

Ida, A [Performative] *Novel* and the Construction of
Id/Entity

by

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Class of 2015

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in Theater

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Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all the people who have supported me throughout this process:

To my director, advisor, and mentor, Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento. You ignited my passion for both the works of Gertrude Stein and “weird” theater during my freshman year by casting me in *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*. Since then, you have offered me with invaluable guidance and insight, teaching me that the process is just as important as the performance. I am eternally grateful for all the time and energy you have dedicated to this project.

To the Wesleyan Theater Department, for guiding me throughout my four years at Wesleyan, encouraging me to embrace collaboration, and making the performance of *Ida, A Novel* possible. Special thanks to Marcela Oteíza and Leslie Weinberg, for your help and advice during the process of *Ida*.

To my English advisors, Courtney Weiss Smith and Rachel Ellis Neyra, for challenging me to think critically and making me a better writer in the process.

To Estate of Gertrude Stein, for allowing me to perform the beautiful piece of writing that is *Ida*.

To Cicily Clare Gruber, for sharing this journey and collaborating on *Ida* with me. Your talents as a designer helped build a world that Stein would be proud of.

To the incredibly dedicated team of *Ida*, particularly my stage manager Cheyanne Williams, assistant director Daniel Maseda, lighting designer Maia Nelles-Sager, and costume designer Hanako Rodriguez. Thank you for your hard work painting planets, hanging saints from the ceiling, sewing aprons for baby dolls, and performing countless other obscure tasks. Your patience and commitment brought *Ida* to life.

To my friends and family at Wesleyan, especially Kate Gilpin, for being the sister I never had, and Daniel Ng, for providing irreplaceable “choreography” input and spending Christmas with Gertrude and me. You have made Wesleyan my home these past four years.

To Leo Chilcott, for keeping me sane across oceans.

To my parents, Jason and Beth Malczewski, for giving me everything, and my brothers, Roman, Blaise, and Nash, for reminding me to play a little. I have no words to describe my gratitude and love for you all.

Thank you very much, thank you very much indeed!

Introduction

“I am I because my little dog knows me.”

Gertrude Stein’s frequent use of this line in her writing is indicative of her fondness of canines, her playful style, and, more seriously, her preoccupation with the self and the other.¹ A brief analysis of the aphorism reveals that it is much more complicated than its nursery rhyme-appearance initially lets on, providing a window into one of the complex issues that Stein grapples with in her works: how to understand the self. In true Stein fashion, repetition draws the reader’s attention to a specific part of speech. The pronoun “I” is repeated for emphasis, underscoring the subject’s need to establish herself as an individual. However, the “I”’s subjectivity cannot exist in isolation; the little dog must validate the “I,” despite the possessive “my” indicating that the subject has ownership over this dog. The dog’s power to validate the speaker is not inhibited by its subordinate position. Furthermore, the action of knowing is not modified, making the dog’s affirmation of the subject less about the degree to which it knows her and more about the fact that the its mere presence means that the “I” must exist in relation to it. Thus, I locate the question at the heart of Stein’s concern about the self: how can one live in relation to others and simultaneously understand and nurture their own inner life?

As an actor tasked with bringing Stein’s *Ida, A Novel* to the stage, my goal was to embody the writer’s specific style in performance and illuminate how these theoretical issues permeate the novel. In this essay, I seek to contextualize Stein’s writing within contemporary performance theory—namely, Erika Fischer-Lichte’s aesthetics of the performative. By combining an analysis of Stein’s work with

Fischer-Lichte's research and my own experience performing *Ida*, I examine how an actor can transform Stein's writing techniques into acting strategies.

Stein's Theoretical Framework

To discuss *Ida, A Novel* and my adaptation and performance of it, I must first provide a deeper understanding of the main theoretical concerns at play in Stein's work. Though her texts grapple with many different issues, her concept of a continuous present and her view of the self are distinguishable as two of Stein's most prominent concerns because of their impact on both the form and content of her writing.

Continuous present

Throughout Stein's literary oeuvre, she expresses an emphasis on the present time that embodies the period's aching desire to fully experience what she called "daily life as we live it" ("How Writing is Written" 119). The idea of recognizing and understanding one's contemporaneity was highly significant to Stein and her fellow Modernist writers and artists. As Thornton Wilder, Stein's friend and critic, famously asked in his Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Our Town*, "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it—every, every minute?" (125).

Stein's unquenchable thirst for contemporaneity began even before she articulated her concept of the self in her theoretical writings of the 1930s. In her lecture "How Writing is Written," Stein shared how her early desire to express the present shaped her works:

I was trying to get this present immediacy without trying to drag in anything else. I had to use present participles, new constructions of grammar... In short, from [the time of *The Making of Americans*, completed in 1911,] I have been trying in every possible way to get the sense of immediacy, and practically all the work I have done has been in that direction. (444)

Indeed, Stein's early emphasis on "present immediacy" is one way she expresses "the thing in itself," which entails an attention to the state of that thing in the exact moment it is being observed. Melissa Kwasny concisely explains Stein's objective in concentrating on the present as "develop[ing] a literature that would be based not on memory and description but would sound the act of thinking and writing as it occurred" (288). By isolating and capturing the present moment as its own entity, Stein could understand the world around her without others' perceptions clouding her view. Thus, her focus on the present both drives her understanding of the self and derives from it. To truly and comprehensively explore the present moment she had to eschew identity in the writing process; to let go of identity she had to ground herself in the present. Stein felt that the self is most itself during the act of creation in the present moment.

In her 1926 lecture "Composition as Explanation," Stein first used her now-trademark phrase "continuous present" to describe her efforts at containing the moment (31). Her critics have written much on the topic of the continuous present, generally understood to be Stein's method of "[rendering] the exact moment of perception without exceeding the moment" while simultaneously making "these static

moments to be dynamic” (Ryan 20). One must look no further than her own definition of “continuous present” to observe how Stein achieves this effect: “it was all so natural to me and more and more complicatedly a continuous present. A continuous present is a continuous present” (32). In the lecture, she layers meaning and association onto the phrase “continuous present” through her repetition of it. Each time the term is repeated it gains momentum and significance.

In fact, Stein asserted that she was not employing repetition at all. She claimed that “if [she] had repeated, nobody would listen... [she] kept on saying something was something or somebody was somebody, [but she] changed it just a little bit until [she] got a whole portrait” (“How Writing is Written” 448). With slight variations in grammar and syntax, Stein contains the progression of the present moment while still allowing it to gradually unfold. I will elaborate on Stein’s use of repetition in the context of her writing strategies in the upcoming pages.

View of the self

Stein’s intricate and sometimes esoteric view of the self is a frequent topic in her texts. She was devoted to discerning how the individual functions, both in relation to others and independent of social concerns. By outlining the concept of the self as a source of apprehension for Stein, I present her theory of identity and entity as a remedy for this uneasiness.

The problem of the external and the internal

In her writings, Stein expresses an anxiety about the relationship between the interiority and exteriority of the self, particularly with regard to artistic creation. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein intimates that “she always was, she

always is, tormented by the problem of the external and the internal” (119). Stein posits that this problem has direct bearing upon the writing process:

The thing is like this, it is all a question of identity. It is all a question of the outside being outside and the inside being inside. As long as the outside does not put a value on you it remains outside but when it does put a value on you then it gets inside or rather if the outside puts a value on you then all your inside gets to be outside. (*Everybody's Autobiography* 47)

The problem of the external and the internal is significant to the act of artistic creation, and thus is crucial to an understanding of Stein's work.

Stein became a literary celebrity following the unexpected success of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in 1933. Her work after this time reflects a preoccupation with the effects of celebrity on the self that she exemplifies in texts such as *Ida, A Novel*, which I will explore in a later section. The notoriety Stein gained from the newfound popularity of her work led her to think about the connection between writing, self, and audience:

All this time [since the release of *The Autobiography*] I did no writing. I had written and was writing nothing. Nothing inside me needed to be written. Nothing needed any word and there was no word inside me that could not be spoken and so there was no word inside me. And I was not writing. I began to worry about my identity. I had always been I because I had words that had to be written inside me and now any word I had inside could be spoken it did not need to be written. I am I

because my little dog knows me. But was I I when I had no written words inside me. (*Everybody's Autobiography* 64)

Here Stein reflects on how her sudden fame affected her writing, and, in turn, her understanding of the self. She does not refute the statement “I am I because my little dog knows me” in this passage; she knows that some people characterize themselves based on the views of others. Indeed, Stein’s anxiety about her identity reveals that she is not immune to the pressures of public perception. However, she recognizes a distinction between the self that the public perceives and the one that is shaped by her inner life. Though she was finally receiving recognition as a writer, Stein’s inability to write created a tension between others’ perceptions of her and how she truly was “inside [her].” Thus, Stein’s concern about the external and the internal stems from the fact that she was aware of how her audience perceived her, but also was also conscious and protective of the part of her that was independent from these social pressures.

