bugiste* characterizes translation as a crusade, a charged encounter mediated through language. What starts as a challenge of words and a mutually beneficial investment in the heroic other ("her subject"), yields to an expression of rapt devotion and libidinally charged surrender. A strange form of victory is achieved through subordination to the words; converting the speeches into French, Stein also transforms herself into Pétain's loyal follower. The ontological gap between source text and subject collapses; submitting to one suggests submitting to the other.

Correspondence in Columbia's Random House collection reveals uneasiness between Stein and Cerf regarding her campaign to bring Pétain's words to an American public. In the winter of 1941–1942 Stein worked simultaneously on *Mrs. Reynolds*, described in one letter as a "historical novel of the present,"¹¹⁷ and the Pétain translations. While Stein explains to Cerf that the former "progresses slowly" because it is "a difficult subject, the two dictators,"¹¹⁸ she does not draw any connection between the critical work on Hitler and Stalin and the favorable project she was undertaking for the Vichy leader. In general, the Cerf–Stein exchanges show a Stein dramatically different from that of the Fay correspondence. Stein subdues remarks about leaders and her conservative opinions, whereas Cerf assumes that they hold equivalent political attitudes, often making pro-Roosevelt remarks; but queries about Stein's work and the progress of her manuscripts are always at the fore. Given the voluminous and often cozy exchanges between the two, it is striking that Cerf's memoirs do not reveal a relationship of any significant intimacy.¹¹⁹ Cerf visited Stein and Toklas in Bilignin in June 1936, but likely knew little about Stein's political sympathies or about what she did in order to remain unharmed in Vichy France. Nonetheless, the hazards seem to be at the front of his mind in a 1941 letter, in which he hopes that she and Alice would "come through the holocaust completely unscathed."¹²⁰ Still, his memoir's chapter "Travel" features a hysterical Stein too busy with domestic amenities to concern herself with political vicissitudes, while an anecdote about her rage at a literary editor from the *New Masses* casts her as grotesquely self-concerned. According to Cerf, Stein exclaimed:

[Y]ou foolish Communists – and all other people who waste their time with politics – are like janitors. When my flat is warm and clean, and the elevator is running regularly, and the garbage is collected twice a day, I never give a thought to the janitor in the cellar ... [But] If things continue to go wrong, I see that the old janitor is fired and a new one gets the job. It's the same way in government. Let my own life go undisturbed, and my private affairs prosper – and I don't give a continental whether the government is being run by a Communist, or a Seventh-Day Adventist, or a Hottentot.¹²¹

The Stein we see here, desiring to live life on her terms without the interference of political thought, is precisely the Stein who survived in Vichy France. Cerf's anecdote is revealing, bypassing reference to her apologia for Pétain, which clearly put distance between the two friends, and offering a variation of the expressions he found objectionable. Even a cursory comparison of Cerf's memoirs, *Try and Stop Me* (1944) and *Shake Well Before Using* (1948), and the Cerf–Stein correspondence bears out that the tone (intimate, chiding, familiar) and volume (possibly hundreds) of the letters are in no way reflected in the autobiographies' breezy and somewhat dismissive attitude.

Cerf's rejection of the Pétain introduction was unequivocal. At the top of the manuscript, Cerf wrote, "For the records. This disgusting piece was mailed from Belley on Jan. 19 1942."¹²² Stein's determination to bring Cerf around to "understand things as they are" – as she put it – emerges in the letter that accompanied the manuscript's delivery to Cerf. Here she thanks Cerf for sending her books, among them Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and explains her feelings about translating Pétain's *Parole aux Français. Messages et écrits, 1934–1941*, a book of speeches "to his people." Stein writes:

I found the book convincing and moving to an xtraordinary [*sic*] degree and my idea was to write an introduction, telling how my feelings have changed about him, I have had strong ups and downs and I think it would all do a lot of good ... Now please Bennett if this idea interests you let me know as soon as possible, because I would naturally prefer you but if not someone else.¹²³

In the January 19 letter to which Cerf refers in his annotation, Stein again presses that "something like this is necessary now to make people understand." That Cerf would publish neither *Mrs. Reynolds* nor the Pétain work is less curious, however, than the mystery of the missing Pétain manuscript. During the period of 1941–1942, mail service out of France was disrupted and therefore, according to their correspondence, Cerf did not actually receive the manuscript or introduction until February 7, 1946. (Thus his annotation must have been written at that time as well.)

Responding to Stein, Cerf points to the perilous effect that publication would have on her career:

I have just this moment received your letter telling me about your idea of translating the addresses of Petain and writing an introduction to the same. I want to tell you immediately what a very bad idea I think it is. In America, at least, Petain stands for the very soul of collaboration and his record for several years before the French occupation stamps him in the minds of most Americans as a fascist of the most poisonous kind. Possibly history will prove that this was too harsh a judgment, but certainly for the next few years not one person in a thousand in America is going to look with any favor on any volume of Petain's addresses, and I hate the idea of your becoming associated with such a volume in any way, shape, or form ... speaking from a purely commercial point of view, I think the project would be doomed to dismal failure ... Don't you go upsetting the apple cart with that Petain idea of yours!¹²⁴

Cerf's choice to cast the injunction in terms of national identity and audience reception must have been cutting to Stein who, despite many decades of expatriate life, considered herself an American, capable of crossing into foreign territory as an ambassador of her home country. Cerf's letter posits a dilemma between identification with home nation and political alignment with authority; luckily for Stein, she was never leveled with such a choice. She reaped the benefits of her Vichy alliances while the erratic wartime postal services protected her from the imprudence of publishing her translations. Clearly from his letter, Cerf understood translation as an endorsement that could effectively inscribe Stein into the American imagination as much as a collaborator as Pétain.

