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Freudian Dream Symbols in Q.E.D., Melanctha and Ida

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FREUDIAN DREAM SYMBOLS IN Q.E.D

MELANCTHA AND IDA

(TITLE)

BY

VICTORIA M. DAVIS

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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Alice B. Toklas, erstwhile companion and lover of Gertrude Stein, once rebuked Julian Sawyer for "his mistaken notion that sexuality was an approach to understanding Gertrude's writings." ¹ Many Stein biographers and critics like Donald Sutherland, W.G. Rogers and Robert Haas, have ignored or misunderstood the nature of her love affair with Toklas and its relation to her writing. Haas describes Ida as a "satirical picture within the individual" ² ignoring the fact that Ida prostitutes herself to men and to women resulting in her continual resting and disliking for living. Sutherland is another who misunderstands, although he is accurate in stating that her words have "sensuous qualities." ³ W.G. Rogers, the Kiddie, in a well-written and pleasant memoir reminisces about Toklas and Stein as ego and alter-ego without any sexual overtones. He politely terms their friendship as being united by an "infinitely closer and profounder tie." ⁴ These critics would, perhaps, agree with Toklas in rebuking anyone who tries to approach Stein through the theme of sexuality.

Other critics like Elizabeth Sprigge claim that Stein "unhelped by Freud, years before D.H. Lawrence, wrote in a new style about sex." ⁵ She does write in a new style about an old subject but she is aware of Freud's writings at the latter part of her career. James R. Mellow in his recent biography, Charmed Circle, is open and honest about the fact that Stein and Toklas had a Lesbian marriage spanning some forty years. He doesn't understand why some critics haven't discussed the nature of their relationship sooner. Some, like Edmund Wilson, have dropped hints about how the obviousness of "queer little portraits and her

mischievously baffling prose-poems did often deal with subjects of this sort," ⁶ but Wilson concentrates on how she writes in metaphors because she was of an age where she couldn't describe more explicitly. Frank Gervasi even states in an article that he had heard much about the Lesbian relationship of Toklas and Stein but they were "genuine human beings loving and lovable" ⁷ as though Lesbian women couldn't be accepted as normal human beings. William Gass gives Stein definitive labels like butch, "eccentric, dilettante, and gossip, madwoman, patron, tutor, fraud and queer--the Mother Goose of Montparnasse" ⁸ and believes that the central theme of her writing is her distrust of men. All these men and women have used various critical approaches to explore the themes and devices that Stein played with and developed: identity, history, continuous present, word portraits, repetition, rhyming, naming, counting. They have ignored or side-stepped the one approach which Toklas did not believe in, sexuality. I choose to explore the sexuality that is prevalent in Q.E.D., Melanctha and Ida in light of Sigmund Freud's tenth lecture on dream symbolism. By exploring, in her books, the sexuality of her life with Toklas and her past life with May Bookstaver, one can see that Stein is talking about the universal, every day existence of the common man or woman. This is what good literature is all about: the universal, human experience. Sexuality is the common basis for everyone's life whether he or she be heterosexual or homosexual or nonsexual. Stein based all of her writings on some aspect of her daily life. She did not always state that sex was a part of her life but it is

an undercurrent in all of her writings. She did not analyze sexuality nor did she talk about it. She just lived life, as a woman who loved another woman, in the here and now and that is how she wrote her books, describing the here and now, the theme of the continuous present, of each of her characters.

Freud, in his lecture, discusses the nature of dream symbolism. He states that the "symbolic relation is essentially that of a comparison." ¹⁰ For example, the human form as a whole is usually represented by a reference to water. The objects which belong to the sexual life such as the genitals, sexual processes and intercourse are represented by a long list of symbols. ⁹ Freud comments on the fact that "an overwhelming majority of symbols in dreams are sexual symbols, " ¹⁰ and since they are in dreams, they are subconsciously used. These same dream symbols are traced back to their origins in mythology and folklore. For an example, he used the origin of wood, a female symbol, from the German word, Holz, which is derived from the same root as the Greek word, $\sqrt{\lambda}\eta$, which means stuff, raw material. Applying Freud's list of symbols to the three writings of Stein brings out some interesting problems. First, was Stein writing subconsciously or consciously? Q.E.D. (1903) was certainly written before Stein was aware of Freud and his works. Melantha coming out in 1909 was before Freud's dream theory was well known. Ida was written in 1940 so Stein was acquainted with Freud's work. The dream symbols are present in all three works. I suggest that in Q.E.D. and Melantha the

dream symbols arise out of her subconscious to express Stein's own feelings about sexuality and the part it plays in these books. In Ida, Stein is playing around with comic aspects of conscious use of symbols to explore sexuality in the public person's life. Second, Freud's symbols suggest interpretations that throw some light on understanding Stein and her life as reflected in the characters and their lives. Third, the dream symbols correspond to male and female genitals and bodies indicating to the interpreter a male or female sexual role. So, in Stein's books one finds that the women have taken the men's roles and vice versa with the result that both the roles are redefined.