Identity and entity

Stein admitted that “[she] always wanted to be historical, from almost a baby on” (“A Message from Gertrude Stein” vii). She believed that she could make her mark on history by creating a truly lasting work of art, what she calls a “masterpiece” in her 1935 lecture “What Are Masterpieces and Why Are There So Few of Them.” According to Stein, an artist must harness the independent, essential part of the self in order to create a masterpiece:

There are so few [masterpieces] because mostly people live in identity and memory that is when they think. They know they are they because

their little dog knows them, and so they are not an entity but an identity. And being so memory is necessary to make them exist and so they cannot create master-pieces. (90)

To reconcile the tension between outer perception and inner feeling, Stein develops a dichotomous notion of the self that is invariably intertwined with the act of artistic creation. This dichotomy is comprised of identity and entity, two key concepts in Stein's theoretical vocabulary.

Stein initially sets up identity and entity as a binary. She explains that most people define themselves by how others remember them and how they remember themselves. Thus, they are overwhelmed by the part of the self that is rooted in the past and so shaped by interactions that have already taken place. Stein names this part of the self "identity." However, the creation of a masterpiece is tied only to the part of the self that is "a thing in itself and not in relation," which Stein calls "entity" (88). Identity, the part that is connected to the awareness of being recognized and remembered by oneself and others, disallows for one's full investment in the present moment. Entity, on the other hand, is isolated from socialization. It illuminates the present moment in its self-containment.² Stein contends that a writer must draw from entity in order to "put down a contemporary thing" that lives on as a masterpiece of its time ("How Writing is Written" 447).

Laurel Bollinger reads the concepts of identity and entity as guides for interpreting how Stein assigned value to her own texts. Bollinger claims that through "What Are Masterpieces," Stein "explain[s] that *The Autobiography* and texts like it are inferior productions, with *The Autobiography*'s accessibility signaling that its

author was not engaged in the highest mode of production” (245). Consequently, popular, more transparent works such as *The Autobiography* suit the category of writings that privilege identity, while seemingly impenetrable writings as *The Geographical History of America* would fall under the category of masterpieces: works written through entity *about* identity and privileged *because of* their inaccessibility.

I believe that Bollinger’s interpretation overlooks vital information about how Stein viewed the relationship between identity and entity. Stein makes a provision for identity within a masterpiece’s content: “[b]ut what can a master-piece be about mostly it is about identity and all it does and in being so it must not have any... we see it without it turning into identity, the moment is not a moment and the sight is not the thing seen and yet it is” (“What Are Masterpieces” 91). She indicates that truly great works of art can have identity as their subject matter as long as they are not written through identity.

Later in the same lecture, I locate another of Stein’s explanations that further troubles Bollinger’s view. This passage discusses her relationship with writing and audience:

When you are writing before there is an audience anything written is as important as any other thing and you cherish anything and everything that you have written. After the audience begins, naturally they create something that is they create you, and so not everything is so important, something is more important than another thing, which

was not true when you were you that is when you were not you as your little dog knows you. (94-95)

Here, Stein emphasizes her passion for her body of work as a whole. “[B]efore there [was] an audience,” that is, before *The Autobiography* skyrocketed her to fame, Stein’s lack of self-consciousness allowed her to appreciate each work for what it was. Bollinger’s analysis reduces “What Are Masterpieces” to an attempt at self-validation, when the lecture actually functions as a critique of how society breeds destructive self-consciousness in artists.

To interpret Stein’s writings with regard to her definitions of identity and entity, I propose an approach that is more in line with that of Barbara Will, who warns against using Stein’s vocabulary of the self for simple, reductive categorization:

The popular autobiographies of the 1930s—*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Everybody’s Autobiography*, along with such memoirs as *Picasso* (1938) and *Paris France* (1940)—would appear to belong firmly to... the public, to identity and human nature; a ‘difficult’ work like *The Geographical History* would belong... to the private, to the human mind, to ‘genius.’ But such a claim reduces Stein’s work to a set of stable binary distinctions that she herself was continually destabilizing in the texts at hand. Just as *The Geographical History of America: Or, the Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* is as much a text of ‘relation’ as it is of ‘entity’ (as its title makes clear), so too are the ‘popular’ texts as disruptive to the presentation of

public identity as they are productive of it (as their titles likewise suggest). (156)

Will's analysis brings to light the instability inherent in Stein's works and demonstrates that it is futile to attempt to classify any of Stein's texts as either works of identity or entity. Though Stein presents identity and entity as a dichotomy, the subversive nature of her writing means that the relationship between these concepts is dynamic. As a result, both Stein's concept of the self and her texts can be viewed as transcending this binary rather than reinforcing it.

Ida, A Novel provides an example of a text loaded with destabilization; it explores how an individual can adapt to the constantly shifting balance between identity and entity. However, before I can determine the specific ways in which Stein illuminates the relationship between identity and entity in *Ida*, I must first employ her concepts of the self and the present as frameworks for investigating her writing process and the specific techniques she uses to embody her philosophy of artistic creation.

Stein's Writing Process and Techniques

"She never knows how a thing is going to look until it is done, in arranging a room, a garden, clothes or anything else."

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas

I wish to employ a spatial analogy of Stein's approach to writing as an exercise to more fully comprehend her process. If Stein were arranging a room, she would first concentrate on space itself. How is it positioned? What is its shape? How does light fill the space? What is the essence of the room, for her? I imagine that she

would then begin to place furniture, rugs, paintings, and other décor by considering how they could best highlight this essence. She might not consider the functional purpose of the objects in her arrangement of them—a rug could hang from the ceiling to bring out the texture of the walls, a chair could be placed upside down to emphasize the room’s verticality. Working from impulse, Stein would promptly place an object and just leave it there rather than tentatively positioning it in different ways. Her arrangement would build on itself as a result of spontaneity and personal memory rather than a preconceived vision of her end product.

One can begin to understand Stein’s method of writing simply by replacing the objects in the above analogy with words. Crucial to Stein’s work is a focus on process. Here I examine both Stein’s strategies in the process of writing and the characterizing literary techniques of her work. By outlining Stein’s strategies and techniques, my goal is to illuminate how her concepts of the self and the present are at the root of her personal creative process and the formal elements that resulted from it.

Richard Bridgman describes Stein’s creative method as the following:

Her practice was to concentrate upon an object as it existed in her mind. Her imagination was stimulated then not by the object’s particular qualities alone, but also by the associations it aroused, by random interruptions in the act of composition, and by the words as they took shape on the page. So far as Gertrude Stein could determine in her subjective isolation, all of these made up the object’s full and authentic existence insofar as it had any reality for her. (124)

From a place of “subjective isolation,” that is, entity, Stein could focus completely on the object of her attention and see it for itself. She concentrated her energy on staying present in the moment so that “the act of composition” could inform her perception of its subject matter. Interestingly, her desire to express “the thing in itself” does not preclude the expression of her own associations and understanding of that thing. However, this understanding is informed by the present moment and the act of writing itself, not from collective memories of the subject matter.

Impulse and playfulness

Stein’s attention to the present entails an embrace of impulse, a key aspect of her work. As Thornton Wilder points out, Stein “does not, as other writers do, suppress and erase the hesitations, the recapitulations, the connectives in order to give you the completed fine result of her meditations. She gives us the process” (“Gertrude Stein Makes Sense” 290). Just as Stein’s arrangement of a room would come to her spontaneously, so too does her play with words in the act of writing. She insists on highlighting the process of her work by avoiding self-correction: “...I do not correct, I sometimes cut out a little not very often and not very much but correcting after all what is in your head comes down into your hand and if it has come down it can never come again no not again” (*Everybody’s Autobiography* 311). By allowing herself to play with language without any obligation to correction, Stein could more fully ground herself in the act and process of writing. Imbuing the writing process with this freedom is part of her effort “to get back to the excitingness of pure being” (Stein qtd. in “Gertrude Stein Makes Sense” 284)—that is, to return to writing from a place of

entity. Once more, Stein expresses her commitment to the present moment, valuable because of its fleeting quality.

Repetition

The presence of repetition across Stein's literary oeuvre is a direct result of the impulsive nature of her writing. As I discussed earlier, Stein employs repetition in her work to form a continuous present. At this point, I would like to foreground how repetition creates a dynamic playfulness in Stein's language. She often implies different meanings with each use of the same word, shifting the reader's expectations of the word in question. In *Ida, A Novel* she writes: "If somebody said to her you know they are most awfully kind, Ida could always say I know I do not like that kind. She liked to be pleasant and she was but kind, well yes she knew that kind" (111). More than just containing the moment, the repeated use of the word "kind" lends lightheartedness to Stein's writing. The reader must work to keep up with how Stein transforms the meaning of the word "kind" within the sentences.