Upon receiving Cerf's belated proscription, a chagrined Stein cast the project as a long since forgotten whim, a now amusing political miscalculation. Her telegram urging "KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON BENNETT DEAR LETTER RE PETAIN WAS WRITTEN IN NINETEEN FORTYONE LOVE GERTRUDE" was followed two days later by a letter that diverts attention from the ideological implications by focusing on the "funny" confusion about the lost letter. "Where could that letter have stayed all these years, it must [?] only have been written in 1941 before Pearl Harbor and I suppose was not sent on because all correspondence stopped after that."¹²⁵ Cerf followed Stein's lead by making a joke of her error in judgment: "Some German gauleiter was probably sleeping with it under his pillow for the last three or four years; come to think of it," he quipped, "there was a faint aroma of frankfurters and sauerkraut."¹²⁶

Fajé reaped substantial professional benefits from the Vichy regime, working as director of the French National Library and museum of

documentation on secret societies, where he sought to combat the Masonic influence – anti-clerical and anti-religious – in French society. He accessed secret archives from World War I and on a daily basis published the names of Freemasons in the *Journal Officiel*, crimes for which he was arrested at the Bibliothèque Nationale by the French Forces of the Interior on August 19, 1944. In response, Stein remarked that, "[H]e certainly did certain things that he should not have done, but that he ever denounced any body, no, that I do not believe."¹²⁷ Her reluctant appraisal remains unconvincing. Stein's customary authority is missing; rather than say he did not denounce anyone, she says she does not *believe* he denounced anyone. The confident Stein of, say, *Four in America*, insisting that "everybody" will know that Washington wrote novels "*because I will tell them the way that he did that*" is absent. Stein makes no such confident pronouncement about Fay; she equivocates: "believes," instead of "knows," uneasily, vaguely acknowledging that he "certainly did certain things."

Four months after Stein's death, Fay's trial was under way in Paris. Throughout Fay's career the *New York Times* had been attentive to his progress, promoting and covering his lecture series, appointments, and publications in America and France, and offering admiring reviews. Shortly after his arrest, however, American intellectual historian Perry Miller wrote that Stein had "lent herself to exploitation by one of Europe's leading charlatans, Bernard Fay."¹²⁸ Reports on the trial pointed to damning evidence that Fay had systematized propaganda against Masons by producing thirty-three pamphlets and making a film called *Forces Occultes* in 1943. In the end, Fay was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1946, doing hard labor for the crime of collaboration – though he escaped on September 30, 1951.

VI "IF NAPOLEON"

Stein's effort to understand identity and character, and her struggle for authorial autonomy against the accretions of exterior meaning finds articulation through Napoleon. Throughout Stein's work, Napoleon often represents the consolidation of masculine power caught up in the excesses of "identity." To Stein "identity" – as opposed to "entity" – represents the propensity toward a fetishized self, caught up in a skein of memory and self-reflection. In the complexly philosophical *Geographical History*, Stein's polarizes "human nature" and the "human mind," creating a Manichean scheme in which the former, like identity, represents

a “serpent’s nest,” from which proceeds self-justification, jealousy, and propaganda, while the latter stands for self-same presence and absolute dedication to the creative act. But, like Roosevelt, Napoleon offers a “very interesting [example] of having neither human nature nor the human mind,”¹²⁹ leaving him trapped in a netherspace with Being and memory on one side and history and audience on the other. Without a recoverable identity, Napoleon persists as multiform meaning in Stein’s work, serving as something like a suprahistorical anti-hero who facilitates her study of prominent male figures. In her early treatment of the likeness between the painter and the emperor, “If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso” (1923), Stein synthesizes Picasso and Napoleon, bringing into relief the diachronic nature of male authority. This poetic interrogation of masculine identity not only evokes the degree of Stein’s preoccupation with this subject, but also puts a finer point on its precise nature. “If I Told Him” highlights how history perpetuates masculine authority by casting its power as innate and inevitable. Stein distrusts these assumptions, expressing wonder at what Picasso’s response would be if she told him what she knew. Though only the title references him, Picasso is a commanding presence in the poem; both he and Napoleon are “Exactly as as kings,” their ambition and mastery reflected in the poem’s persistent tone. In pointing out Picasso’s likeness to Napoleon, Stein opens larger considerations of the resemblance between an artist and a statesman, as Dydo explains:

She sees the artist’s work, like the strategist’s, as a battle ... Both the artist and the general must win battles against resistant material by means of their constructive gift and their genius. It is for their genius that she admired Napoleon, to whom she likened Picasso, as well as Grant, Hannibal, and Wellington, one of many Arthurs.¹³⁰

Stein inserts herself into the analogy between Picasso and Napoleon, suggesting her own role in the equation with “I judge judge/As a resemblance to him,” and by “Who comes too coming too.” A refrain of “exact,” “exactitude,” and “exactly” brings forth a muscular assertion of control. Where “Exactitude as kings” establishes Napoleonic aspirations for sovereignty, “Exact resemblance to exact resemblance” suggests the resemblance Stein “exacts” (as a commander herself) through her portrait of Picasso *and* the accurate match (“resemblance”) she identifies between the emperor and the Cubist. Stein also signals moments of self-conscious attention to her own role vis-à-vis these two strategists, boldly asserting, “I judge judge,” thereby positing her dominance over those who claim a

monopoly over knowing. Written to tease, the portrait's "He he he he and he" converts the insistent masculine pronomial into laughter; written to criticize – and, again, adjudicate – its oft-quoted line, "Let me recite what history teaches. History teaches," elucidates the cyclic and self-sustaining dynamic in narratives of power. Performative in her delivery, Stein is the one who knows and who may or may not give the lessons, may or may not tell him. The persistent pronominal shifting of "I" to "him" that constitutes both the portrait's title and its first five lines elucidates Stein's identification with these figures; what results is a triangulation among self and others, Stein and masculine figures of artistic and military authority.