Leon Katz, in his introduction to Q.E.D., explores the Lesbian relationship that was the autobiographical basis for Q.E.D. and the later story, Melanctha. Gertrude Stein fell in love with a fellow-student at Johns Hopkins, May Bookstaver. She had a rival for May's affections in Mabel Haynes, the leader of a college women's reform group. She described these women as "Raw virginity" ¹¹ and yet she was just as raw and inexperienced until May entered her life. The affair with May had many beginnings and endings all of which are recounted in Q.E.D. as Stein describes and explains what was demonstrated. The affair becomes a tug-of-war between Adele, the Stein persona, and Mabel for Helen's , May Bookstaver's, affections. Q.E.D. is a book about an initiation into sexual experience for Adele as she grows from a thinking person into a feeling, passionate, aware woman.

This same initiation story is replayed and deepened in Melanctha,

a smoother narrative of repeated beginnings and endings. Sutherland sums up the love relationship between the Stein persona, Jefferson Campbell, and the May character, Melanctha:

In this long dialogue, which is like a duel or duet, the traditional incoherence between the inner and the outer life has been replaced by an incoherence between two subjectivities. It is conceived of as a difference in tempo, the slow Jeff against the quick Melanctha. ¹⁴

Just as Adele was slower than the quick Helen, so are Jeff and Melanctha out of step, each wanting, feeling, and needing to know but unable to get in step with each other. They cannot experience life together as Melanctha is quicker than Jeff. Jeff is an innocent who is initiated into life by the experienced Melanctha, as Helen initiated Adele. Mellow feels that this character of Jeff is an index to Stein's emotional state regarding her own cautious approach to sexuality at the time Melanctha was written. As he explains it: "With marvelous economy, too, she sublimates her own disappointed medical career in the character of the practicing doctor." ¹³ Stein also sublimates her disappointed affair with another woman, Bookstaver, into a lingering affair between a man and a woman. She doesn't tell the reader that Jeff is having an affair with Melannctha or that Jane is involved with Melanctha, instead, Stein relies on metaphors or ambiguous phrases like wandering to explain the initiation into sexual experience. Here, it is not her place as a serious writer to tell or talk about the sexual experience. Stein would rather describe the situation

and let the reader discover whatever he or she may on whatever level the writing exists for them. Melanctha is a continuous dialogue between the lovers, Jeff and Melanctha and Melanctha and Jane, unlike the description of the characters' feelings and moods in Q.E.D.

Ida, by contrast, isn't an initiation story but a fairy tale of full-blown Freudian sexuality. It is the story of Ida, the public personality, the movie star, who is a "publicity saint."¹⁴ Ida is based on the Duchess of Windsor, according to Sutherland, but she could be Stein, the star of the lecture tour of the thirties in the United States. Ida could be a combination of any of the stars like Mary Pickford that Stein met on her lecture tour as well as the public person Stein became. Ida, the I am, the center focus of this transitionless tale is described by Sutherland as "a person who neither does anything nor is connected with anything but who by sheer force of existence in being there holds the public attention and becomes a legend."¹⁵ That sounds like Miss Gertrude Stein. Sutherland ignores the sexuality in Ida but it is there, hidden in dream symbolism that Stein chose to use to define Ida's character and to use as connections when no transitions are readily apparent. Stein, to dispute Sprigge and some of the other critics, was most familiar with Freud and his writings when she wrote Ida in 1940. Mellow quotes some letters from Thornton Wilder, a close friend and intimate of Stein and her coterie, to Stein in which he states: "After a visit with the famous Dr. Freud--'Really a beautiful old man'"¹⁶ he could pick up Stein's manuscripts and digest them, seeing

more and more in them. Mellow also mentions Wilder's acquaintance with Freud in 1930; therefore, Stein would have been more than familiar with his theories, notably the one about dream symbolism. In Ida, she could have talked about Lesbianism and sexuality because it was a more acceptable topic then than in 1909. Instead Stein chooses to use the dream symbols, consciously, to explain the story. Stein has a definite sense of humor and she uses it in Ida to define and to parody the sexuality inherent in a public person's life and how that person handles it. Whereas, in Q.E.D. and Melanctha, Stein was not consciously using dream symbols but in depicting the taboo subjects of Lesbianism and premarital sexuality the symbols surface to the alert reader.

