

LITERARY DOSSIER



GERTRUDE STEIN 2024

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1. SACRED EMILY (fragment)

[...]

Paper peaches.

Paper peaches are tears.

Rest in grapes.

Thoroughly needed.

Thoroughly needed signs.

All but.

Relieving relieving.

Argonauts.

That is plenty.

Cunning saxon symbol.

Symbol of beauty.

Thimble of everything.

Cunning clover thimble.

Cunning of everything.

Cunning of thimble.

Cunning cunning.

Place in pets.

Night town.

Night town a glass.

Color mahogany.

Color mahogany center.

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.

Loveliness extreme.

Extra gaiters.

Loveliness extreme.

Sweetest ice-cream.

Page ages page ages page ages.

Wiped Wiped wire wire.

Sweeter than peaches and pears and cream.

Wiped wire wiped wire.

Extra extreme.

Put measure treasure.

Measure treasure.

[...]

(Gertrude Stein. "Sacred Emily" in *Geography and plays*. Boston: The four seas Company, 1922 [1913], p. 178-188)

2. THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS

Fernande had at this time a new friend of whom she often spoke to me. This was Eve who was living with Marcoussis. And one evening all four of them came to the rue de Fleurus, Pablo, Fernande, Marcoussis and Eve. It was the only time we ever saw Marcoussis until many many years later.

I could perfectly understand Fernande's liking for Eve. As I said Fernande's great heroine was Evelyn Thaw, small and negative. Here was a little french Evelyn Thaw, small and perfect.

Not long after this Picasso came one day and told Gertrude Stein that he had decided to take an atelier in the rue Ravignan. He could work better there. He could not get back his old one but he took one on the lower floor. One day we went to see him there. He was not in and Gertrude Stein as a joke left her visiting card. In a few days we went again and Picasso was at work on a picture on which was written *ma jolie* and at the lower corner painted in was Gertrude Stein's visiting card. As we went away Gertrude Stein said, Fernande is certainly not *ma jolie*, I wonder who it is. In a few days we knew. Pablo had gone off with Eve.

This was in the spring. They all had the habit of going to Céret near Perpignan for the summer probably on account of Manolo, and they all in spite of everything went there again. Fernande was there with the Pichots and Eve was there with Pablo. There were some redoubtable battles and then everybody came back to Paris.

One evening, we too had come back, Picasso came in. He and Gertrude Stein had a long talk alone. It was Pablo, she said when she came in from having bade him goodbye, and he said a marvellous thing about Fernande, he said her beauty always held him but he could not stand any of her little ways. She further added that Pablo and Eve were now settled on the boulevard Raspail and we would go and see them to-morrow.

In the meanwhile Gertrude Stein had received a letter from Fernande, very dignified, written with the reticence of a frenchwoman. She said that she wished to tell Gertrude Stein that she understood perfectly that the friendship had always been with Pablo and that although Gertrude had always shown her every mark of sympathy and affection now that she and Pablo were separated, it was naturally impossible that in the future there should be any intercourse between them because the friendship having been with Pablo there could of course be no question of a choice. That she would always remember their intercourse with pleasure and that she would permit herself, if ever she were in need, to throw herself upon Gertrude's generosity.

And so Picasso left Montmartre never to return.

(Gertrude Stein. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1933, p. 111, 112)

3. THE WORLD IS ROUND

ONCE UPON A time way back, there were always meadows with grass on them on top of every mountain. A mountain looked as if it had rocks way up there but really way up there there was always grass and the grass always made it look elegant and it was nice.

Grass is always the most elegant more elegant than rocks and trees, trees are elegant and so are rocks but grass is more SO.

And here way up there was grass and it was going on and on and it is so much harder to climb up and up and up on grass than on rocks and under trees.

And to carry a blue chair way up there on and on through the grass because grass is steep steeper than rocks are, it was a very difficult day that day and that was the way Rose went on her way.

She had to what else could she do she had to see it through getting up there to be all the way there and to sit on her chair.

And when you are walking on grass it is harder to see where there is. And anyway what did it say. The grass did not say anyway, it was green and nothing green ever has anything to say.