Circular structure

Stein's continuous present presupposes nonlinearity within the structure of her writing. However, I argue that the term "nonlinear" is an inadequate description of her works because it implies only non-chronological temporality rather than encompassing the cyclical, repetitive nature of Stein's writing, which should be deemed "circular." Circularity reflects how she delves further into the essence of her subject matter through each cycle of repetition. Even in *Ida, A Novel*, one of Stein's more narrative-based texts, events are retold again and again with subtle changes that create depth. For example, Ida sings to her dog Love about wanting a twin at the

beginning of the novel, and then talks about killing this twin (6). A few pages later, the scene repeats. She sings the same song, but remembers her parents instead of talking about murder (8). The narrator reveals different information about the same event through the nuances of each description. It is no coincidence that Stein writes “[l]ittle by little circles were open and when they were open they were always closed” (109) in *Ida*; she tells of an event, opening a circle, and subsequently closes the circle by retelling the event in a slightly different way.

Personal associations

Stein’s use of personal associations in her writing process becomes apparent in the intertextuality of her work. She would take ideas, phrases, and even entire sections of text from earlier writings and integrate them in the creation of a new one. For example, *Ida, A Novel* incorporates two texts written earlier in Stein’s career, “My Life with Dogs” and “Superstitions (Part Five)” (Esdale xxi). Her placement of the two texts within *Ida* demonstrates how the subject matter of the novel guided her writing process rather than the plot. These sections do not propel the narrative forward, but function as explorations of Stein’s understanding of the self.

Furthermore, Stein’s deliberate act of overlapping and recycling texts is evident in her drive to create a record of her process in her later years. Around the same time that Stein began writing *Ida*, she also started sending her manuscripts to Yale University to compile an archive of her works. This archive contains drafts, letters of correspondence, and unpublished writings to provide a more complete picture of how Stein drew from her own body of work to create new texts (Esdale xi). Through the archive at Yale, the reader can ascertain how Stein’s personal

associations allowed her to connect various pieces of her writings. Her process, and particularly her collaging of these works, becomes traceable.³

Ida, A Novel: Context and Textual Analysis

Stein wrote *Ida, A Novel* between 1937 and 1941. During that same period, she also focused on theorizing about the self in texts such as *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937) and "What Are Masterpieces?" (1940). As a reflection of Stein's ongoing concerns about the self, *Ida* presents a commentary on how the experience of celebrity affects the balance between identity and entity. This topic was especially important to Stein because of the way her celebrity status impeded her writing process and led her to think about the self. A 1938 press release for the novel explains that *Ida* is "a novel about publicity saints," a term Stein used to describe someone "with a certain mystical something about him which keeps him a saint; he does nothing and says nothing, and nobody is affected by him in any way whatsoever" (qtd. in Esdale xvii-xviii). That same press release cites Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor, as a prime example of a publicity saint; *Ida* contains echoes of Simpson's life and marriage to King Edward VIII. However obscured by the novel's circular narrative, this parallel sheds light on Stein's view of celebrity and its effects on the self, particularly through *Ida*'s relationship with her royal lover, Andrew. Both the form and content of *Ida* hinge upon identity and entity as Stein experienced them after her rise to fame. Thus, it was crucial for me to apply Stein's theoretical concepts to the novel in order to create a stage adaptation of it.

Novel summary and interpretation

Ida begins, naturally, at the beginning of the title character's life: "There was a baby born named Ida... And as Ida came, with her came her twin, so there she was Ida-Ida" (3). From the start, the reader is informed that Ida constantly has some sort of double or companion. This first twin hints at Ida's later desire to have a double, though the twin is mentioned only in the opening paragraph.

Ida's parents abandon her "but there were plenty to take care of her and they did" (8). Living with different caretakers means frequent relocation for Ida; however, "[s]he liked the change of address because in that way she never had to remember what her address was and did not like having to remember" (9). Here Stein is hearkening back to her idea of identity as she describes it in *Everybody's*

Autobiography:

It is a funny thing about addresses where you live. When you live there you know it so well that it is like identity a thing that is so much a thing that it could not ever be any other thing and then you live somewhere else and years later, the address that was so much an address that it was a name like your name and you said it as if it was not an address but something that was living and then years after you do not know what the address was and when you say it it is not a name any more but something you cannot remember. That is what makes your identity not a thing that exists but something you do or do not remember. (71)

In her dislike of remembering, Ida demonstrates a discomfort with identity and acting based on others' perceptions of her. Even from an early age, Ida's narrative is one of escape: "[w]herever she was she always liked to change places" (*Ida* 4). Her movement from place to place, from guardian to guardian, and later from husband to husband suggests restlessness, an unquenchable thirst for new experiences, and above all, a desire to elude categorization—much like Stein herself.

Perhaps, then, Ida's longing for a twin stems from the appeal of transferring this identity onto someone else. Though she has a faithful companion in her blind dog Love, from the start of the novel Ida expresses the desire to have someone that is just like her:

Oh dear oh dear Love, that was her dog, if I had a twin well nobody would know which one I was and which one she was and so if anything happened nobody could tell anything and lots of things are going to happen and oh Love I feel it yes I know I have a twin. (8)

For Ida, the appeal of having a twin lies in the fact that no one will be able to tell them apart, giving her the freedom to act as she chooses. In addition, "when [she] is a twin, one of [them] can go out and one of [them] can stay in" (6). As Anya Vigers explains, "the outside is the public identity that stands in relation to others. The inside is the private entity that 'stays in,' allowing the self to experience full immersion in itself" (193). Thus, the creation of a twin gives Ida the opportunity to expand her mobility between identity and entity.

Vigers also asserts that "[w]hat Ida fails to see in this early stage is the disadvantage of having a split identity and the trials that come with it" (194). While I

agree with Vigors' analysis of the external and the internal, I do not support her claim that Ida is unaware of the downside of having a twin. Ida "[writes] letters to herself that is to say she [writes] to her twin," and in the process she enthusiastically creates a twin that she calls Ida in the image of herself. However, Ida's excitement is not without conflict. In her first letter she wonders, "[a]re you beautiful as beautiful as I am dear twin Ida, are you, and if you are perhaps I am not." The struggle between Ida's desire to privilege either identity or entity becomes apparent. She says that the twin "could be a queen of beauty, one of the ones they elect when everybody has a vote" (12), spelling out her twin's potential for public recognition. If one twin is more beautiful than the other, then the more beautiful twin will certainly be the one the public pays attention to. Is Ida willing to give up ego to experience her essential self? What starts as a play to give Ida freedom develops into a relationship of competition.

It is significant that immediately following this first letter, Ida enters a beauty pageant:

So when Ida arrived they voted that she was a great beauty and the most beautiful and the completest beauty and she was for that year the winner of the beauty prize for all the world. Just like that. It did happen. Ida was her name and she won.

Nobody knew anything about her except that she was Ida but that was enough because she was Ida the beauty Ida. (13).

The passage provides an example of how Stein deals with the tension between the event-driven narrative form of the novel and her belief that "events should not be the cause of emotion nor should they be the material of poetry and prose... They should

consist of an exact reproduction of either an outer or an inner reality” (Bridgman 211). Though a beauty pageant is undoubtedly an event, Stein downplays its power by highlighting its outcome rather than the details of its action: “Just like that. It did happen. Ida was her name and she won” (*Ida* 13). Rather than framing the pageant as an event in progress, a *happening*, Stein turns it into a “*did* happen,” an episode already in the past that must be affirmed again and again for it to have significance. In addition, the use of repetition displaces any emotion that could come from Ida’s part in the beauty pageant by dulling the impact of her victory. For instance, the word “beauty” is used four times to describe Ida at the pageant, but at the end of the passage this beauty abstracts Ida by becoming the only quality that provides her with public recognition. By decentralizing the beauty pageant as an event and further abstracting Ida’s identity through repetition, Stein’s description of the pageant is cohesive with her principle of writing “about identity and all it does” while using the techniques that she associated with entity (“What Are Masterpieces” 91). In other words, Stein takes an event as her subject matter without telling *about* the event; she writes it into the essence of itself.

Since Ida simply calls her twin “Ida” at this point, it is ambiguous as to whether Ida or her twin has won the pageant. This ambiguity serves to highlight a second step in the tension between Ida and her twin. Indeed, the progression of naming for Ida and the twin is significant to the understanding of their relationship. In the next letter to her twin, names denote the distribution of power between the sisters:

Dear Ida,

So pleased so very pleased that you are winning, I might even call you Winnie because you are winning. You have won being a beautiful one the most beautiful one... [N]ow I will call you Winnie because you are winning everything and I am so happy that you are my twin.