Ralph Maud, in his book, Entrances to Dylan Thomas's Poetry, states that "the well-known Freudian symbols constitute a shared sexual language."¹⁷ It is a language that is used in all three of Stein's books. It is meant to be translated and shared by those readers who see the sexual aspects and depth to the relationship between lovers. Katz explains about the lovers that Stein uses in her books. He states that the contrast between May Bookstaver and Stein was to become the contrast between "all lovers in Stein's character system, attracting by opposition of type and function. One fights by attacking and the other by sullen resistance."¹⁸ The later relationship between Stein and Toklas was not as violent as attacking and resisting but there was a give and take to their marriage. This contrast between the lovers is best understood by interpreting the language of the dream symbols whether they are consciously used in Ida or subconsciously used as in Q.E.D. and

Melanctha. The books contain every symbol that Freud delineates, most notably the weapon symbol and the landscape symbol, which is a complicated topography of the female genitalia, and which is seen as sunshine and once-upon-a-time. The books also contain room, window, door, and house symbols, which are the uterus or womb, the openings of the body, and the representation of the human body as a whole, if smooth-walled then male or if containing ledges and balconies then female. These symbols in Q.E.D are the means for the reader to explore Adele's, Helen's and Mabel's moods. They give us a picture of Adele as one with nature, cleaving to all things wooden, which is a maternal symbol, like the planks of a ship. In Melanctha, the symbols enable the reader to explore and define Jeff's attitude toward life, Melanctha's actual sexual experiences, and the triangular relationship between Melanctha, Jeff and Jane. In Ida, the symbols are placed there because Stein explored the blatant sexuality in stories like the ones about dogs, male symbols that grow bigger and bigger and who are never forgotten by Ida who is openly loving and affectionate to dogs and to no human being, male or female. The symbols also serve to explain the public person, Ida, who is always resting from her husbands, her travels, and her labors. Ida is Gertrude Stein's book about defining human nature and life as it happens and it is a book about her life as were Q.E.D and Melanctha. By interpreting the Freudian dream symbols in all three books, one can see that Stein has described her life and the public life of the universal experiences of everyday man and woman.

The grouping of room, window, door and house is mostly a grouping of female symbols. The appearance of these symbols usually indicates the role that the characters assume, whether they are male or female, or it reflects the moods of the characters or mirrors the events at that point in the book. In Q.E.D., room and window symbols mirror the triangular affair and the roles that each woman assumes. In Melanctha, houses are the symbols that explore the character of the person living in them as the character contrasts with Melanctha. In Ida, door and doorway symbols explain the difference in roles between Ida and Andrew much as the southern sunshine and the lack of it point out the difference between the lovers, Jeff and Melanctha. Many meetings between lovers occur in rooms with various people looking out the window at the landscape. There are houses with people in them and with broken windows that contain no doors. All of these combinations are in the three books by Stein. In Q.E.D. and Melanctha, the Freudian symbols signify underlying sexual themes that she doesn't wish to be made public. In Ida, the symbols are conscious exposes of the proclivities of two sexual people--Stein and Toklas.

In Q.E.D., a book without men, curious meetings and role changes occur in rooms. Mabel's room is described by Mabel as "very good shape, dark walls but mediocre furnishings and decorations was more than successfully unobtrusive, it had perfect quality. " 19 It also had a fireplace, which is the receptacle for the flame. Mabel's room is a description of a part of her body and it is a

description of her affair with Helen--successfully unobtrusive and of a perfect quality--as she would view herself and any woman she was involved with. At this point, Mabel is assuming a female submissive role, identifying with female symbols. This same room is threatening to Adele as she begins to realize the extent of Helen and Mabel's friendship:

Mabel's room was now for Adele always filled with the atmosphere of the unasked question. She could dismiss it when alone but Mabel was clothed with it as with a garment although nothing concerning it passed between them. ²⁰

There are several female symbols in this passage: the room is filled with a question and Mabel is clothed with a garment, the property of enclosing. The room has sexual overtones to it for Adele. She sees it as filled with a question so I would think she has assumed the male dominating role with Mabel as female. Further on, the room is described as growing "large and portentous" and Adele's figure grows "almost dreadful in its concentrated repulsion." ²¹ The room as well as Adele's figure is a male symbol in its ability to raise up in defiance of gravity. So the once submissive female, Adele, Stein, has assumed a dominating male role. Mabel, the male to Helen's female, is now a female rival. The women's sexual roles are reversed and redefined.

The most significant room passages are the ones filled with window symbolism like:

...all three lounging in Helen's and Mabel's room taking the usual afternoon siesta. Adele was lying on the bed looking vacantly out of the window at the blue sky filled with warm sunshine.

Mabel was on a couch in a darkened corner and Helen was near her sitting at a table. Adele's eyes after a while came back into the room. 22

Stein has described a normal, friendly situation on the surface. It is an experience that most females go through in their youthful days. But Stein is also recounting a Lesbian triangle. The fact that there are three taking a rest in the room is significant in that the roles are reversed. This had just been Mabel's room. Now it is Mabel and Helen's room with Adele lying on the bed. She is lying just like she used to lie on the planks of a ship or on a hill when she was assuming the female maternal role. Now she is looking out a window at the blue sky filled with warm sunshine. This indicates to the reader that the picture the window opens onto is one of the sexual act. Mabel is on a couch while Helen is sitting at a table. These are female symbols whose roles are assumed by Helen and Mabel, a female and male combination, usually. No one is definitely male in this situation unless Adele by contemplating the sex act is male. This is a role reversal mirrored by the characters' situation.

