

**Innovation in Gertrude Stein's Anti-Plays:
Genre Analysis of *What Happened*, *Capital Capitals* and *Dr.
Faustus Lights the Lights***

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Abstract

Anti-plays can refer to the avant-garde theatre that rejects most traditional aspects of theatre, especially *mimesis*, or imitation, and sometimes even plot and character. In this research, informed by genre studies, some of the anti-plays of American expatriate writer Gertrude Stein are examined for breaking many theatrical conventions. These plays are: *What Happened*, *Capital Capitals* and *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights*. Despite being mostly famous for writing modernist novels, Stein wrote a few plays that manifest many of the anti-theatrical elements, such as narrative fragmentation, lack of exposition, or lack of character. Most of her plays can be considered as anti-plays that mark a transitional stage into postdramatic theatre, a designation that has been used, first by Lehmann in *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), to describe plays that manifest ample performative qualities and are mainly associated with the postmodernist era. Analyzing Stein's anti-plays sheds light on some aspects of what the genre of theatre is and explores how her plays are innovative and better interpreted as postdramatic performances that include aspects of music and multimedia.

Keywords: anti-plays, anti-theatricalism, Gertrude Stein's plays, postdramatic theatre, landscape plays.

Introduction

Drama has usually been associated with representation on stage. Ever since Aristotle's *Poetics*, drama has been expected to be more representational rather than include narrative or epic qualities. Such "pre-dramatic" Aristotelian plays came to be considered the benchmark for what theatre should be. Aristotelian plays focused on the plot and character, and were expected to follow the three unities of time, place and action. Such characteristics were the standard for appreciating many Western plays that came to be considered the hub of "dramatic" theatre, which emphasized the dramatic curve of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Dramatic theatre aimed at the representation "of speeches and deeds on stage through mimetic dramatic play" (Lehmann 21); that is, it was expected to be representational and mimetic.

Many dramatists attempted to break away from the Aristotelian dramatic mould. For instance, German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht (1898 - 1956) introduced new poetics known as "epic" theatre. According to Peter Szondi, the epic "designates a common structural characteristic of the epos, the story, the novel, and other genres" (6). Narrative qualities, such as storytelling, were not commonly associated with the theatre genre. However, Brecht intended the "epicization" of theatre in order to achieve the alienating effect of *Verfremdungsrffekt* and raise the awareness of the audience. Brecht's effect was "an anti-theatricalism that allowed him to find in the theatre's destruction the material for his own epic theatre" (Ackerman and Puchner 7). That is why Brecht's approach is considered by some critics as anti-theatricalism.

During the 1960s and 1970s there emerged a "rejection of textual sovereignty, of authorial or directorial authority, in favor of the free-play of performance..." (Reinelt 202). Many plays of the period came to be described as postdramatic. Postdramatic theatre is a designation that has been used, first by Lehmann in *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), to describe plays that manifest ample performative qualities. Most of these plays were associated with the postmodernist era, but the term postdramatic has been preferred to postmodernist in conjunction with theatre because combining the postmodern with drama is considered superficial (Jüres-Munby14). To add, "narrative fragmentation, heterogeneity of style, hypernaturalist, grotesque and neo-expressionist elements [...] are all typical of postdramatic theatre, [...]" (Lehmann 24). Lehmann explains, "theatre existed first: arising from ritual, taking up the form of mimesis through dance, and developing into a full-fledged behaviour and practice before the advent of writing" (46). He adds that performance has existed before the text. "Theatre without drama does exist" (Lehmann 30). Therefore, the dominance of the dramatic text can be challenged and a theatrical performance can exist without it. In addition, Jerzy Grotowski (1933 – 1999), the Polish director, in *Towards a Poor Theatre* claims that theatre can exist without costumes, set, lighting, music, or dramatic text, but not without an audience (32).

That is, by means of an analysis informed by genre studies, many of Gertrude Stein's plays can be considered avant-garde in doing away with theatrical conventions; plays such as *What Happened*, *Capital Capitals* and *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights* can be considered as experimentation on the theatrical genre, to exhibit many postdramatic qualities, and thus be defined as modernist anti-theatricalism. Analyzing Stein's anti-plays sheds light on some aspects of what the genre of theatre is and provides the means of exploring how her plays are innovative and better interpreted as postdramatic performances that include aspects of music and multimedia.