Your twin, Ida-Ida (16)

“Ida” is simply one half of the being that is “Ida-Ida.” The very fact that Ida-Ida is able to rename the twin signals that she has the agency in their relationship—she is the whole.⁴ However, Ida-Ida’s renaming of her twin “Winnie” marks the beginning of a shift in her desire to have a twin and initiates a separation between the two. In the third and final letter to her twin, Ida-Ida goes back to being singular, “Ida,” and the twin is now addressed as a separate individual, Winnie:

Dear Winnie,

Everybody knows who you are, and I know who you are. Dear Winnie we are twins and your name is Winnie. Never again will I not be a twin,

Your twin, Ida (17)

Winnie quickly becomes known independently of Ida, but not yet as entirely separate. To Ida’s annoyance, at this point in the novel she is mistaken for Winnie on multiple occasions:

What is it that you like better than anything else, [the officer] asked and [Ida] said. I like being where I am. Oh said he excitedly, and where are you. I am not here, she said, I am very careful about that. No I am not here...

The officer smiled. I know he said I know what you mean. Winnie is your name and that is what you mean by your not being here.

She suddenly felt very faint. Her name was not Winnie it was Ida, there was no Winnie. (21)

If Ida creates Winnie to take on her public identity, to be the one who “[goes] out” so that Ida can live in entity and “stay in,” the public confusion of the twins signifies the failure of the title character’s plan. Ida attempts communicate her isolation from identity to the officer when she says “I am not here.” However, the officer thinks that by “not being here” Ida is Winnie, the public image who is everywhere. Thus, she faces the problem of the external and the internal that Stein outlines in *Everybody’s Autobiography*: “[i]t is all a question of the outside being outside and the inside being inside” (47). Ida’s outside and inside have become interchangeable to the public eye and she can no longer press a distinction between the two of them. Ultimately, Winnie’s overwhelming presence causes Ida to decide that “[s]he no longer even needed a twin” (*Ida* 32). Through the twin’s creation, public recognition, and disappearance, Stein demonstrates that identity and entity are not so easily separated.

With the disappearance of her twin, Ida moves from state to state. This movement indicates her search for mobility on both a physical and a metaphysical level; she relocates in different parts of the country and simultaneously attempts to strike a balance between public and private, identity and entity. Ida also shifts her focus to finding a husband, hoping to meet someone who can act as a double and affirm her identity without constraining her inner self as her twin did. People come to know her, not tangentially through Winnie, but for the seemingly mundane things she

does in her daily life: “[t]hey were taken with her beginning counting and she counted from one to ten. Of course they listened to her” (43). It is simply Ida’s “certain mystical something” that entralls the people around her and makes her famous.

Over the course of the novel Ida marries no less than five times. Her first four marriages prove to be unfulfilling, and it is not until she moves “to another country” (89) and meets a man named Andrew that she finds her match. It is fitting that Ida’s most drastic physical relocation is also the one that brings her the greatest mobility between identity and entity. Andrew is “Andrew the first” (89), Stein’s sly indication to the reader that he is a king. As a king, Andrew is “one of two” (70), a man so well known that his public identity has a life of its own, similar to the title character. However, being “one of two” also suggests that Andrew has an inner life that matches Ida’s. He is the only husband that is characterized in this way. The reader learns that Ida is able to connect with Andrew on a deeper level, beyond his role in the public sphere: “Andrew, she called him, Andrew, not loudly, just Andrew and she did not call him she just said Andrew. Nobody had just said Andrew to Andrew” (73). Ida sees him for who he truly is, not just as a king but also as a person facing the same problem of the external and the internal that she does.

Here the parallel between Ida and the Duchess of Windsor comes into play. The American socialite and divorcée Wallis Simpson garnered massive media attention when the king of England abdicated his throne to marry her. Though their marriage faced a barrage of criticism, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor remained together for the rest of their lives and Simpson called their relationship “a great romance” (King 388). The link between Ida and the Duchess of Windsor serves to

highlight the idea that even in the midst of intense public scrutiny, private life can flourish. *Ida* presents a love story in this way.

Thus, Ida's most fulfilling relationship is the one in which her partner can understand the burden of celebrity that she experiences because he was born into it. Logan Esdale points out that "although life with Andrew brings more publicity than ever to Ida, she experiences more intimacy with him than with her earlier husbands" (xx). Along with this intimacy comes a fuller understanding of inner life: "Being Andrew's Ida Ida was more than Ida she was Ida itself... Andrew had changed Ida to be more Ida and Ida changed Andrew to be less Andrew" (73). Despite (or possibly because of) her increased celebrity, Ida's transformation into "Ida itself" suggests her accession of a state of entity. Like Winnie, Andrew is a double for Ida, but he completes her in a way that Winnie could not. While Winnie required a splitting of the self for Ida to attempt to delineate identity and entity, Andrew provides her with both public recognition and the realization of her essential self. Stein reveals that the self cannot be made up exclusively of identity or entity through Ida and Andrew's relationship; these two parts of the self must coexist in an ever-changing balance in order to mitigate the problem of the internal and the external.

Stein's Theater, the Aesthetics of the Performative, and the Actor's Work in *Ida*

I would now like to shift my focus to how an actor might approach Stein's texts in the creation of a performance, grounding an exposition of my own process of adapting and staging *Ida, A Novel*. To do so, I provide a brief explanation of Stein's philosophy of theater and how it is affected by her concepts of the self and the

present. Next, I discuss the intentions behind my adaptation of the novel and demonstrate how this adaptation remains faithful to both Stein's writing techniques and her theater. I subsequently apply Erika Fischer-Lichte's aesthetics of the performative to put Stein's concepts in the context of performance theory. Finally, I explore strategies that an actor can use to transform Stein's writing into performance, developed through my work with *Ida*.

Stein's "Plays"

Stein's 1934 lecture "Plays" illuminates how the problem of the external and the internal fueled her anxiety about theater and how her idea of the continuous present addressed it. Stein approaches a discussion of theater by first examining the way events have an emotional impact in everyday life: "This then is the fundamental difference between excitement in real life and on the stage, in real life it culminates in a sense of completion whether an exciting act or an exciting emotion has been done or not, and on the stage the exciting climax is a relief" (97-98). For Stein, the "relief" of theater is the root of its problem. Stein's goal in writing was to express the thing in itself; she wanted audiences to be able to fully experience that thing in her theater, and a full experience entails feeling the emotion of the performance.

The discrepancy between the audience's and the character's emotions troubled Stein, and she questioned exactly why this discrepancy exists:

If the emotion of the person looking at the theatre does or does not do what it would do if it were really a real something that was happening and they were taking part in it or they were looking at it, when the emotion of the person looking on at the theatre comes then at the

climax to relief rather than completion has the mixture of seeing and hearing something to do with this and does this mixture have something to do with the nervousness of the emotion at the theatre which has perhaps to do with the fact that the emotion of the person at the theatre is always behind and ahead of the scene at the theatre but not with it. (103)

This discomfort with the theater's emotion is clear in Stein's concern with regard to the problem of the external and the internal self. Just as Stein recognized a difference between others' perceptions of her and her inner life, so was she troubled by the fact that she was supposed to feel a certain emotion at the theater that she was not actually experiencing inside of her.

In the statement above, Stein links her "nervousness of the emotion at the theatre" with "the mixture of seeing and hearing something." Probing this connection, I posit that her uneasiness at the theater stems from the discrepancies between *mise en scène* (the decisions on how to stage a production) and performance (in which the autopoietic feedback loop is unpredictable) as it emerges in the actor-audience relationship (Fischer-Lichte 187).⁵ The actors of a play are usually expected to make the audience feel a certain emotion through the visual and auditory cues they use to embody their characters. However, the fact that the audience is not experiencing the events of the play firsthand—as they would in real life—means that they can never experience the emotion of the play at the same time as the characters. In a theater committed to representation, the audience accordingly feels "relief" or resolution rather than "culmination." Stein's emphasis on the present exerts its influence here;

she wanted to express immediacy in her writing and tried to understand why a similar immediacy could not be contained in the emotional experience of the theater.

Consequently, Stein focused on “[thinking] about the theatre from the standpoint of sight and sound and its relation to emotion and time, rather than in relation to story and action” (“Plays” 104). Turning her attention to the tangible aspects of theater allowed her to tackle the problem in a way that was conducive to the rest of her work. Thus, all of her plays demonstrate the auditory potential of a text, though she developed different playwriting approaches to resolve her anxiety about the theater.