Adele, in another passage, is looking out a window at the city "all gloomy and wet and white stretching down to the river." 23 Here the city is a female symbol encompassing Adele as she contemplates the male properties of the river. As reflected in nature, Adele is thinking about her growing awareness of sexuality. At a meeting with Helen, Adele goes to the window "and stared bravely at the trees. Helen left standing in the room fought it out, finally she yielded and came to the window." 24 The trees

at which Adele is staring are male symbols as was the sky and the river. Adele is identifying with the male role. Helen has to fight it out within herself and then she yields, assuming the female role. This is a whole sexual episode interpreted through the Freudian symbols since Stein doesn't tell us what has happened.

The room and window symbols in Q.E.D. are a reflection of the openness and willingness of the raw girls to explore sexuality once they have accepted it in themselves. In Melanctha, the house symbol is used in connection with other people around Melanctha. The house is the symbol for the body whether male or female. In Melanctha, it also means security to the people who have a house. The married couple, Rose and Sam, who are friends with Melanctha live in a "little red brick house" and he works as a "deck hand on a coasting steamer."²⁵ The house has no ledges or balconies so it is a male symbol. The marriage, as reflected by the symbols, is a successful combination of the security of the male house surrounding Rose and the female ship encompassing Sam in their daily lives. The house that Melanctha's mother lives in is described as "a little red brick , two story house. They had not much furniture to fill it and some of the windows were broken and not mended"²⁶ but the mother had the security of her house. This is something that Melanctha did not have. She boarded with her various female friends. On closer inspection, one sees that the house has a window broken and not mended, so it is a female symbol with a broken entrance

to it. Melanctha's mother's marriage and house are not as secure as Sam and Rose's. These two house passages point up the relative security afforded these characters as opposed to Melanctha's insecurity. She has no husband to provide a house for her and no prospects of a husband since she is never regularly engaged to a man. Melanctha is not just a book about sexual, Lesbian affairs and their consequences as is Q.E.D.; it is a book about the merits of a marriage as opposed to the merits of wandering.

In Ida, there are rooms and windows and houses but the door and doorway symbol is more important to understanding the lovers. Doors and doorways are exits and entrances from rooms as well as people. They are what define Ida's and Andrew's characters and roles. Stein compares Ida's dislike to doors and doorways to Andrew's affinity for doors and doorways. Although there is no definite Stein persona in Ida, Andrew and Ida as a duo come the closest, autobiographically, to representing aspects of Stein and Toklas in their marriage. Ida's feeling is that "People should be there and not come through a door. As much as possible Ida did not let herself know that, they did come through a door." ²⁷ Doors are female entrances. Ida has allowed many men and women to gain entrance to her body but she doesn't acknowledge this fact to herself. Andrew, by contrast, is not as promiscuous as Ida but he "just naturally came through a door." ²⁸ Andrew is more at peace with his body and his exclusive access to Ida's body. Sex is a natural function to him. Stein, after her involvement with May, was comfortable and dominating in her sexual

affair with Toklas. However, Toklas was the one who protected her "Pussey" from any interfering people other than herself, the "Lovey" of Stein. As a public personality Ida must be attractive and desirable but she is not known as being accessible to the public as a whole. As Andrew views it:

Kind people always like doors and doorways, Andrew did. Andrew thought about Ida and doors, why should he when doors were there. But for Ida doors were not there if they had been she would not have been. How can you rest if there are doors. And resting is a pleasant thing. 29

So Ida feels that sex is not a restful occupation, whereas, Andrew was all for doors and doorways to sex. Similarly, Jeff disliked the excitement of the passionate blacks and Melanctha craved excitement which could mean sexual experiences, wandering. Ida explains her reasoning with an analogy about flowers and how they should remain where they grow because there is no door for flowers to come through. Flowers are the sexual growth from fertile ground which doesn't require penetration to complete the fertilization; therefore, flowers do not need doors. Females need doors to complete the fertilization of their seed by penetration; therefore, doors are necessary. Since Andrew was always coming in Ida's door, doors could have been a nuisance to her. Andrew is the male and Ida the female in this part of Ida, although Ida can be seen as a Tiresias, the blind prophet of once-upon-a-time tales, who is male and female. Since Toklas and Stein were partners for forty years one can assume that they both enjoyed doors and doorways. One might have enjoyed them

better than the other.