Napoleon's rhetorical significance for Stein's own heroic longings is invoked elsewhere as well. Placing into dialogue her discussions of Napoleon in *Paris France* and her comments in "A Transatlantic Interview" (1946), we find the trope of a crafted public identity developing with provocative consequences. While the Napoleon of *Paris France* embodies political history's propagandistic turn, he does so as an exotic interloper and national other not unlike Stein who ever insisted upon her Americanness, as Picasso did his Spanishness: "Napoleon because he was not French had a glamour for them and beside they then had for the only time in their history an idea of propaganda of trying to make other people think as they were thinking."¹³¹ Imagining a sort of marginal prophet thesis, Stein echoes the conclusions of Isaiah Berlin, whose "borderland theory of charismatic political genius" studied Napoleon and Hitler, concluding that "the peculiar psychology of many of the most charismatic, fanatic, possessed nationalist leaders can be traced to their borderland origins: to the fact that they came 'from outside the society that they led, or at any rate from its edges'.¹³² This liminal figure fascinated Stein, as it does Mrs. Reynolds, the protagonist after whom Stein's 1942 novel is named: "Angel Harper said Mrs. Reynolds is a stranger and a stranger can do things nobody born in a country can do."¹³³ The attraction persists in Stein's analysis of Napoleon and Hitler in *Wars I Have Seen*, where she writes: "funnily enough the foreign monster has a glamour for the nation he is destroying that a home grown monster could not have ... it is the other way to [*sic*] of a prophet not being recognized in his own country."¹³⁴ Stein is not concerned with the *nature* of their monstrosity or the ideological implications of their rule so much as with the transplantation that helped advance them to prominence. For her part, authorial self-possession required resettlement in France (she was long herself a prophet not being recognized in her own country); indeed, the move was essential to the effort to "live inside" herself: "That is why writers have to

have two countries, the one where they belong and the one in which they live really. The second one is romantic, it is separate from themselves, it is not real but it is really there.¹³⁵

For Stein, Napoleon-as-case-study exemplifies more than just a chief seeking to conquer or a marginal prophet looking for a space in which to claim *la gloire*. Indeed, as *Paris France* suggests, his fame is implicated in culture's pernicious turn toward propaganda. Behind his protective screen of "identity" lies the receding lived reality (or "entity") of Napoleon. Beneath technologies of promotion, Stein explains, a living version persists; reconciling the two presents a cognitive challenge, much like the one Stein experiences in seeing German soldiers buying candies and silk stockings in her village. She writes:

No individual that you can conceive can hold their own beside life. There has been so much in recent years. Napoleon was, you might say, an ogre in his time. The common people did not know all the everyday things, did not know him intimately, there was not this enormous publicity. People now know the details of important people's daily life unlike they did in the nineteenth century.¹³⁶

While *Paris France* mentions Napoleon's famous deployment of propaganda to seduce the French people, "A Transatlantic Interview" suggests that it was precisely the *lack* of close public scrutiny that afforded him a despot's duplicitous existence. Propaganda effectively concealed the extent of Napoleon's tyranny; indeed, publicity would have exposed the minutiae and "everydayness" of his brutality. Along these lines, Stein's dramatization of Hitler in *Mrs. Reynolds* complicates the despot's public figuration by focusing precisely on these details of his daily life, expressing an intimate everydayness that brings biographical banality to bear on his highly mediatized public persona but also construes sinister meaning in the details she conjures up.

Written in 1941–1942, *Mrs. Reynolds* is unique in the Stein oeuvre. Falling roughly into the category of experimental narrative, *Mrs. Reynolds* bears a curious intertextual relation to *Wars I Have Seen*, her memoir composed from 1943 to 1944. Where *Wars I Have Seen*'s treatment of life's rhythms is characteristic Stein, approaching a range of subjects with what Cerf called "Olympian detachment,"¹³⁷ the earlier work is obsessive, even morbid. Discomfiting familiarity with Hitler in *Mrs. Reynolds* creates a dramatically different emotional climate than that produced by the memoir's more collected observations about the German troops, railroads, and the Maquis. Though Stein's apprehension bears out in the memoir, pleasurable moments in the countryside, unexpected gifts of food, and

news of small victories coming over the wireless disperses the ominous mood. In *Mrs. Reynolds*, the intimate connection between Mrs. Reynolds and Hitler creates a tone of inspissated despair, in which dream worlds and narrative worlds implicate and explicate each other and daily living is contaminated by his malignant presence. *Mrs. Reynolds* reveals a more poignant glimpse of the kind of psychic disturbance Stein lived with during the war, so that even though the later-published *Wars I Have Seen* is a “first-hand” report of life under the Nazis, *Mrs. Reynolds* is more emotionally keen, displacing tensions provoked by living with Hitler onto the title character and presenting them in unsettling impressionistic fashion.

VII A HISTORICAL STATE OF MIND

That Stein’s lifelong identification with leaders and geniuses culminates with varied interpretations of Hitler suggests a dramatic terminus, a dark final intervention of her own authorial subjectivity into the most nefarious example of masculine authority. Stein repudiates any effort to explain, instead dissecting a Hitler manufactured almost entirely from her subjective ideas. The constellation of male leaders that had for so long preoccupied her does not assimilate Hitler. Unlike theirs, his name never serves as one of Stein’s caressable objects invoked through poetic play. The last long novel Stein wrote before she died, *Mrs. Reynolds* tells the story of Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, and their struggles, concerns, and diversions while living through the war. Mrs. Reynolds takes long walks through the countryside, chats with villagers, and returns at the end of the day to report observations and news to her husband (to whom she at one point disturbingly says, “be my angel”¹³⁸). Permeating their everyday experience is a shared preoccupation with Angel Harper and Joseph Lane (Joseph Stalin); though the couple does not experience the war directly (there is no actual physical violence) or know Harper personally (though friends and relatives of theirs do), they cannot shake the dictator’s looming intensity. Stein explains her intentions in the novel’s epilogue:

This book is an effort to show the way anybody could feel these years. It is a perfectly ordinary couple living an ordinary life and having ordinary conversations and really not suffering personally from everything that is happening but over them, all over them is the shadow of two men ... There is nothing historical except the state of mind.¹³⁹