First, Stein tried to “express [what happened] without telling what happened, in short to make a play the essence of what happened” (119). The appropriately titled dramatic work *What Happened, A Play* (1913) is an example of such an effort. The exploration of this kind of dramatic voice highlights Stein’s urge to illuminate the thing in itself, rather than a description of that thing.

Through works such as *Objects Lie on a Table* (1922) and *A List* (1923), Stein later conceived the idea of a landscape play: “I felt that if a play was exactly like a landscape then there would be no difficulty about the emotion of the person looking on at the play being behind or ahead of the play because the landscape does not have to make acquaintance” (122). To her, landscape plays avoid the nervousness of theater’s emotion altogether because a landscape does not require emotional syncopation from the audience. Instead, landscape plays emphasize what Betsy Alayne Ryan calls “spatial presence,” meaning expression through “the physical

terms of landscape in which elements relate to one another but ultimately remain static” (52).⁶

Towards the end of her career, Stein took a more narrative-based approach to playwriting. *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1937) is exemplary of this narrative turn in Stein’s theater.⁷ However, in keeping with her overall aesthetic, she deemphasizes the plot and decentralizes events so that the audience does not feel the need to experience the emotion of the play in time with its characters. These three loose groupings—plays as the essence of what happened, landscape plays, and narrative-based plays—present the different solutions Stein found to her anxiety about the theater.⁸

Adapting Ida for performance

As I noted earlier, the writing in *Ida, A Novel* most closely resembles the narrative-based plays of Stein’s oeuvre, which tell a story while still avoiding any kind of emotional climax.⁴ The decentralization of plot in *Ida* helps abstract the title character, drawing attention to the identities that others project onto her and expressing the essence of what happened rather than the events themselves. In my adaptation, I decided to highlight this character abstraction by choosing the events from the novel that, for me, comprise Ida’s essence.

The events that I selected for the script are, for the most part, ones that I have already discussed in my analysis of the novel and so I will not describe them in further detail. However, I want to call attention to the bracketed section of Scene 17 in my adaptation.⁹ For this part of the scene, my director and I collaged lines from different chapters of the novel and events in Ida’s life to express the unfulfilling

nature of her relationships with her twin and first four husbands. We included the repetition of lines such as “Very often, very often,” “I like to change places,” and “Ida was not married any more. She was very nice about it” to accentuate Ida’s continuously shifting physical, emotional, and mental states. The collage also highlights the circularity of Stein’s writing, as repetition establishes each of Ida’s relationships as a kind of cycle.

Stein and the aesthetics of the performative

While Stein did not directly concern herself with acting, her theoretical writings provide a jumping off point for the creation of acting strategies that I fortify with research on the aesthetics of the performative from Erika Fischer-Lichte’s *The Transformative Power of Performance*. Stein’s concepts of identity and entity, a continuous present, and her “nervousness at the emotion of the theatre” resonate in Fischer-Lichte’s discussion of the actor’s body and presence to create a “reenchantment of the world” (181). I argue that by viewing Stein’s texts through the lens of the aesthetics of the performative, the actor can apply Fischer-Lichte’s examination of presence as an approach to the transposition of Stein’s writing techniques to performance.

“The aesthetics of the performative” is a term that Fischer-Lichte uses to describe the defining attributes of art events, particularly those that draw attention to “how actors and spectators influence each other in performance.” Considering that Stein’s issues with theater are at least in part caused by the discrepancy in the emotional experience of the actor-audience relationship, it is pertinent to turn to the aesthetics of the performative to develop acting strategies that can address the

“nervousness of the emotion of the theatre” in a manner that suits Stein’s writing style. Fischer-Lichte explains the cycle of influence between actors and spectators as “a self-referential, autopoietic system enabling a fundamentally open, unpredictable process” that she calls the autopoietic feedback loop (39). An audience member’s reaction to a scene can change an actor’s response in performance and vice versa. Therefore, while the *mise en scène* “provides a strong framework for the performance... [t]he intentions of the *mise en scène* and the actual occurrences during a performance are frequently incongruent” (188-189). As previously discussed, Stein attempted to circumvent the problem of emotional syncopation in the theater through her plays as the essence of what happened, as landscapes, and as narrative-based works. However, part of the actor’s job in performing Stein’s texts is ensuring that spectators are not pressured to feel emotions in time with the characters’ present by highlighting the writing itself rather than the narrative, if she provides one.

In my interpretation, the actor must work with the unpredictable nature of the autopoietic feedback loop to create conditions for the audience’s recognition of Stein’s writing techniques. While this focus on Stein’s writing could be seen as the privileging of text that avant-garde theater challenges, the methods through which I bring her language and its sonic properties to the forefront emphasize the actor’s body and voice and create a balanced and dynamic relationship between the text and its embodiment.

Fischer-Lichte discusses the historical categorization of the actor’s body as twofold:

The enemies of theatre thus distinguished between two types of presence in the theatre: the presentness created by the actor's semiotic body in the portrayal of a fictional character's passionate actions, and the presentness exerted by the actor's phenomenal body, by his sheer presence. (94)

The semiotic and phenomenal bodies are crucial to embodiment, the process through which the actor brings forth the dramatic character. Though the semiotic and phenomenal are by no means a direct parallel to Stein's concepts of identity and entity, they operate in a similar fashion; within the aesthetics of the performative, the actor's semiotic and phenomenal bodies can and should coexist. Just as Stein's works can be understood as writings generated from her experiences of both identity and entity, the aesthetics of the performative often undo the semiotic/ phenomenal binary so that at any given time in a performance the spectator can understand the actor as both a bodily-being-in-the-world (phenomenal) and as the character the actor is portraying (semiotic).

Establishing a parallel between Stein's concepts of identity/ entity and Fischer-Lichte's exploration of the actor's semiotic/ phenomenal bodies not only allows for an understanding of how these so-called "dichotomies" operate, but also presents my approach for performing Stein's texts. According to Fischer-Lichte, "[t]hrough specific processes of embodiment, the actor can bring forth his phenomenal body in a way that enables him to command both space and the audience's attention." She calls this ability of the phenomenal body "presence" (96). Furthermore, "[w]hen the actor brings forth their body as energetic and thus generates

presence, they appear as embodied mind. The actor exemplifies that body and mind cannot be separated from each other” (98-99). I posit that through the generation of presence, the actor accesses a state of artistic creation that reflects an “embodied mind” and so can be likened to Stein’s concept of entity. Thus, by developing acting strategies that simultaneously echo Stein’s literary style and generate presence, the actor can perform both her writing techniques and her theoretical foundations.

Applying presence: performance strategies for Ida

Fischer-Lichte outlines methods used by artists such as Jerzy Grotowski and Robert Wilson to harness the power of the actor’s presence. These methods generally revolve around emphasizing the actor’s corporeality, the uniqueness of their physicality, so that the spectator’s attention is drawn to the phenomenal body rather than the semiotic body (85). In the rehearsal process for *Ida, A Novel*, I developed my own performance strategies with this principle in mind, though I did not adhere to methods delineated by any specific artist.

Just as Stein describes how writers can create works of entity, Fischer-Lichte demonstrates how an actor before an audience can generate presence in performance. However, as I have discussed, Stein also argues that the writing process itself can and should take place in the subjective isolation that comes with entity. As a way of staying true to Stein’s principles, I attempted to find ways to generate presence and “bring forth the body as energetic” (Fischer-Lichte 98) in the rehearsal process as well as in the actual performances.

Attention to process

To write from entity, Stein focused on the *process* of her writing, staying present in the moment of the act of creation so that she could express the thing in itself. Thornton Wilder remarked that Stein “was engaged in a series of spiritual exercises whose aim was to eliminate during the hours of writing all those whispers into the ear from the outside and inside world where audience dwells” (“Gertrude Stein Makes Sense” 289). While I cannot claim that my rehearsals had any particularly “spiritual” qualities, I did try to isolate myself in practical, if obvious, ways that nonetheless helped me center my attention on my work. When creating new physical and vocal scores, I would typically enter the rehearsal space alone with my phone and computer turned off so that I could devote all of my energy to the creative act. If an unrelated thought came to mind, I would write it down in a journal and then let it go. This decision aided me in creating scores that would express the thing in itself, whether that thing was an event, an action, or a character, without impeding thoughts and ideas.