The grouping of the landscape, sunshine, weapon, and once-upon-a-time symbols is apparent in the books. Ida has a variation on the street and weapon and landscape symbols in the use of once-upon-a-time landscape symbolism. Many Stein biographers have commented on the fact that the happiest of times for Stein was when she, with her brother, Leo, or her lover, Toklas, went off into the surrounding country to meditate while on a hill lying in the grass under a blue sky filled with warm sunshine. Elizabeth Sprigge, in her biography of Stein, comments on how much Stein loved the sun: "she adored the sun and said that it rested her eyes and head to look straight up into it." ³⁰ This feeling for the sun comes out strongly in Q.E.D. and Melanctha, particularly. In Q.E.D. the sun is a male symbol reflecting Adele's contentment whereas in Melanctha the sun is a more developed symbol of sexual desire as reflected in the southern negro sunshine just as the later Melanctha is a deepening of the original, descriptive story, Q.E.D.

In Q.E.D., the symbolism is used when Adele lies on the hillside, a breast symbol, questioning herself about Helen and also devoting herself entirely "to the sunshine on the hills." ³¹ This is Adele, a painful consciousness slowly awakening to the fact that there is sexuality in the world, that the sun shines down on the hills making flowers pollinate and grow as it fills the blue sky. Adele is one with her surroundings, nature. In another part, Adele, the loner, is "lying on the green earth on

the sunny English hillside" where she buries her face "in the cool grass to recover the sense of life in the midst of her sick despondency." ³² The green earth , the English hillside, the cool grass are all female revivifying forces to Adele, and they depict her as identifying with the female role in this part of Q.E.D. They are all a part of the landscape. The sunshine is a symbol of Adele's state of mind: content, peaceful, open to a new experience and it is a creative, generating force making her one with nature. After she has resolved her ambiguous, tedious affair with Helen, Adele's mood is:

In the succeeding week of steady tramping, glorious sunshine, free talk and simple comradeship, Adele felt all the cobwebs blow out of her heart and brain. While winding joyously up and down the beautiful Tuscan hills and swinging along the hot dusty roads all foulness and bitterness were burned away. She became once more the embodiment of joyous content. ³³

Adele's state of mind is similiar to her state of mind previously: she is feeling relaxed and content while winding along roads, a male symbol, and hills, a female symbol. She is one with Helen in an affair. So, when the final break comes it is understandable that the sunshine had been taken out of the sky for Adele. ³⁴ Adele is a simple person with complex desires that are rooted in nature while trying to break out of her consciousness just as Stein must have felt. The sunshine soothes her body and caresses her spirit as a lover might. It also reflects her simplistic desire that sexuality be a oneness between the lovers, Adele and Helen, instead of an attracting-repelling war of feelings.

There is one landscape passage in Melanctha that is autobiographical like the passages in Q.E.D. In Melanctha, the sunny landscape reflects the happiness of the two lovers, Jeff and Melanctha, while on an outing in the country.

They sat in the bright fields and they were happy, they wandered in the woods and they were happy. Jeff always loved in this way to wander. Jeff always loved to watch everything as it was growing, and he loved all the colors in the trees and on the ground, and the little, new, bright, colored bugs he found in the moist ground and in the grass he loved to lie in and in which he was always so busy searching. ³⁵

By being autobiographical this passage also points up the role reversal. It isn't Melanctha who is akin to nature and fertility and growing things as it wasn't Helen in Q.E.D. It is Jeff and Adele who are delighted and at one with nature. Jeff has the female maternal role to Melanctha's male dominating role. He identifies with all the female symbols in nature. Jeff is an innocent as was Adele and Stein, who is delighted and in awe of the changing character of nature. This nature passage is one of bright, sunny fields, a nurturing fertile symbol, in which the two lovers wander. The woods are a general symbol for pubic hair. Jeff watches the growth of the trees and the grass. These symbols reflect his identification with nature and fertility. This same grass symbol, as used in Q.E.D., is where Jeff buries "his face deep in the green grass underneath him." ³⁶ He is reviving his sense of self in the heart of nature's fertility,

the grass.

The landscape symbols are apparent in another passage describing Jeff's reawakened interest in Melanctha

Dr. Campbell went to the window to look out a little, while he was waiting. It was very early now in the southern springtime. The trees were just beginning to get the little zigzag crinkles in them, which the young buds always give them. The air was soft and moist and pleasant to them. The earth was wet and rich and smelling for them. The birds were making sharp fresh noises all around them. The wind was very gentle and yet urgent to them. And the birds and the long earthworms, and the negroes, and all the kinds of children, were coming out every minute farther into the new spring, watery, southern sunshine. 37

This is quite a fertile picture that Jeff sees through the window as Adele did in Q.E.D. It is through this window that he catches a glimpse of Melanctha and they are beginning again. The list of symbols in this passage includes the trees and the birds with their open mouths pulling the long earthworms. This is a sexual act like Adele witnesses through the window. In Melanctha, though, it is a more developed symbolic act. Stein has come to grips with her earlier affair and can explore sexuality in a more mature way. The air is soft and moist and the earth is wet and rich as the womb would be. The sunshine is springy, watery and southern, which means that it is fertile, growing, propagating. These landscape passages are similiar to the ones in Q.E.D. in that the Stein personae are growing aware of their own sexuality and their initiation into it. This is also the

introduction of the southern negro sunshine, a more developed symbol than the sun in Q.E.D.