Mrs. Reynolds is capacious, elliptical, and paratactic; it is also usefully informed by her correspondence, as Stein’s own life is present to many of

the novel's details. Rogers' remark that a letter from Stein moves from "nudging to [the Prime Minister of France Léon] Blum"¹⁴⁰ resonates in the thematic fragments of *Mrs. Reynolds*, in which domestic routine and politics share close quarters. Rogers puzzles over the composite of information Stein included in her letters, one of which moves without self-consciousness from *croix de feu* meetings to "mushrooming."¹⁴¹ *New Yorker* journalist Janet Flanner similarly noted Stein's ability to focus on the rituals of village living in the face of historic change – for good or ill. "My dear Gertrude," she wrote to Stein within days of leaving France in 1939, "Your letter was sublime. Few ladies in these times have the concentration to ignore the war, and heaven knows it's true that in the end that's all that prevented ... me coming down and eating mushrooms with you and Alice."¹⁴²

Mrs. Reynolds clings to these fantastic contradictions, embedding woeful details in a narrative of eerie normalcy. Harper himself is a conglomeration of irreconcilable oddities, of malign intensity and dead-end attributes, serving as ambivalent ballast to a narrative that is, at times, nihilistically indifferent to logic. Rogers recounted, "Inspired by the books displayed in the stalls by the Seine," *Mrs. Reynolds*, "an old-fashioned novel" (as Stein put it), threatened to become (in her words) "a dictator novel."¹⁴³ More than a dictator novel, however, *Mrs. Reynolds* is a work about the emotions a dictator provokes; as Lloyd Frankenberg suggests in the book's foreword, Harper is less a direct representation of Hitler than an embodiment of "everybody's fears and thoughts" about Hitler.¹⁴⁴ Set against Mrs. Reynolds's preoccupation with Harper's aging and his memories of childhood and growth as a dictator is Harper's imminent death. Buoyed by the prophecies of Saint Odile, Mrs. Reynolds awaits his death with hovering intensity. "Dear me," she tells herself, "if I knew how to be patient and I know how to be impatient I would know that everything is imminent very imminent."¹⁴⁵

Stein's Harper offers a figure available for facile psychoanalytic speculation. There is Harper's proclivity toward sadomasochistic power relations – "he liked to be with two or three [children] and have the littlest of them tell him what to do,"¹⁴⁶ "he remembered that when he was nine he asked others to build him a little room that would be like a prison"¹⁴⁷ – his barely repressed feminine identification – "before when he was twelve he was in a very strange costume, a hat of a girl and an apron of his mother"¹⁴⁸ – and wrenching fluctuation between the erotic and the traumatic. Harper is "gloomy" and "loved himself for himself alone,"¹⁴⁹ a peevish figure whose recursive dips into hazy childhood memories render him incapable of achieving any presence – or "entity."

Harper – as his name suggests – is practically all talk. Throughout the novel, voice and aggression commingle, bringing to mind the menacing shrieks of a Hitler made familiar by radio broadcasts and newsreels. Mrs. Reynolds not only notes that “Angel Harper talked and talked so everybody had to listen,”¹⁵⁰ but also that he “acted as if he was very angry very very angry,”¹⁵¹ and when he “was very angry that his voice was hoarse,”¹⁵² and when he was sad he felt “tears in his throat but not in his eyes.”¹⁵³ More *dictat*-or than politician, Harper sighs, makes loud noises, “crie[s] like anything,”¹⁵⁴ and loves orating: “[H]e began to speak, he said, when I speak I speak and I speak once in a day twice in a day three times in a day I speak and then I speak on the day and on that day I speak. That was the very first speech he ever made.”¹⁵⁵ Harper’s performative mode of speech precludes communicating any actual information, allowing him to arrogate all significance of the speech act to himself; that Harper asserts himself *is* the significance of the event. As with Adenoid Hynkel’s guttural spouting, the speech act imparts the drama. Even as a child, Harper designated himself a totalizing “overvoice” speaking for those who were “not silent ... but silenced ... because everyone listened when he had it to say that he did say all he did say.”¹⁵⁶ Harper’s pointing relation to his own speech act dramatizes the novel’s larger play with authorial self-reference: we cannot forget that Stein is in control and that the book performs a tactical authorial intervention into an authoritarian’s story. Reinforcing notions of framing and performance is Harper’s attraction to theatrical spectacle, his wish to “play the voices in Punch and Judy,”¹⁵⁷ to play dress up and act out his fantasies.

Though parodic, Harper is never fully unmoored from his real-life counterpart. At age twenty-four, Harper, like Hitler, serves as a corporal in a war; both men are vegetarians and excessive talkers. Certainly Hitler’s histrionic rhetorical skills were well-known in Stein’s day. His voice was integral to Nazism’s political efforts, embodied and singularly capable of galvanizing national will. According to Kershaw, “Hitler was obsessed by his own words, a thorough fanatic with the most powerful effect on his audience; a born agitator in spite of a hoarse, sometimes broken and not infrequently croaking voice.”¹⁵⁸ Likewise, Alice Kaplan asserts that voice “is always the key to mystification.”¹⁵⁹

A claustrophobic intimacy emerges out of the fragmented thoughts that stream through Harper’s mind. Compulsively recalling perverse scenarios from his past – while subject to Mrs. Reynolds’s prophetic anticipation of his death – Harper remains ensnared in a dialectical tug-of-war: he both saturates the novel and sustains a maddeningly elusive role. Harper

is both psychic disturbance and disturbed psyche: Mrs. Reynolds cannot banish him from her thoughts and fixates on the fragmented mirror of his personal history: "Mrs. Reynolds every morning in her bath lying on her back and her hands pressed together prayed not against Angel Harper but she prayed for his opponent and she prayed against his friends."¹⁶⁰ Her circuitous method of prayer reflects the narrative itself. Rather than naming Hitler and elucidating *why* he is evil, Stein creates an extended portrait of Harper's psychic development – or lack thereof. The recursive narrative engenders the angst of the protagonist, raising the question, what type of narrative *is* up to the task of representing Hitler? *Mrs. Reynolds* unnerves the reader by flooding the story with the hazy, anguished thoughts of its characters, provoking Mrs. Reynolds's obsession with Harper to become the reader's own.