Embracing impulse and playfulness

Finding ways to work from impulse became a crucial aspect of my effort to transform Stein’s writing into performance. In the creation of physical scores of action, one strategy that I utilized was picking out a word from the text and making a gesture based on the impulse that this word inspired in me. I would then further develop this gesture by playing with its speed or repetition until it became an action. Like Stein, I tried to avoid self-correction in the process, viewing these devising rehearsals as play rather than pressuring myself to come out of each session with a

polished action. By allowing myself to play without self-correction, my own idiosyncrasies were able to come through in the actions in the same way that Stein's writing contains the nuances of her literary voice. For instance, I noticed that I am prone to turn in a direction that would be counterintuitive for most people. I decided to push this unconventional movement further to create a score with it. In Scene 5, when the narrator says that "every now and then [Ida] was lost,"¹⁰ I exaggerated my counterintuitive sense of direction through the repeated action of turning as an embodiment of the disorientation Ida experiences being "lost."

Embracing impulse is also significant to the actor's work in that it helps "bring forth the body as energetic" (Fischer-Lichte 98) to generate presence in the rehearsal process. Through spontaneous gestures and their subsequent repetition, the actor learns how to channel impulses into motivated movement performed by the phenomenal body. The importance of impulse is also conducive to the parallel between Fischer-Lichte's discussion of presence and Stein's concept of entity; the freedom to play while devising expresses a connection between physicality and the mental process that demonstrates the actor as an embodied mind.

Repetition

As one of Stein's most apparent writing techniques, repetition played an essential role in both the process and performance of *Ida, A Novel*. In my exploration of repetition, I kept in mind that Stein's use of this technique entails slight changes within each recurrence of a word or phrase, allowing her to build a continuous present. In some of my physical scores, I created a longer action through the repetition of a brief gesture, adding nuances to the gesture with each repetition so that

it gained meaning through reiteration. My vocal scores also reflected the repetition in Stein's work, not only in the actual words that I spoke from the text but in their intonation and rhythm, as well. Within the vocal aspect of scoring, repetition emphasized the musicality of Stein's language, as the tune in which I sang certain words or phrases became recognizable throughout the performance.

Circular structure

To demonstrate the circularity of Stein's writing, I searched for ways to echo the structure of the novel within the *mise en scène* of the performance. One example of such an effort was in the repetition of Ida's song in Scenes 2 and 3.¹¹ When I sang to Love in Scene 2, I faced the audience. In Scene 3, I sang the same song at a faster tempo and performed the action from the previous scene with my back to the audience, creating a loop in the space. By performing the same scene with slight changes, my goal was to highlight how Stein's retelling of an event refuses linear structure and, even more, extends the present moment. I focused on direction and speed to achieve this effect, while Stein played with repetition of language.

Another strategy for embodying *Ida's* circularity in performance came in the staging of the last scene.¹² In the final moments of the play, I used chalk to draw a circle around Andrew (represented by a mink stole on a coatrack) and myself, speaking the final lines of the novel: "...Andrew is in, and they go in and that is where they are. They are there. Thank them. Yes" (127). These words hearken back to the dichotomy of the inside and the outside, which Stein breaks down by allowing Ida and Andrew to be recognized ("thank[ed]") even when they are "in." Likewise, the action of making this circle is Ida's creation of a private space for her lover and

herself, but the two-dimensional nature of the circle means that they are not obstructed from the view of others. They can thus find a balance between identity and entity. In addition, the use of chalk to draw this circle on the black floor of the studio echoed the projected black-and-white animations of earlier scenes,¹³ relating the design elements to the circular nature of Stein's language and theory of the self.

Exploring personal associations

I translated Stein's use of personal associations and her privileging of intertextuality in the writing process to performance by integrating scores that I developed for past productions with the new material that I generated for *Ida*. In the spring of 2012, I was an ensemble member of the Wesleyan University Theater Department's production of *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*, for which I developed a physical score of action for swimming by studying the quality of movement of the actress and swimmer Esther Williams. In my visual research on celebrities of the early 1940s for *Ida*, I came across images of Esther Williams again. On the basis of this personal association I decided to incorporate parts of the swimming score from *Faustus* into *Ida* in Scene 11, in which "Ida began to be known."¹⁴ The juxtaposition of the score inspired by Williams onto a scene about Ida's celebrity helped me understand that Ida's quality of movement is part of her "certain mystical something" that makes others want to know her. Another instance of personal association occurred in the integration of a physical score of action that I created for Lily Haje's Honors in Theater production *FIRE + BONE*, performed in the spring of 2013. My choice to use this score in *Ida* was based on a personal connection I felt with the action as opposed to a parallel of subject matter; though this score was originally

created to demonstrate the inner turmoil of a woman being martyred, I transformed it to express Ida's relationship with the different men in her life.

The recycling of scores from previous performances creates layers of meaning within the actor's work in the same way that intertextuality does in Stein's writing. The self-referential nature of Stein's intertextuality allowed her to recognize herself as a writer without needing affirmation from her readers. Likewise, drawing from my own body of work in the development of these scenes helped me realize that the integration of personal associations can be self-affirming for the actor in the process of scoring. In both of the above examples, actions gained new significance when placed in the context of a different semiotic world, and reviving these scores drew my attention to my own phenomenal body in the rehearsal process.

Reenchanting Ida's world

Borrowing from Russian Formalists, Fischer-Lichte discusses the transformative nature of the aesthetics of the performative as "the reenchantment of the world." The German scholar interprets it as a blurring of the boundaries between art and life: "[t]he reenchantment of the world is inclusive rather than exclusive; it asks everyone to act in life as in performance" (207). With this inclusivity comes a noncompliance with binary oppositions in general. The aesthetics of the performative refuse to narrow the roles of actor and spectator to creator and recipient, respectively; to classify an actor's body as either semiotic or phenomenal; or to maintain rigidity within Stein's own concepts of identity and entity. In terms of the autopoietic feedback loop, this transcendence of binaries means that the actor and spectator play equally important roles in the performance event and that sometimes these roles

cannot be clearly distinguished. Fischer-Lichte thus describes the participants of a performance as “co-subjects” because “[t]hrough their physical presence, perception, and response, the spectators become co-actors that generate the performance” (32). Similarly, objects onstage have a physical presence that imbues them with power. Fischer-Lichte discusses the presence of objects as the “ecstasy of things,” which “makes things appear as what they already are but which usually remains unnoticed in everyday life because of their instrumentalization” (100). The ecstasy of things engages Stein’s idea of “the thing in itself,” since objects onstage can be acknowledged for their form and presence rather than their instrumental value.

The scenic elements of *Ida* were greatly influenced by Fischer-Lichte’s concept of the reenchantment of the world. Originally, the set was comprised of translucent curtains that created room-like divisions of the space. However, these curtains interfered with my ability to see the audience and vice versa. Bearing in mind the audience as co-subjects, I wanted the spectators to be able to see my actions as clearly as possible so that the comic elements of the performance could be understood. My team and I decided to remove the front curtains, allowing for a better view and consequently a fuller engagement in the autopoietic feedback loop.

Found objects made up another primary element of the set, integrating the ecstasy of things into *Ida*. As everyday items that are often overlooked, found objects resonate with Stein’s emphasis on “daily life as we live it.”¹⁵ Furthermore, the way in which I used these objects in the production underscored the transformative nature of Stein’s writing. For instance, a desk lamp became the officer in Scene 8¹⁶ when I adjusted the shade so that it registered as a “hat.” I then indicated that the officer was

speaking by turning the lamp on and off in time with the text. Manipulating the objects in this way mirrored Stein's play with language; just as she brings forth unexpected meanings of words to reenchant language, the objects gained new significance within *Ida*'s semiotic world.

Conclusion

“It is all very confused but more confused than confusing,” Stein writes at the end of *Ida, A Novel* (126). Teasing out the intricacies of Stein's theories is no small task. This project presented me with the opportunity to synthesize my studies in acting, literary analysis, and performance theory. The role of the actor in performing Stein is to illuminate how the engagement of the phenomenal and semiotic bodies can circumvent the “confusion” of the external and the internal, making both so-called “binaries” into dynamic relationships. My investigation is by no means a complete study of the actor's work in the context of Stein's writing, but it has given me a set of tools that can be expanded upon in the future to create performances that emphasize personal memory, play, presence, and above all, process. In *Ida*, the title character is often “confused” in her relationship with herself and with others. Through the exploration of this confusion, the novel invites the actor to reenchant both *Ida*'s world and the world of performance—though the actor might find that these two worlds are not as different as they first appear.

Notes

¹ Perhaps the most pertinent example of Stein's frequent use of this aphorism is in "Identity A Poem," a short text comprised of "plays" that explore the question "I am I why" (74) as a meditation on her view of the self.