In Melanctha, the southern negro sunshine is something that Jeff has and Melanctha doesn't, at the beginning of the affair. But as it progresses to the sexually aware stage, Jeff is unable to enjoy the sunshine for he could not abandon himself to it. By contrast, Adele felt that it had been taken out of the sky--not that she couldn't still enjoy it. The sunshine is a reflection of the characters' states of mind as well as being a symbol that stands for fertility, propagation, for things that grow. The person who sees and laughs at the warm broad glow of the sun, is the person who is aware of nature. He or she is not always initiated but the sun contains all kinds of possibilities if Jeff or Melanctha will open the self to the wisdom contained there. It is the wisdom of the unabashed blacks who revel in their own sexual nature. The mature person who understands the reasons for fertility and love and sex and who is hurt by these things will not be as gay and abandoned in the sun. Rose Johnson is described as laughing "when she was happy but she had not the wide, abandoned laughter that makes the warm broad glow of negro sunshine." ³⁸ This sun is one that causes happiness and warmth and that is a revivifying force. Melanctha's father did not possess the laughter that gives the glow to sunshine, even when he was young. And Melanctha tends to be like her father in some ways. There is a side to Melanctha that is in possession of this sunshine and reflects it at times

to Jeff: "When it comes it's got a real sweetness, gentleness, that is more tender than the sunshine, and a kindness that makes one feel like summer." ³⁹ Jeff has it always at the beginning of the affair: "He sang when he was happy, and he laughed, and his was the free abandoned laughter that gives the warm broad glow to negro sunshine." ⁴⁰ So he values her as better than a pure flower and kinder than summer because she has a side that reflects his nature. At the end of an outing, Jeff and Melanctha rest in each others' arms, content and happy "so the two of them now in the warm air of the sultry, southern, negro sunshine, lay there...." ⁴¹ This is a fertile, maternal view of their relationship, warmed and nurtured by mother nature. A last reference to this type of sunshine is the change from spring to summer that brings out all the blacks into the streets:

It was summer now and the colored people came out into the sunshine, full blown with the flowers. And they shone in the streets and in the fields with their warm joy, and they glistened in their black hair, and they flung themselves free in their wide abandonment of shouting laughter. ⁴²

It's too bad that Melanctha can never enter fully into this warm, glowing, fertile scene of blossoming flowers, streets, and fields, This is a scene full of happiness and sexuality. Jeff could have joined them once but he is alive to the sexuality within himself and it is a painful ability not to be exercised without restraints as do the unabashed blacks.

The landscape scenery in Ida deals with the buildings and

fairy tales beginning once-upon-a-time. Ida is more than conscious of her sexuality unlike the painful groping of Adele and Jeff. Yet, she is not one with nature as they were but she enjoys sexual activities with dogs, with women, and with men who are her husbands and who aren't. As I stated before, she is a Tiresias figure, one who has known the pleasure of sexual experiences as a man and as a woman but who has enjoyed few of the comforts of mature love. Stein is writing autobiographically when she depicts Ida and Andrew but they do not know mature love as did Stein and Toklas. They are instead a matched duo through which she defines the nature of mind, a phrase Gass uses in his introduction to The Geographical History of America. Adele and Jeff were Stein's personae in O.E.D. and Melanctha; in Ida, she has none.

The most noticably Freudian passages are the ones dealing with landscapes that begin once-upon-a-time. These are Stein's conscious parodies of Freudian dream symbolism that suggest sexual actions as well as sexual roles. Ida is always relating these fairy tales that mirror her sexual proclivities at the time. The first passage is about gates.

Once upon a time way back there
were always gates, gates that opened
so that you could go in and then little
by little there were no fences no walls
anywhere. For a little while they had
a gate even when there was no fence.
It was there just to look elegant and it
was nice to have a gate that would
click even if there was no fence. By
and by there was no gate. 43

The gate is an entrance symbol, presumably to Ida's body. These gates are to go in and out, to have access to her body sexually. The body has no fences, nor walls, lacking the property of enclosing. The gate, at one time, used to click, thereby counting the number of men or women who entered but eventually the gate was eliminated along with the fence. This parallels Ida's dislike of doors, an always open symbol, and her liking for gates that were shut if need be or that would count if necessary but which always looked elegant. Ida is both male and female in this instance.

Another passage deals with meadows.