Rose knew that that is why she always did prefer blue.

(Gertrude Stein. *The world is round*. Ch. 9. New York: William R. Scott, 1939)

4. WHAT ARE MASTER-PIECES AND WHY ARE THERE SO FEW OF THEM

I once wrote in writing *The Making of Americans* I write for myself and strangers but that was merely a literary formalism for if I did write for myself and strangers if I did I would not really be writing because already then identity would take the place of entity. It is awfully difficult, action is direct and effective but after all action is necessary and anything that is necessary has to do with human nature and not with the human mind. Therefore a master-piece has essentially not to be necessary, it has to be that is it has to exist but it does not have to be necessary it is not in response to necessity as action is because the minute it is necessary it has in it no possibility of going on.

To come back to what a master-piece has as its subject. In writing about painting I said that a picture exists for and in itself and the painter has to use objects landscapes and people as a way the only way that he is able to get the picture to exist. That is every one's trouble and particularly the trouble just now when every one who writes or paints has gotten to be abnormally conscious of the things he uses that is the events the people the objects and the landscapes and fundamentally the minute one is conscious deeply conscious of these things as a subject the interest in them does not exist.

You can tell that so well in the difficulty of writing novels or poetry these days. The tradition has always been that you may more or less describe the things that happen you imagine them of course but you more or less describe the things that happen but nowadays everybody all day long knows what is happening and so what is happening is not really interesting, one knows it by radios cinemas newspapers biographies autobiographies until what is happening does not really thrill any one, it excites them a little but it does not really thrill them. The painter can no longer say that what he does is as the world looks to him because he cannot look at the world any more, it has been photographed too much and he has to say that he does something else. In former times a painter said he painted what he saw of course he didn't but anyway he could say it, now he does not want to say it because seeing it is not interesting. This has something to do with master-pieces and why there are so few of them but not everything.

So you see why talking has nothing to do with creation, talking is really human nature as it is and human nature has nothing to do with master-pieces.

(Gertrude Stein. "What are master-pieces and why are there so few of them". Los Angeles, CA: The conference Press, 1940. p. 86-87)

5. A MOVEABLE FEAST (Ernest Hemingway)

But if the light was gone in the Luxembourg I would walk up through the gardens and stop in at the studio apartment where Gertrude Stein lived at 27 rue de Fleurus.

My wife and I had called on Miss Stein, and she and the friend who lived with her had been very cordial and friendly and we had loved the big studio with the great paintings. It was like one of the best rooms in the finest museum except there was a big fireplace and it was warm and comfortable and they gave you good things to eat and tea and natural distilled liqueurs made from purple plums, yellow plums or wild raspberries. These were fragrant, colorless alcohols served from cut-glass carafes in small glasses and whether they were *quetsche*, *mirabelle* or *framboise* they all tasted like the fruits they came from, converted into a controlled fire on your tongue that warmed you and loosened it.

Miss Stein was very big but not tall and was heavily built like a peasant woman. She had beautiful eyes and a strong German-Jewish face that also could have been Friulano and she reminded me of a northern Italian peasant woman with her clothes, her mobile face and her lovely, thick, alive immigrant hair which she wore put up in the same way she had probably worn it in college. She talked all the time and at first it was about people and places.

Her companion had a very pleasant voice, was small, very dark, with her hair cut like Joan of Arc in the Boutet de Monvel illustrations and had a very hooked nose. She was working on a piece of needlepoint when we first met them and she worked on this and saw to the food and drink and talked to my wife. She made one conversation and listened to two and often interrupted the one she was not making. Afterwards she explained to me that she always talked to the wives. The wives, my wife and I felt, were tolerated. But we liked Miss Stein and her friend, although the friend was frightening. The paintings and the cakes and the *eau-de-vie* were truly wonderful. They seemed to like us too and treated us as though we were very good, well mannered and promising children and I felt that they forgave us for being in love and being married —time would fix that—and when my wife invited them to tea, they accepted.

(Ernest Hemingway. *A moveable feast*. New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1964. p. 13-15)