² Stein was surrounded by the discourse concerning inner and outer life from her days as a student at Radcliffe University, where she studied psychology under William James. James' theory of the self played an important role in Stein's formation of the concepts of identity and entity. He posited the self as comprised of two aspects, "partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject... of which for shortness we may call one the *Me* and the other the *I*" (James 101). Similar to James' "Me," Stein's concept of identity is the part of the self that is "known" to both others and the self. For James, being known to others means that "*a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him* and carry an image of him in their mind" (102). An individual acts according to others' ideas of him and so this part of the self can change based on how he is perceived. Likewise, James' "I" and the idea of entity can be equivocated. James calls the "I" "that which at any given moment *is* conscious, whereas the *Me* is only one of the things which it is conscious *of*" (107). Entity is aware of identity without being informed by it.

³ Logan Esdale's introduction to the workshop edition of *Ida* discusses Stein's archive at Yale in greater detail, analyzing how its materials reflect the writing process of the novel.

⁴ It is also important to note that while Ida writes letters to her twin, the twin never writes back. Bollinger suggests that the twin's silence empowers Ida by allowing her to enter into an "ongoing self-dialogue" (253). However, I do not view Ida's relationship with her twin in such a positive light. In my interpretation, the twin's silence contributes to Ida's ultimate rejection of Winnie. After all, Ida seeks an interlocutor: she "liked to be spoken to" (46), and once she meets Andrew she remarks that "[she] likes to know that all [she] love[s] to do is to say something and he hears [her]" (*Ida* 115). Ida is not aiming for self-dialogue when she writes to her twin; she is searching for both public recognition and the intimacy of being known by someone "dear" to her.

⁵ I elaborate on these specific terms of the aesthetics of the performative in a later section, but introduce them here to begin contextualizing Stein's work within Fischer-Lichte's vocabulary.

⁶ Stein's concept of a static spatial relation within a landscape coincides with her continuous present; each moment, like each part of the landscape, is self-contained.

⁷ In fact, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* actually developed out of *Ida*, though Stein finished *Faustus* first. In a letter to Thornton Wilder dated May 11, 1938, Stein wrote "Ida has become an opera, and it is a beauty, really is, an opera about Faust... someday she will be a novel too, she is getting ready for that, but as an opera she is a wonder" ("Selected Letters" 202).

⁸ See the chapter entitled “Playwriting Aesthetic” in Betsy Alayne Ryan’s book *Gertrude Stein’s Theatre of the Absolute* for a more in-depth analysis of these plays and complications of their categorizations.

⁹ See page 52 of the Appendix for Scene 17 of my adaptation of *Ida, A Novel*.

¹⁰ See page 46 of the Appendix for Scene 5.

¹¹ See pages 44 and 45 of the Appendix for Scenes 2 and 3.

¹² See page 55 of the Appendix for the part of Scene 19 that corresponds with this action.

¹³ Animations designed by Cicily Clare Gruber.

¹⁴ See page 49 of the Appendix for Scene 11.

¹⁵ I discussed Stein’s passion for daily life earlier in the essay. See my section about continuous present under “Stein’s Theoretical Framework.”

¹⁶ See page 48 of the Appendix for Scene 8.

Appendix

Ida, A Novel

Adapted by Katherine Malczewski

Scene One: Ida's birth and family

Narrator: There was a baby born named Ida. Its mother held it with her hands to keep Ida from being born but when the time came Ida came. And as Ida came, with her came her twin, so there she was Ida-Ida.

The mother was sweet and gentle and so was the father.

It was a nice family but they did easily lose each other.

So Ida was born and a very little while after her parents went off on a trip and never came back. That was the first funny thing that happened to Ida.

The days were long and there was nothing to do.

She saw the sun and she saw the moon and she saw the grass and she saw the streets.

Ida: I like to talk and to sing songs and I like to change places. Wherever I am I always like to change places.

Narrator: Ida lived with her great-aunt not in the city but just outside.

She did not have anything to do and so she had time to think about each day as it came. She was very careful about Tuesday. She always just had to have Tuesday. Tuesday was Tuesday to her.

Scene Two: Ida sings to Love

Narrator: And so Ida went on growing older and then she was almost sixteen and a great many funny things happened to her. She had a dog, he was almost blind not from age but from having been born so and Ida called him Love.

Ida: It is true he was born blind nice dogs often are.

Narrator: Though he was blind naturally she could always talk to him.

Ida: Listen Love, but listen to everything and listen while I tell you something.

Yes Love, you have always had me and now you are going to have two, I am going to have a twin yes I am Love, I am tired of being just one and when I am a twin one of us can go out and one of us can stay in, yes Love yes I am yes I am going to have a twin. You know Love I am like that when I have to have it I have to have it. And I have to have a twin, yes Love.

Narrator: She began to sing about her twin and this is the way she sang.

Ida: Oh dear oh dear Love, if I had a twin well nobody would know which one I was and which one she was and so if anything happened nobody could tell anything and lots of things are going to happen and oh Love I felt it yes I know I have a twin.

Love later on they will call me a suicide blonde because my twin will have dyed her hair. And then they will call me a murderess because there will come the time when I will have killed my twin which I first made come. If you make her can you kill her. Tell me Love my dog tell me and tell her.

Scene Three: Ida sings to Love and grows older

Narrator: When she got home her dog Love met her and she began to sing about her twin and this is the way she sang.

Ida: Oh dear oh dear Love, if I had a twin well nobody would know which one I was and which one she was and so if anything happened nobody could tell anything and lots of things are going to happen and oh Love I feel it yes I know I have a twin.

Narrator: And then she began to look far away and she began to think about her parents. She remembered them when she grew a little older but there were plenty to take care of her and they did.

Ida: (Think of all the refugees there are in the world just think.)

Narrator: Ida gradually was a little older and every time she was a little older someone else took care of her. And so quite gradually little by little she grew older.

Scene Four: The walking marathon

Narrator: One day, it was before or after she made up her mind to be a twin, she joined a walking marathon. She kept on moving, sleeping or walking, she kept on slowly moving. This was one of the funny things that happened to her. Then she lived outside of a city, she was eighteen then, she decided that she had had enough of only being one and she told her dog Love that she was going to be two she was going to be a twin. And this did then happen.

Scene Five: Letter #1 / The beauty pageant

Narrator: Ida often wrote letters to herself that is to say she wrote to her twin.

Ida: Dear Ida my twin,

Here I am sitting not alone because I have dear Love with me, and I speak to him and he speaks to me, but here I am all alone and I am thinking of you Ida my dear twin. Are you beautiful as beautiful as I am dear twin Ida, are you, and if you are perhaps I am not. I can not go away Ida, I am here always, if not here then somewhere, but just now I am here, I am like that, but you dear you are not, you are not here, if you were I could not write to you. Do you know what I think Ida, I think that you could be a queen of beauty, one of the ones they elect when everybody has a vote. They are elected and they go everywhere and everybody looks at them and everybody sees them. Dear Ida oh dear Ida do do be one. Do not let them know you have any name but Ida and I know Ida will win, Ida Ida Ida,

From your twin
Ida

Narrator: Ida went out first locking the door she went out and as she went out she knew she was a beauty and that they would all vote for her.

So when Ida arrived they voted that she was a great beauty and the most beautiful and the completest beauty and she was for that year the winner of the beauty prize for all the world. Just like that.

Ida: It did happen.

Narrator: Ida was her name and she won.

Nobody knew anything about her except that she was Ida but that was enough because she was Ida the beauty Ida.

And so she won. The only thing for her to do then was to go home and she did.

So then Ida did everything an elected beauty does but every now and then she was lost.

Scene Six: Letters #2 and #3 / Naming Winnie

Narrator: Ida went on living just outside of the city, she and her dog Love and her piano. She did write letters very often to her twin Ida.

Ida: Dear Ida,
So pleased so very pleased that you are winning, I might even call you Winnie because you are winning. You have won being a beautiful one the most beautiful one. Now I will call you Winnie because you are winning everything and I am so happy that you are my twin.
Your twin, Ida-Ida

Narrator: And so Winnie was coming to be known to be Winnie.

Winnie Winnie is what they said when they saw her and they were beginning to see her.

They said it different ways. They said Winnie. And then they said Winnie.

Ida: Dear Winnie,
Everybody knows who you are, and I know who you are. Dear Winnie we are twins and your name is Winnie. Never again will I not be a twin,
Your twin,
Ida

Scene Seven: People talk about Winnie

Narrator: So many things happened to Winnie. Why not when everybody knew her name.

Once there were two people who met together. They said. What shall we do. So what did they do. They went to see Winnie. That is they went to look at Winnie.

When they looked at her they almost began to cry. One said. What if I did not look at her did not look at Winnie. And the other said. Well that is just the way I feel about it.

Did you see her said one of them. Sure I saw her did you. Sure he said sure I saw her.

Ida: There was Winnie.

Scene Eight: Ida talks to officers

Narrator: Ida commenced to talk. You can always talk with army officers. She did.

Officer: What is it that you like better than anything else

Narrator: said an officer to Ida.