Once upon a time there was a
meadow and in this meadow was
a tree and on this tree there
were nuts. The nuts fell and
then they plowed the ground and
the nuts were plowed into the
ground but they never grew out. 44

This explains Ida's lack of fertility and , perhaps, why she disliked doors as an entrance to the fertile ground of her body. Ida's womb is the meadow in which a tree with nuts is placed. When the nuts fall and are plowed into the ground of the meadow, they never grow out. This is as sterile a relationship as any would be between two women who are lovers like Stein and Toklas or Stein and May. Ida is a sensuous woman in this passage but she can also be a sensual man as seen in the city that "was built of blocks and every block had a square in it and every square had a statue and every statue had a hat and every hat was off." 45 All those blocks with squares have the property of enclosing the phallic statue with his hat off. Ida, the male and female Tiresias,

is being described in sexual terms as Stein is parodying Freudian symbols to define the public person's life.

Another landscape passage shows that Stein has also consciously included Freudian symbols to suggest that the life of a public personality is a promiscuous life and that it is a cause for parody. For example, Ida tells the story that:

She remembered that one day in front of the house a man with a hat a cane and a bottle stopped. He put down the cane but then he did not know what to do with the hat, so he began again. He put his cane into a window so that stuck out, and he hung his hat on the cane and then with the bottle he stood up. 46

This man is attempting to complete the sex act. He has all the right equipment: a hat, a cane, and a bottle. He puts the cane through the window but it sticks out so he puts his hat over the cane and stands up. Stein chose not to describe this sexual action in explicit language instead she leaves it to the reader to interpret the secret language of Freudian symbols and to have a good laugh at the use of humor. These passages all point up the sexuality that is an undercurrent throughout Ida, the book about the publicity star who has innumerable husbands, and who travels throughout the United States, resting from her sexual activities, who is infertile and who might be an aspect of Stein in her relationship with Toklas. Ida is Tiresias, the male and female character, who lives the public life.

Weapon symbolism is the last symbol to be explored. When used in connection with experiencing some violence or being

threatened with the weapon, weapons are symbols for sexual intercourse. In Q.E.D. the reader is never sure if Adele and Helen have an affair that goes beyond the kissing and touching stage. By Katz's definition of lovers,⁴⁷ they are lovers in the Steinian sense. Describing Mabel, Adele states that her "weapons" were "broken in pieces by a vigorous guard."⁴⁸ The guard is probably the arrival of Adele, but Mabel isn't having any sex if her weapons are broken. Using the analogy of knifing a man, Adele talks about Helen in symbolic terms: "If you want to stick a knife into a man you just naturally go and stick straight and hard. You would probably kill him."⁴⁹ The man in the analogy is stuck by Helen with a knife and killed which means that Helen is threatening violence and actually does kill, in the Donnian sense, have intercourse with the man. By contrast, Adele "would cut up all his surface anatomy and make it a long drawn agony but unless he should bleed to death quite by accident, I wouldn't do him any serious injury."⁵⁰ Adele is also threatening violence but not as directly. She doesn't cause the man to die she just teases and threatens on the surface. This analogy to knifing is a reflection of Adele, the would-be lover, and her indecision, as opposed to Helen, the experienced lover, and her actions. The sexual roles are reversed in this passage: Adele is female and Helen is male. It is also an autobiographical passage. Stein studied brain anatomy at Johns Hopkins and did cut up surfaces. These two women are lovers that finally begin an affair after many false starts as did May and Stein have an affair. Helen, in the end,

informs Adele that she has succeeded in killing her and now she is "doing her best to kill herself." ⁵¹

In Melanctha, Jeff uses weapon symbolism just as Adele did to explain the difference between the two lovers and who will get hurt in a love relationship.

When two men are just fighting,
the strong man mostly gets on top
with doing good hard pounding, he
mostly never likes it so far as
I have been able yet to see it, and
I don't see much difference what
kind of noble way they are made of
when they ain't got any kind of
business together there to be
fighting. ⁵²

The fighting is threatening with the weapons being the men's hands. This is also a description of a sexual encounter between Jeff and Melanctha, lovers in the Stein system. Jeff sees that the one who gets the pounding is himself, the one who will suffer the most in the relationship and the one who is the submissive female. Adele warns Helen that Adele will suffer from the initiation just as Jeff senses that he will be the one to suffer. Jeff goes on to warn Melanctha that if someone "cuts into you real hard, with a brick he is throwing, perhaps you never will do any hollaring then, Melanctha." ⁵³ She should take his advice but she doesn't. He isn't the one to throw the brick and cut her--a violent action from which she will suffer as did Jeff in their relationship. Jem is the one to make Melanctha assume the female submissive, suffering role.