Anti-theatricalism

Anti-theatre in this research is used to refer not to an abhorrence or critique of the theatre (as first used by Jonas Barish) but to the avant-garde theatre that shuns away most traditional aspects of theatre, especially *mimesis*, or imitation. Ackerman and Puchner, in *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage*, assume that “anti-theatricalism always emerges in response to a specific theatre, and, by extension, that the modernist form of anti-theatricalism attacks not the theatre itself but the value of theatricality as it arose in theoretical and practical terms throughout the nineteenth century” (2). Many of what can be considered anti-theatre rejected “aspects of traditional theatre practice that emphasized plot, character, and referentiality: in short, Aristotelian principles of construction and Platonic notions of *mimesis*” (Reinelt 202). In another article titled “Dramatism”, Puchner explains, “Many modern plays were written, in one way or another, *against* theater, against the theater’s reliance on human actors and other material forms of *mimesis*” (127).

Theatricality or theatricalism is not the exact opposite of anti-theatricalism. That is, “For some theatricality [or theatricalism] is a liberating or subversive force that challenges the illusion of transparent or unmediated representation, effectively unveiling all representation as theatrical” (“Theatricality and Performance” n.pag.). So, theatricality, despite its elusiveness, can mean being self-conscious of the theatrical artifice, or drawing attention to theatre aspects. “The first thing to make clear is that theatricality is not necessarily the antonym of what Jonas Barish calls ‘anti-theatricalism,’ even though they have an obvious etymological relation and, more importantly, a definite historical bearing on each other” (Postlewait and Davis 4).

Theatre and anti-theatre can exist side by side. According to Herbert Blau, in several plays “theatre and anti-theatre merged in the vicissitudes of critique” as in the plays of Strindberg, Pirandello and Gertrude Stein, whose “bewildering plays that, with elisions or traces of character, were really anti-plays” (54). He concludes that this “appears to confirm again that the theater is inseparable from some instinct of anti-theater” (59). So, anti-theatricality can exist in the theatre, as in the plays of Gertrude Stein.

Anti-plays usually reject many of the conventional elements of what makes a play. Drama has been commonly defined in Merriam-Webster as “a composition ... in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance” (n.pag.). Such definition entails many elements that have become traditionally regarded as essential elements of drama and theatrical performance. These elements include the plot, action, character, conflict and dialogue, while many of them have been removed from certain plays that can be referred to as anti-plays.

In this research, informed by genre studies, some short plays of the American expatriate writer, Gertrude Stein, are examined as anti-plays. The material of the study will consist of her plays: *What Happened*, *Capital Capitals* and *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights*. They can be considered “against” theatre or in “critique” of theatre, but they were many more, avant-garde exercises and experimentations that were pushing the boundaries of what theatre is. These anti-plays, written during the modernist times, rejected theatricality and heralded the passage to postdramatic theatre.

Gertrude Stein's Anti-plays

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) was a modernist American expatriate author. She was an icon of existentialism and one of the pioneers of modernism by using the phrase “Lost Generation” to refer to the existential dilemma of the modernists after WWI. Stein is known for her experimentations, especially in novels such as *Three Lives*. She forged a new style of writing of repetitive sentences that attempted to recreate the same effect as brush strokes in painting. Her work also benefited from Dadaism and surrealism and went even beyond the Theatre of the Absurd to incorporate artistic concepts into her writings. Stein was particularly influenced by the visual arts and Cubism, mainly the works of Picasso and Cezanne. Paul Cezanne was a post-impressionist who resisted the impressionist naturalistic use of light and color. He preferred geometrical forms and distortion for effect. Cubists, such as Picasso, gave preference to breaking of objects and reassembling them in abstract ways and presenting the object from multiple perspectives. The influence of Cubism was in looking at time and space in a new way and disregarding the differences between past, present and future.