The novel's mode of dissociation is unnerving in another way: by absenting history, Stein presents a problematic value-free text, enacting authorial play that obfuscates disturbing subject matter. The persistence with which Mrs. Reynolds meditates on Harper's appearance, habits, and imminent death borders itself on monomania. Though Stein does not make any claims to causality between Hitler's childhood and the horrors he perpetrated, her characterization of Harper accords with her belief about great men – to wit, that Hitler's evil can be examined outside of history, ideology, and the society in which he lived. As Ron Rosenbaum argues, such interpretations "tend to exculpate if not excuse Hitler," presenting him "as a victim" of traumas from childhood or his formative years.¹⁶¹ On a deeper register, *Mrs. Reynolds* suggests that perpetrators and potential victims, dictators and ordinary people share psychic space. The densely mingled thoughts of Mrs. Reynolds and Angel Harper remain contextually possessed by Stein herself, who weaves in her authorial presence through familiar autobiographical details, such as her love of food and her mystic commitment to the prophecies of Saint Odile. Mrs. Reynolds shares her reliance upon prophecy and prediction with Stein, as well as a preoccupation with great men: "She quite often meditated about George Washington."¹⁶² While subjective blurring occurs between Stein and Mrs. Reynolds, their shared readiness to explore Harper's cognitive depths threatens to become a self-indicting expression of fascination. Mrs. Reynolds experiences privileged access to Harper's present thoughts and past memories but does not reflect upon their meaning: "He said he preferred macaroons to fruit, he said he preferred coffee to potatoes, that is he never said this *but he thought* that if he had said anything about coffee or macaroons or fruit or potatoes he would say that."¹⁶³

Stein's letters to Cerf updating the novel's progress betray her publisher's lack of enthusiasm about the subject. She introduces the work to him by announcing the "new novel is about dictators" (January 1940), "it is a difficult subject" (1941), it is "moving along very smoothly" (1942), and finally, in a letter dated May 15, 1945, that its subject is Hitler:

I don't know whether I have told you that Mrs. Reynolds was supposed to be the life of Adolph Hitler ... I was trying to make it the daily life of him based on a little boy who I used to see in Belley ... and I was to finish it off to the end of the war and then the war got too long and I quit.¹⁶⁴

Cerf likely did not see any potential market for such a book, as much of his correspondence urges her to take into consideration the "commercial point of view," while his response to Stein's Pétain translations indicate his unwillingness to advocate for projects so inflammatory and politically unsavory.

By the novel's end, Harper is a conglomeration of jagged memories, projection, and rumors, so that even in allowing us to play voyeur to his childhood memories, Stein insists that we unlearn what we may know or presume about the "identity" of the living counterpart. Stein offers *Mrs. Reynolds* as a kind of *perversion* of hero worship, a dissolution of the fetishizing distance between leaders and ordinary people. Basing him on a young boy from her village, Stein exploits familiarity. But Harper is no biographer's mute object of study, available for explanatory dissection. Cowardly and solipsistic, he does not seem destined to rule the Third Reich: his own heartbeat scares him, he weeps into his handkerchief, and makes such paradoxical declarations as, "I am anxious ... but I am not."¹⁶⁵ While we never see an ideology-maddened figure, Nazism and Hitler rise to the surface through oblique references. Dictatorial brutalities emerge through childhood irascibility, informing one another. Hints of atrocity (refugees stream past the Reynolds house, war prisoners escape) are reported with the same tone as his childhood proclivity for dressing up in a black veil or "reading a newspaper with pictures."¹⁶⁶ Like Stein's indirect mode of narration in *Wars I Have Seen*, couching references to mysterious freight cars in discussions of visiting the dentist,¹⁶⁷ *Mrs. Reynolds'* litotic disclosures that people have had "things taken" from them or that Harper has made "everybody go away and suffer"¹⁶⁸ closely follow innocuous memories of swimming lessons, while Harper's dreams of "wooden houses" with windows that "are frightening" resonate like ominous visions of primitive concentration camp quarters.

What Stein hoped to express in presenting Hitler as a novelistic curiosity is never entirely clear; nor does the superabundance of details converge into an intelligible whole. Why should he remember whispering into a drain, hanging “a doll on a string,” or “never lik[ing] any word that began with F”? What are we meant to construe from the report that at five Harper was shorter than a three year-old,¹⁶⁹ that children surrounded him holding knives when he was fourteen,¹⁷⁰ or threw stones at him when he was eight?¹⁷¹ Stein calculates the reader's impulse to uncover the repressed content of these recollections, and does not gratify that urge. That Stein's essay “And Now” appeared in the September 1934 issue of *Vanity Fair*, which also featured John Gunther's “Has Hitler a Mother Complex?” suggests she may have read his piece – which clearly indulges its readership's fascinations with Hitler.¹⁷² Reading like a spoof on psychoanalysis, “Has Hitler a Mother Complex?” insists that the adult Adolf has not yet transcended the mastery of his dead mother. Though dictator of Germany, Hitler remains “an emotional slave to the *dreams of his childhood*.”¹⁷³ Touting his “research into the little known facets of his parentage and early youth,” Gunther elucidates Hitler's adult frailty. Like Stein's Harper, who “crie[s] like anything,” Gunther's Hitler “weeps easily” and “has no love life at all.”¹⁷⁴ Ultimately, Gunther diagnoses Hitler's aberrant personality and monstrous ambitions, offering a “mother-complex” as the psychological shibboleth to deconstructing Hitler. The portrait shapes itself around personal interviews and biographical tidbits about young Adolf: he was “dreamy” and “moonstruck” – his guardian “was worried about the boy's dreaminess” – for dreams would always provide his retreat from reality.¹⁷⁵ Inward and “greatly given to reading books of history, he found a picture book of the Franco-Prussian war and devoured it; Bismarck became his hero; and from then on began to think of himself as a leader, *making speeches* to the other boys.”¹⁷⁶ Seeking to expose an underlying truth to Hitler's psychic constitution, Gunther presents a mosaic of childhood qualities that rehashes material from *Mein Kampf*. In contrast to Gunther, Stein refuses the work of diagnosing.