Ida: I like being where I am.

Officer: Oh, and where are you.

Ida: I am not here, I am very careful about that. No I am not here, it is very pleasant, very pleasant indeed not to be here.

Narrator: The officer smiled.

Officer: I know I know what you mean. Winnie is your name and that is what you mean by your not being here.

Narrator: She suddenly felt very faint. Her name was not Winnie it was Ida, there was no Winnie. She turned toward the officer and she said to him.

Ida: I am afraid very much afraid that you are mistaken.

Narrator: And she went away very slowly.

Scene Nine: Connecticut

Narrator: In New England there are six states, Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Ida turned up in Connecticut. She spent the day sitting and then that was a day. One day she heard somebody say something. They said who is Winnie. The next day Ida left Connecticut.

Ida left Connecticut and that was the first time Ida thought about getting married and it was the last time anybody said Winnie anywhere near her.

Scene Ten: Presidents

Ida: Some men are more presidents than other men when they happen to be born that way. Which one is mine.

Narrator: She knew that there must be one that could be hers one who would be a president.

Ida saw herself come, then she saw a man come, then she saw a man go away, then she saw herself go away.

Ida: Yes yes I like to be sitting. Yes I like to be moving. Yes I have been here before. Yes it is very pleasant here. Yes I will come here again. Yes I do wish to have them meet, I meet them and they meet me and it is very nice.

Narrator: Ida never sighed, she just rested. When she rested she turned a little and she said,

Ida: yes dear.

Narrator: This was all of Ida's life just then.

Ida: I do not like birds.
I am never tired and I am never very fresh. I change all the time. I say to myself, Ida, and that startles me and then I sit still.

Scene Eleven: Ida begins to be known

Narrator: Ida began to be known.

Some did begin to notice her. Was she a twin well was she.

Ida: Now listen to me, I am here and I know it, if I go away I will not like it because I am so used to my being here. I would not know what has

happened, now just listen to me, listen to me, I am going to stop talking and I will.

How many of those who are yoked together have ever seen oxen.

Narrator: This is what Ida said and she cried. Her eyes were full of tears and she waited and then she went over everything that had ever happened and in the middle of it she went to sleep.

She no longer even needed a twin.

Ida went back again not to Connecticut but to New Hampshire. She sighed when she said New Hampshire.

Ida: New Hampshire is near Vermont and when did I say Vermont and New Hampshire.

Very often, very often.

Narrator: That was her answer.

This time she was married.

Scene Twelve: Ida in Ohio

Narrator: Ida was married and they went to live in Ohio. She did not love anybody in Ohio.

She liked apples. She was disappointed but she did not sigh. She got sunburned and she had a smile on her face. They asked her did she like it. She smiled gently and she left it alone. When they asked her again she said not at all. Later on when they asked her did she like it she said.

Ida: Perhaps only not yet.

Narrator: Ida left Ohio.

Scene Thirteen: Ida settles in Washington

Narrator: And so there she was in Washington and her life was going to begin. She was not a twin.

This is what happened every day.

Ida woke up. After a while she got up. Then she stood up. Then she ate something. After that she sat down.

That was Ida.

Ida: I am not careful. I do not win him to come away. If he goes away I will not have him. I can count any one up to ten. When I count up to ten I stop counting.

Scene Fourteen: Once upon a time

Ida: 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.

Narrator: Ida began a daily life in Washington.

Ida: I thought I coughed and when I coughed I thought I coughed.

Narrator: Once upon a time Ida stood all alone in the twilight. She was down in a field and leaning against a wall, her arms were folded and she looked very tall. Later she was walking up the road and she walked slowly. She was not so young anymore.

Scene Fifteen: Not married

Narrator: Oh Ida.
Ida was not married any more. She was very nice about it.

Scene Sixteen: Gerald Seaton

Ida: Once upon a time there was a city, it 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.

Narrator: Where was Ida where where was Ida.
She was there. She was in Washington and she said

Ida: thank you very much, thank you very much indeed.

Narrator: Ida was in Washington.
Thank you very much.

She was kind to politics while she was in Washington very kind. She told politics that it was very nice of them to have her be kind to them. And she was she was very kind.

Seaton: Your name is Ida isn't it, I thought your name was Ida, I thought you were Ida and I thought your name is Ida.

Narrator: She did not ask his name but of course he told her. He said his name was Gerald Seaton, and that he did not often care to walk about.

It was easy, Ida was Mrs. Gerald Seaton and they went away to stay. Ida was Mrs. Gerald Seaton and Seaton was Gerald Seaton and they both wore their wedding rings.

Scene Seventeen: Far away / Andrew

Narrator: If nobody knows you that does not argue you to be unknown, nobody knew Ida when they no longer lived in Boston but that did not mean that she was unknown.

One day they went away again,

If nobody knows you that does not argue you to be unknown, nobody knew Ida when they no longer lived in Boston but that did not mean that she was unknown.

One day they went away again, this time quite far away,

If nobody knows you that does not argue you to be unknown, nobody knew Ida when they longer lived in Boston but that did not mean that she was unknown.

One day they went away again, this time quite far away, they went to another country and there they sat down. How are you they said to each other. Ida learned to say it like that.

Ida: How are you.

If nobody knows you that does not argue you to be unknown, nobody knew Ida when they no longer lived in Boston but this did not mean that she was unknown.

Narrator: Never at any time did tears come to Ida's eyes.

Never.

[Very often, very often

I like to talk and to sing songs and I like to change places. Wherever I am I always like to change places.

...that was the first time Ida thought about getting married and it was the last time anybody said Winnie anywhere near her.

Ida was married and they went to live in Ohio. She did not love anybody in Ohio.

Oh Ida.

I like to talk and to sing songs and I like to change places. Wherever I am I always like to change places.

Very often, very often

Ida married Frank Arthur. Ida never saw Arthur again.

Ida was not married any more. She was very nice about it.

Very often, very often

Frederick came to see Ida. He married her and she married him.

Ida was not married any more. She was very nice about it.

Ida married again. He was Andrew Hamilton and he came from Boston.

Ida was not married any more. She was very nice about it.

I like to talk and to sing songs and I like to change places. Wherever I am I always like to change places.

It was easy, Ida was Mrs. Gerald Seaton and they went away to stay. Ida was Mrs. Gerald Seaton and Seaton was Gerald Seaton and they both wore their wedding rings.

Ida was not married any more. She was very nice about it.

Oh Ida.]

Everybody knew that Andrew was one of two. He was so completely one of two that he was two. Andrew was his name and he was not tall, not at all.

And yet it did mean it when he came in or when he went out.

Andrew, there were never tears in Andrew's voice or tears in his eyes, he might cry but that was an entirely different matter.

Ida knew that.

Slowly Ida knew everything about that. It was the first thing Ida had ever really known the first thing.

Ida: Feel like that do you.

Narrator: There was hardly any beginning.
 There never could be with Andrew when he was there there he was.

How do you do. That is what she said when she met him. Andrew, she called him, Andrew, not loudly, just Andrew and she did not call him she just said Andrew. Nobody had just said Andrew to Andrew.

Ida liked it to be dark because if it was dark she could light a light. And if she lighted a light then she could see and if she saw she saw Andrew and she said to him.

Ida: Here you are.

Narrator: And now Ida was not only Ida she was Andrew's Ida and being Andrew's Ida Ida was more than Ida she was Ida itself.

For this there was a change, everybody changed, Ida even changed and even changed Andrew. Andrew had changed Ida to be more Ida and Ida changed Andrew to be less Andrew and they were both always together.

Scene Eighteen: Everybody knows everything about Ida

Narrator: Andrew was Andrew the first, and Ida was Ida and they were almost married and not anybody could cloud anything.

Ida never said once upon a time. These words did not mean anything to Ida. This is what Ida said. Ida said yes, and then Ida said oh yes, and then Ida said, I said yes, and then Ida said, yes.

Scene Nineteen: What happened

And then something did happen.

Well what happened was this. Everybody thought everybody knew what happened. And everybody did know and so it was that that happened. Nothing was neglected that is Ida did nothing Andrew did nothing but nothing was neglected.

That was the way it was nothing did happen. Everybody talked all day and every day about Ida and Andrew but nothing could happen as neither one of them or the other one ever did begin anything.

Ida: It is wonderful how things pile up even if nothing is added. Very wonderful.

Yes.

Narrator: Dear Ida.

Little by little there it was. It was Ida and Andrew.
Not too much not too much Ida and not too much Andrew.
And not enough Ida and not enough Andrew.
If Ida goes on, does she go on even when she does not go on any more.

She dresses in another hat and she dresses in another dress and
Andrew is in, and they go in and that is where they are. They are there.
Thank them.

Yes.

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