Stein's fascination with the arts led her to experiment with writing at the level of sentences and words, which resulted in her rhythmic, repetitive prose. She sometimes broke down sentences to words that bordered on the level of incoherence. Stein subverted linguistic rules and “so she patterned sensation into composition with each letter, syllable, and word, each space and line” (Dydo 2). She was trying to take “language apart” (Dydo 9). Concerning Gertrude Stein's experimentation in her plays, she rejected traditional narrative expectations from a play. She used wordplay, repetitions, rhymed language, and alliteration. Some of her plays focused on temporal and spatial relationships. In rejecting the conventional dramatic curve (rising action, climax, falling action), Stein's plays were perhaps not “dramatic” theatre and could be categorized as “anti-plays”. In what follows, three of her short plays, *What Happened*, *Capital Capitals* and *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights*, will be analyzed in detail to examine how they subvert the dramatic genre.

Gertrude Stein's unique literary style has made her one of the famous modernist writers. However, many critics did not favor her work. For instance, Reid calls her work “unreadable” (93), while the feminist critic Elaine Showalter, in *A Jury of Her Peers*, describes Stein's work as “unreadable, incomprehensible, self-indulgent and excruciatingly boring.” However, Gertrude Stein was quite innovative at her time in the way she envisioned what theatre should be. She wrote 77 plays. Of her experimentation, she said, “I concluded that anything that was not a story could be a play and I even made plays in letters and advertisements” (Stein, “Plays”, *Lectures in America* n.pag.). Some critics (Ryan for example) divide Stein's dramatic *oeuvre* into categories: plays as essence of what happened, plays as landscape, and plays as narrative. That is why this research prefers to focus on plays representing each of these three categories: *What Happened*, *Capital Capitals* and *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights*, respectively. Ryan also referred to Stein's plays as “theatre of the absolute”, which eschews the dramatic curve of rising action, climax and falling action. Her plays wanted the spectator to explore what it truly meant to remain in the present. By doing away with many dramatic conventions, Stein's theatrical pieces focused on the present moment of performance. For Stein, theatre is more of sight and sound rather than story (Stein, “Plays”, *Lectures in America* n.pag.).

Gertrude Stein is known for the concept of “prolonged present”, or “continuous present”. She based her experimentations in theatre on her experience in attending a theatrical performance. She felt the inauthenticity in a theatrical performance when dealing with time,

that is, the past, present and future. In a lecture titled "Play", in *Lectures in America*, Stein criticizes that "out of synch" experience between what the audiences are feeling and what is happening on stage. She says, "The thing that is fundamental about plays is that the scene as depicted on the stage is more often than not one might say it is almost always in syncopated time in relation to the emotion of anybody in the audience." That is, "your emotion concerning that play is always either behind or ahead of the play" (n.pag.). There is always something to be told about the past or to expect from the future. So, the audiences are not living in the present. Stein wanted the spectator to live in the present time.

Stein tried to achieve staying in the present in the first play titled *What Happened, A Play* (1913). The play was published in *Geography and Plays*, and Stein wrote that the aim "was to express this [staying in the present] without telling what happened, in short to make a play the essence of what happened. I tried to do this with the first series of plays that I wrote" (Stein, "Plays", *Lectures in America* n.pag.). As has been noticed, she felt that she had to state in the title that it is a play because it was unlike other plays, and it defied genre expectations of drama. This play can be categorized, according to Ryan, as "Essence Theatre" as it explores the essence of relationships. Stein wanted to show, not tell. She wanted the audience to experience the moment not hear about it from the characters. She did not want to tell a story, but she included narrative parts in some of her plays, as is common in Brecht's epic theatre, both achieving the effect of alienating the audience, or achieving the *Verfremdungseffekt*, to use Brecht's term.

Stein's *What Happened* is an anti-play because it is not what one typically expects from a play; the play does away with many theatre conventions and is, in this, similar to how Reinelt describes anti-theatre. First of all, it is described as a five-act play although it is laid out on four pages only. So, despite using the conventional Aristotelian five-act structure, she seems to subvert this division by not really presenting an act in a conventional way. There are no stage descriptions or stage directions. There are no clear characters, only numbers. These numbers could stand for a character or the number of characters speaking at a time. This sounds more plausible because at one time is not just "(Three)" but "(The same three)". Stein was impressed by the Opera, which to her was more instantaneous than conventional theatre; so these grouping of characters are quite operatic in structure. Stein could not do away with characters or people all together, but she presented them in an innovative way.