The inability to forget torments Harper – not of trauma experienced or atrocity committed – a hypermnesia of half memories and troubling dreams. He remembers his mother but not “whether she had been strong or she had been weak”; he remembers being too old to have “other children harnessed in front of him as horses ... and still he had been doing it”; he remembers “he had hung a doll on a string.”¹⁷⁷ His inability to take shape biographically, to materialize beyond his inhabitation of the protagonist's psyche, is metaphorically realized through the liminality of

dreams. For Mrs. Reynolds sleep provides a respite to her relentless fixation on Angel Harper – “we can always go to bed,”¹⁷⁸ she comforts herself – but dreaming is qualitatively different from sleeping. Mrs. Reynolds dislikes dreams, but her urge to interpret (like her love of prophecy) prevents her from dismissing them altogether. To her, “dreams go by contraries,” failing to furnish the comfort of Saint Odile, the stars, prayer, or meditations on Washington, provoking “frightening” hallucinations that, in one example, “nobody had a name.”¹⁷⁹

Harper’s yearning to dream reflects his need to consolidate an ominous vision. Indeed, recalling Hitler’s own declaration, “I go with the certainty of a sleepwalker,”¹⁸⁰ Harper’s longing to sleep suggests the desire to be estranged from reality, to live in tableaux projected straight from his psyche. For Hitler, the search for a stage upon which to spectacularize his ego precipitated his turn to the cinematic medium; like film, dreams transcend historical meaning and linear time, allowing a self-directed imaginary. For Mrs. Reynolds, dreams and recollections of Harper transmit an uncanny double meaning; he is an agent of confusion and amnesia: “[S]he could not remember how Angel Harper wore his hair ... She did not say she did not remember because perhaps she had never seen his hair.”¹⁸¹ Harper punctures the psyche, distorting the ability to reason and reflect, inflating his presence in their minds. The persistent Hitler of fascist film resembles the omnipresent, excessive figure who permeates the dream state: “[S]he dreamed that Angel Harper was all over and she said in her dream I dreamed that Angel Harper was all over, and she dreamed in her dream that she said it so many years later.”¹⁸² Stein equalizes ubiquity and death: to be “all over” implies his demise *and* total saturation. The apparatus of dreams, like the cinematic apparatus, induces the hallucination of total power and exigent presence: dreamer and viewer are immobilized by the images that play across the screen.

This film/dream connection was not lost on Stein, whose *Everybody’s Autobiography* recalls her conversation with French filmmaker Jacques Viot, who explains that the film spectator’s experience bears a striking resemblance to the dream state – a suspended, entranced mode of engagement. Viot insists that “[T]he film audience is not an audience that is awake it is an audience that is dreaming, it is not asleep but is always dreaming.”¹⁸³ To Viot and Stein, dreaming marks the suspension between sleep and wakefulness, representing the dissolution of boundaries between reality and fantasy: “Angel Harper never could stay either awake or away and yet in a kind of way he never slept and if he ever slept he was nervous.”¹⁸⁴ At one point haunted by a frightening dream, Harper is later

said to have had no dreams at all, or to have forgotten them altogether. Such contradictions plague the effort to sleep: “[somebody said] that he had heard that when Angel Harper could not sleep he put himself to sleep by spelling out keep awake keep awake keep awake, and so well not always but sometimes it did put him to sleep.”⁸⁵ Forging a chiasmic relationship between sleeping and waking, Harper vanquishes states of coherence, existing in a world in of oblivion and amorality. The novel’s ritualized disordering of sleeping and waking states recalls Benjamin’s ideological critique of National Socialism’s “technology of awakening.” According to Cadava, Nazism’s aggressively campaigned political slogan *Deutschland, erwache!* (Germany, Awake!) compelled Benjamin to interrogate the regime’s arrogation of language and of conscious states. The call to national awakening was a call to unquestioning obedience, a sleep-walker’s submission to authority. *Mrs. Reynolds* features just such slippage between sleeping and waking life. Harper likewise insinuates himself into psychic reflection, fracturing epistemological processes and willing confusion among sleeping and dreaming, reality and imagination.

VIII FRAMING LEADERS

Stein recognized that to “be historical” meant relinquishing some control over her self-same being. Perhaps we may see Stein’s increasing photographic availability as a demonstration of her adaptability both to modern forms of subjectivity and to self-spectacularization. Stein’s readiness to strike a pose increased as she got older; in an inverse phenomenon, her self-consciousness before the camera diminished while her interpretations of audiences and the public self became more keen. In a 1937 photograph at Bilignin, Stein assumes a composed, authoritative pose captured by a politically charged angle, and exploiting the second-story window as a rhetorical signifier of ready photographic representation (Figure 5). Shot straight up from a dramatically subordinate position, the image emphatically frames Stein, who is set against a deep black background that features all the more her white dress and hands firmly poised with interlocking fingers. Confidently inhabiting the pose, Stein looks like nothing so much as an orator ready to address the masses.

Recalling a similar *mise-en-scène* of Hitler in *Triumph of the Will*, this image presents a monumental Stein. The high window as proscenium for the display of a leader’s body bears a long history that, as an ideal way of constituting the leader as spectacle, Riefenstahl fully exploited in framing Hitler in the window of his Nuremberg hotel (Figure 3). Stein’s Bilignin



Figure 5 Gertrude Stein at the window

photograph would have been appreciated by those who knew her proclivity for performative self-enactment, and it was along such lines that Rogers described her:

As she stood there statuesquely, perfectly framed by the window, her forearms on the sill, with a green tracery over the white wall below her, she was as impressive as Mussolini addressing his massed followers in Rome. The Duce needed the balcony of magnificent Renaissance façade for his setting, however, and Miss Stein achieved the same effect by speaking from the bathroom.¹⁸⁶

The bathos of this commentary would not have been lost on Stein, who would occupy Hitler's domestic setting at Berchtesgaden as a stage upon which to consolidate her authority and ironize her identification with the Nazi leader, mocking while laying claim to power's idealized images of itself.