The use of Freudian dream symbols to explore the psychological aspects of Stein's writing is a valid approach

Q.E.D., Melanctha and Ida, contrary to Toklas's opinion. In Q.E.D., a book without men, the window, room, landscape, sunshine and weapon symbols can be explored by the alert reader who understands their significance, for Stein is writing subsciously using the Freudian symbols. Q.E.D. is a probing account of a Lesbian affair between Stein and May. The sexual roles of male and female are assumed and discarded by the three characters involved in the triangle. In Melanctha, the house, landscape, sunshine and weapon symbols are again interpreted as subconscious manifestations that Stein did not wish to make public. They reflect the switch of roles as Jeff, the Stein persona, is female and Melanctha, the May figure, is male. Both characters are initiated into sexual experience, as was Stein by May, and they never again know the abandonment of the southern negro sunshine. This story is a deepened and expanded version of the affair in Q.E.D. Ida is a fairy tale based on Stein's affection for folklore. It is also a definition of the public personality's mythic life based on an aspect of herself that Stein discovered while on a lecture tour in the United States. It is a conscious use and parody of the Freudian symbols of once-upon-a-time, landscape, and door reflecting the fact that there is no Stein persona in Ida, only a Tiresias figure combining male and female sexuality. Toklas and Stein were courageous, unique, honest women who lived their own very personal, private sexual life as it can be seen in these books. Gass has summed up this approach when he quoted Stein as saying: "the most serious thinking about the nature of literature in the twentieth century has been done by a woman." ⁵⁴ Miss Gertrude Stein.

FOOTNOTES

¹Muriel Haynes, review of Staying on Alone: Letters of Alice B. Toklas, edited by Edward Burns, in Ms., March 1974, p. 36.

²Robert Bartlett Haas, ed., A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Gertrude Stein (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1973), p. 27.

³Donald Sutherland, Gertrude Stein: A Biography of Her Work (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1951), p. 17.

⁴W.G. Rogers, When This You See Remember Me: Gertrude Stein in Person (New York: Discus Books, 1973), p. 32.

⁵Elizabeth Sprigge, Gertrude Stein: Her Life and Work (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 74.

⁶Edmund Wilson, The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 581.

⁷Frank Gervasi, "Liberation of Gertrude Stein," Saturday Review, August 1971, p. 57.

⁸Gertrude Stein, The Geographical History of America or The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 20.

⁹Freud suggests that male symbols are sticks, umbrellas, poles, trees, guns, knives, water cans, springs, hammers, pencils which slide in and out, airplanes, reptiles, hats, cloaks, hand, foot, machinery, rocks, mountains, keys, weapons, tools, number three, smooth-walled houses. Freud suggests that female symbols are houses with ledges and balconies, pits, hollows, caves, jars, bottles, boxes, chests, coffer, pockets, ships, stoves, cupboards, rooms, doors, gates, mouths, wood, paper, tables, books, snails, churches, chapels, apples, peaches, landscapes, jewel cases, gardens, flowers, windows, doors, towns, citadels, materials, things worked on. Freud also suggests that sliding, pulling, or playing are symbols for a gratification derived from onanism and that dancing, riding, climbing, experiencing some violence or being threatened with weapons and certain manual occupations are symbols for sexual intercourse.

¹⁰Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: PermaBooks, 1924), p. 161.

¹¹Gertrude Stein, Fernhurst, Q.E.D., and Other Early Writings (New York: Liveright, 1950), p. xii.

¹²Sutherland, Biography, pp. 45-46.

¹³James R. Mellow, Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein and Company (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 73.

¹⁴Sutherland, Biography, p. 154.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Mellow, p. 419.

¹⁷Ralph Maud, Entrances to Dylan Thomas's Poetry (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p. 89.

¹⁸Stein, Q.E.D., p. xvi.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 70.

²⁰Ibid., p. 86.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., pp. 122-23.

²³Ibid., p. 78.

²⁴Ibid., p. 114.

²⁵Gertrude Stein, Three Lives (New York: Vintage Books, 1909), p. 88.

²⁶Ibid., p. 118.

²⁷Gertrude Stein, Look at Me Now and Here I Am: Writings and Lectures, 1909-45, ed. Patricia Meyerowitz (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 400.

²⁸Ibid., p. 410.

²⁹Ibid., p. 555.

³⁰Sprigge, pp. 66-67.

³¹Stein, Q.E.D., p. 69.

³²Ibid., pp. 95-96.

³³Ibid., p. 124.

³⁴Ibid., p. 133.

³⁵Stein, Lives, p. 149.

³⁶Ibid., p. 42.

³⁷Ibid., p. 195.

- ³⁸Ibid., p. 86.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 138.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 111.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 161.
- ⁴²Ibid., p. 209.
- ⁴³Stein, Writings, p. 352.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 370.
- ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 377.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., p. 350.
- ⁴⁷Stein, Q.E.D., p. xvi.
- ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 71.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 80.
- ⁵⁰Ibid.
- ⁵¹Ibid., p. 116.
- ⁵²Stein, Lives, p. 168.
- ⁵³Ibid.
- ⁵⁴Stein, History, p. 24.

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