The speakers in Stein's anti-play do not seem to be engaging in dialogue. Stein thus wanted to do away with the dialogue as well. It was common in modernist plays, such as Pinter's plays, to show characters that are speaking at each other rather than to each other in an attempt to portray the modernist sense of lack of communication. Stein seems to be doing the same thing in her play, there are just groups of speakers, with something happening, or the play as the "essence" of what happened. Here's Act Two in its entirety:

ACT TWO

(Three.)

Four and nobody wounded, five and nobody flourishing, six and nobody talkative, eight and nobody sensible.

One and a left hand lift that is so heavy that there is no way of pronouncing perfectly.

A point of accuracy, a point of a strange stove, a point that is so sober that the reason left is all the chance of swelling.

(The same three.)

A wide oak a wide enough oak, a very wide cake, a lightning cooky, a single wide open and exchanged box filled with the same little sac that shines.

The best the only better and more left footed stranger.

The very kindness there is in all lemons oranges apples pears and potatoes.

(The same three.)

A same frame a sadder portal, a singular gate and a bracketed mischance.

A rich market where there is no memory of more moon than there is everywhere and yet where strangely there is apparel and a whole set.

A connection, a clam cup connection, a survey, a ticket and a return to laying over. (Stein, *What Happened* n.pag.)

As seen, Stein's prose is unique in its attempt to evade definition. The effect was to grasp the sights and sounds that keep the listener/spectator in the continuous present. Stein uses words as building blocks or as brush strokes that create perception rather than understanding. She attempts to create images in the mind with certain words: wounded, flourishing, talkative, sensible. There is also the image of the oak, the cake, and the market. Thus, Stein's language is similar to a cubist painting, the parts are taken apart and reassembled in new ways. It is as if someone went around a dinner party and picked up bits and pieces of conversation.

Language for Stein becomes important by itself, not as a vehicle to transmit a story or emotion. Language becomes displayed. In her theatre texts "we have the example of a language that loses its immanent teleological temporality and orientation towards meaning and becomes like an *exhibited object*" (Lehmann 147; his italics). Stein's innovative language depends on the "technique of repeating variations, through the uncoupling of immediately obvious semantic connections, and through the privileging of formal arrangements according to syntactic or musical principles (similarities in sound, alliterations, or rhythmic analogies)" (Lehmann 147). That is, for Stein, language becomes like an opera or musical score, depending on repetitions with variations; just like the strokes of a painting brush. That is, Stein's plays try to draw our attention to language rather than to story or plot.

Stein tried to avoid having a plot or story in this play/anti-play. When one reads it, every time one tries to make sense or build a story, she subverts that as if she is shaking the spectator to live in the instantaneous present and not to drift back or ahead. In her own words, she wanted to "express this without telling what happened, in short to make a play the essence of what happened" (Stein, "Plays", *Lectures in America* n.pag.). She explains that she had come back from a dinner party, realizing that something is always happening, and people are having many stories. "Everybody knows so many stories and what is the use of telling another story. What is the use of telling a story since there are so many and everybody knows so many and tells so many" (Stein, "Plays", *Lectures in America* n.pag.). This means that

Stein realized the insignificance of telling a story, and this inspired her to deemphasize plots in her plays.

Stein stressed rather the visual aspect of the theatrical experience, and this is something that is not unlike postdramatic theatre. She focused on sights. She ended the play in Act Five comparing a doorway with a photograph. "What is a photograph a photograph is a sight and a sight is always a sight of something". So, Stein tried to capture the essence of the experience rather than tell it. She attempted to do that with a prose that is almost incomprehensible but is, in fact, used to create a perception of sights of something that happened. Her experimentation with sights led her to consider the significance of landscape as a vehicle for staying in the continuous present.

In the 1920s Stein experimented with drama as a landscape, such as in *Objects Lie on a Table* (1922), *A List* (1923), and *Capital Capitals* (1923), along with other plays. She was inspired by summers she spent in a place with landscape to write down the play as landscape (Stein, "Plays", *Lectures in America* n.pag.). She explains the relationship between a play and a landscape:

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. You may have to make acquaintance with it, but it does not with you, it is there and so the play being written the relation between you at any time is so exactly that it is of no importance unless you look at it. Well I did look at it and the result is in all the plays that I have printed as Operas and Plays (Stein, "Plays", *Lectures in America* n.pag.).