Riefenstahl opens *Triumph of the Will* by assimilating viewer and Führer into the superior perspective of a body flying the plane. Navigating a panorama of clouds, the airplane enables dreams of soaring pre-eminence, divine views, and spectacular gestures. The expansive freedom in the plane is a great distance from the claustrophobic psyches of *Mrs. Reynolds*. Yet for all the profound differences between Riefenstahl's documentary film and Stein's experimental novel, the two works both subjectively explicate Hitler through elaborate dreamscapes. *Triumph of the Will* and *Mrs. Reynolds* press us into dark underworlds where fungible elements are at play in tableaux of pure projection. Riefenstahl's surreal prologue ushers the viewer into a fantasy of absolute control: we are meant to appreciate our position, privileged through conscious alignment with the filmmaker, but more importantly, with the Führer himself.

Similar aerial perspectives figure into Stein's own five-day "trip over Germany" in June 1945, documented in her article "Off We All Went to See Germany," published in *Life* magazine. Her post-liberation flight, by invitation from American soldiers of the 441st, mimics Riefenstahl's moment of technological empowerment, affording her superior views of ruined cities such as Frankfurt, Cologne, and Salzburg. "We have just come back from four days over Germany," Stein wrote to Cerf, "we have had a wonderful time and lots of meditations, we flew and we landed and I even conducted the plane."¹⁸⁷ (She does not tell Cerf about the trip to Berchtesgaden.) Echoing the dramatic arrival of Hitler at Nuremberg, a photograph of Stein piloting the army transport plane highlights her epistemological and technological authority. Like *Triumph of the Will*, the photograph provides ocular proof of Stein's dominant position, advertising

her tactical performance of control and transcendence. But while it angles in over Stein's right shoulder, the camera does not fully align with her perspective; it stops short of full identification, allowing us to take in both the flat gray panorama and a piloting Stein focused intently upon a panel busy with compasses, altimeters, and other navigational equipment. The absorbed gaze of her GI co-pilot confers the scene with a sense of consequence, adding to the legitimization of Stein's command over the aircraft. Striking as the photograph is for its resemblance to *Triumph of the Will's* dramatic prologue, it more importantly serves as commentary on Stein's enduring identification with figures of authority, in this case the newly ordained victors represented by the US 441st Troop Carrier Group, with whom Stein boasts of "living intimately." If the two images – the one, an ascendant tyrant, the other a civilian super-spectator – can be said to converge, they do so as artifacts of modernist cultural progress, indicators of the increasing mobility available to those seeking new modes of exploration and power. Something in the photograph of a piloting Stein "kills off" the image of a semi-divine Führer while proffering a taunting epilogue to the dreams and realities of Nazi rule.

While Stein imagines her trip to Germany as a sightseeing adventure and victor's triumph tour, "Off We All Went to See Germany" features her as public spectacle, a figure of fascination to the stationed soldiers and the German people. Stein's military escorts officialize her presence at the homes of Göring and Hitler, but more important than the access such authorization afforded her is the extent to which she aroused the civilian population's eager attention.¹⁸⁸ A strange reversal occurs as Stein gets out of the car "to look at something" only, in her words, "to realize that they were all looking at Miss. Toklas and myself."¹⁸⁹ Being a spectacle to the Germans, a civilian among the American soldiers, animates Stein, provoking reciprocal moments of recognition that recall her description of seeing Nazi soldiers in her village in Bilignin: "It was not real, but there they were; it looked like photographs in a magazine, but there they were."¹⁹⁰

Stein's journey to Berchtesgaden, Hitler's mountain home in Obersalzberg and *locus classicus* of Third Reich power, reconciles her long-standing fascination and identification with figures of authority and her audacious strategies of self-display. "[O]ff we went to visit Hitler and Göring, that is their homes and their stolen treasure."¹⁹¹ There, Stein dismisses the quality of Göring's art collection ("he had excellent advice apparently") and amazes at Berchtesgaden's "summer resort village" atmosphere, which is "not at all isolated or mysterious." Hitler's window

provides the most engaging pleasure. To Hitler, the views afforded from the Alpine home affirmed his power's infinite scope: from his "magic mountain," Kershaw explains, Hitler could "see himself bestriding the world."¹⁹² To appropriate Hitler's subjective vision was the goal of many who crusaded to the Berghof. "ENJOYING HITLER'S FAVORITE VIEW AT BERCHTESGADEN" reads a *New York Times* headline above an image of American soldiers relaxing in patio chairs before the spectacular view unfolding before them. (Seven years earlier, English-speaking journalists had effused over the retreat's "magnificent highland panorama";¹⁹³ its "magnificent vista in the Bavarian Alps at a point from which the Fuehrer would look across into his native Austria";¹⁹⁴ and the perspective afforded by the "chalet's lovely setting."¹⁹⁵) So central in the public imaginary was "the view" from Berchtesgaden that the large window enframing it becomes something of a dark emblem in the pantheon of modernist visual culture. What remained after RAF bomber attacks was, according to the American press, a "most striking sight ... a gaping, twenty-five by ten-foot, square hole in the front of the building facing north. It was the blackened, twisted framework of the window through which Hitler surveyed the surrounding mountain peaks."¹⁹⁶ "The famous window," reported another journalist for *The New Yorker*, "is charred and empty," and only the frame remains. Gathering *his* views and assuming the commanding pose afforded by the perspective, one could both take in his panorama and occupy the quintessential scene of Hitlerian power.

Writing of her own photo opportunity at the "famous window," Stein articulates a peculiar sort of cheery self-composure: "[T]here we were in that big window where Hitler dominated the world a bunch of GIs just gay and happy."¹⁹⁷ Imposing into spaces redolent with the specter of Nazism, Stein stretches macabre glee to its limits. Though her identification with the GIs comes across in her description, the pleasures of commandeering the space prevail. Commentary confirms the eccentric pleasure such posturing provided: "It was funny it was completely funny, it was more than funny it was absurd and yet so natural. We all got together and pointed as Hitler had pointed."¹⁹⁸ Stein's mimicry divests Hitler's signature gesture, offering a pose that suggestively indexes nothing but the space outside the picture frame.

Together, a seeing Stein and a Stein seen suggests her commanding authority over Hitler's mountain retreat. The image of Stein "pointing" confirms the tone of theatricality in the accompanying narrative, while evidencing the active collaboration of GIs with Stein's vaudeville of authorial occupation. A photograph of Stein and the GIs in the window

where Hitler “dominated the world” undercuts her identificatory play, asserting Stein-as-tourist, posing and documenting her vacation. So heavily backlit as to reduce its nine subjects to shadowy figures, the photograph captures most effectively the damaged frame of the now glassless window and the shadowy mountains far off in the distance.

How do we situate Stein’s travesties of Hitler in her oeuvre? Photographs of Stein “at home on garden chairs on Hitler’s balcony” offer not only mimicry of a figure with whom she had long been fascinated, but also figure new ways for Stein to see herself. Finding comfort in a primary operational center of the Third Reich, where atrocities had been conceived and decreed, Stein makes an intrepid pronouncement upon the authority she had so long examined. In her visual performance of reversal, Stein’s desire to captivate an audience comes to the fore. If the labors of her poetic autonomy could not stimulate an American audience, her prank in the pages of *Life* would certainly bring her some form of celebrity. Despite surviving two wars, Stein was not one to offer conceptual overviews or grand theories about historical phenomena; she saw history in terms of people and personalities, heroes and individual actors; as such, her interest in Hitler-as-personality, uneasily, makes sense. To the indignation of her contemporary and future critics, Stein hardly saw in Hitler a mastermind of industrial genocide posing a direct threat to her survival as a Jewish lesbian living in occupied France.

Fifty years after the fact, and despite deep admiration for Stein, Laughlin explained that her political sympathies still rankled him:

She had great natural charm, tremendous charisma. Marvelous head. Those wonderful flashing eyes. A deep firm voice. So I couldn’t help but be very impressed by her at times, except that often she’d erupt with crazy ideas. She thought Hitler was a great man ... this *before* the war, of course, but how a Jewess could be attracted to such a notion at any time is difficult to understand. She was certainly a woman of strong opinions – indeed to the point of megalomania. She thought she had influenced everyone.¹⁹⁹

To Laughlin, Stein embodies the qualities of a hypnotic leader even as he describes her admiration for one; his characterization attests to prevalent thematics of preoccupation and fascination. At one point during the war, Stein’s authority and prominence would attract the Gestapo to her Paris apartment. There, she wrote eight months before her death, “they flourished a photograph of me saying they would find me.”²⁰⁰ Absconding with the keys, the Gestapo returned the next day and “stole linens and dresses and kitchen utensils and dishes and bed covers and pillows.”²⁰¹ What they wanted can be construed through part imagination and part knowledge

of Nazism's horrific agenda. Making souvenirs out of Stein's domestic possessions seems a perverse recognition of her celebrity. But as "Off We All Went to See Germany" reveals, the practice of souveniring was not unfamiliar to Stein. Describing the soldiers – grabbing what they could at Berchtesgaden – Stein also considered securing her own keepsakes:

And then they began to hunt souvenirs, they found photographs that they were convinced were taken of Hitler's arm after the attempt on his life. What I wanted was a radiator, Hitler did have splendid radiators, and there was one all alone which nobody seemed to notice, but a radiator a large radiator, what could I do with it, they asked, put it on a terrace and grow flowers over it.²⁰²

Though a caption indicates that Stein "was talked out of" taking the radiator, an unpublished letter from Danish-American soldier Mark Hasselriis reports that she "picked up [an X-ray] photo of a broken forearm while she was at Berktisgarten (sp?) which I said might be the arm Hitler broke in the attempt on his life."²⁰³ For the Gestapo, the quotidian objects that Stein featured in her poetry, that comforted her mode of "daily living," become, through such an act of pilfering, ambivalent fetishes to an acquisitive regime. For Stein, an X-ray of Hitler's broken arm seems a bizarre but suitable keepsake. A record of scientific progress and artifact of mutiny against Hitlerian evil, the X-ray resonates with profound physical intimacy, serving the curious with yet another image of a man infinitely represented through photographic technology. Out of the rubble of Berchtesgaden emerged the X-ray of an arm whose salute operated as a tool of ideological manipulation and pathological coercion. Surely Stein knew that in pointing "like Hitler had pointed" she was articulating a visual and gestural lexicon more horrifying than "funny," more self-conscious than "natural." In the hopes that such postures could make revolutionary subversion possible, Stein had once issued the following query: "if nobody saluted and nobody received saluting and nobody saluted ... would that have anything like duelling to do with war ending, oh yes oh yes."²⁰⁴

With more scholars consulting Stein's rich archives, overlooking some of the unsavory opinions she held or her affiliations with such people as Bernard Faÿ or Francis Rose²⁰⁵ (a good friend to Hitler) has become more of an act of willful refusal than one of accidental omission. Considering her work in the context of her correspondence does much to texture our sense of Stein's political views. These letters reveal the great extent to which the crosscurrents of ideological thinking influenced Stein in her day and inform our evolving thoughts about the writer now. Scholarly

understanding of Stein's life and work only stands to gain from judicial acts of critical scrutiny. Washington, Pétain, Grant, Napoleon, and other historical leaders provoked Stein's consideration of contemporary politics as well as her reflections upon posterity, identity, and self-promotion. *Mrs. Reynolds* envisions a world disordered by Angel Harper, a dictator whose awkward and perverse childhood memories dismantle the idea that he is a man destined for greatness. With the posthumously published novel, Stein left a vexing epilogue to her fascination with history's influential individuals – that whether sinister or heroic, great men had a way of claiming space in her work and in her thoughts.