When Stein compares a play to a landscape, it is with the intention of turning theatre into a prolonged or continuous present. There is no need to tell a story. The landscape is a sight that one sees and does not need telling about; it just exists in the present moment.

Stein's landscape plays present new ways of looking at time and space. With the removal of focus on character, time and space are affected. Elinor Fuchs finds that in Gertrude Stein's use of landscape, "time is emptied into space. This spatial stage is almost a necessary consequence of the waning of interest in character moving through narrative" (12). Stein continues the comparison between the theatre experience and landscape,

The landscape has its formation and as after all a play has to have formation and be in relation one thing to the other thing and as the story is not the thing as any one is always telling something then the landscape not moving but being always in relation, the trees to the hills the hills to the fields the trees to each other any piece of it to any sky and then any detail to any other detail, the story is only of importance if you like to tell or like to hear a story but the relation is there anyway. And of that relation I wanted to make a play and I did, a great number of plays (Stein, "Plays", *Lectures in America* n.pag.).

That is, Stein defends a static, not a dynamic, play, devoid of action and does not move ahead in time, and she undermines the importance of a story or a plot in a play because, similar to a landscape, in the play things should just exist in relation to one another. That is, the focus becomes on the sights and the visual. Stein's landscape drama is "one in which conventional

modes of dramatic structure [... are] transformed into spectacle driven works [...]" (Vinitiski 1).

In *Capital Capitals*, published in *Operas and Plays* in 1932, Stein applies the same concept of a play as landscape, exhibiting a relationship between things. This play should be considered an anti-play as it is not divided into acts. There does not seem to be conventional characters; only spoken sentences, assigned to First Capital, Second Capital, Third Capital and Fourth Capital. What is evident is the focus on the language, the word play and the created rhythms. That is why the play was published under *Operas and Plays*. Stein had enjoyed her experience in the opera, she did not see it as artificial, and she seemed to be attempting to recreate the operatic experience in the theatre. The polyphony of voices created by Stein's particular language composition brings back her focus on both sound and sight. American composer Virgil Thomson managed to interpret some of Stein's works as operas. *Capital Capitals* was presented by the Liminal Group to Thomson's musical composition and directed by John Sydney Berenzden in 2012. So, Thomson treated Stein's playtext as a libretto or a text for an opera. The play gained new insights with this type of presentation, especially because of the integration of music and multimedia.

Photo 1: Screen shot of Stein's *Capital Capitals*, the Liminal Group, directed by Berenzden – music and multimedia



The opening of the play sets the tone for it. We notice the rhythms and the wordplay about the different meanings of capital: important, capital letters, city and money. Here is the opening of the play:

Capitally be.

Capitally see.

It would appear that capital is adapted to this and that. Capitals are capitals here.

Capital very good.

Capital Place where those go when they go.

Capital. He has capital. (Stein, *Capital Capitals* n. pag.)

In the Berenzden/Thomson production, these lines are spoken by the Third Capital. However, in Stein's text, they are not assigned to any character. I think these lines were meant as a prelude, like an introductory musical piece to her operetta. She attempted to interpret the music as a text. Now once this was put on stage, the text needed someone to speak it. I assume it may have been better to assign it to a narrator or a chorus, or make the four characters say it together.

This play/anti-play still does not provide any exposition, or action, or development in time. Stein was innovative in her use of time and place. She did not abide by Aristotle's concept of the three unities of time, place and action. The space in her playlet is usually undefined and ambivalent. She tried to make time move through the space or the landscape. The attempted effect is to keep situating the spectator in the present moment. In the Berenzden/Thomson production, there are media projections behind the characters, with places and images; just like when the characters mention a certain city or mention horses. These images act as the free association of the mind, but there is no link between them; this is intended in order to keep the spectator always in the present.

Photo 2: Screen shot of Stein's *Capital Capitals*, the Liminal Group, directed by Berenzden – projections



After the beginning part, or overture, there seems to be spoken parts by the Capitals: First, Second, Third and Fourth. Here's a piece of a dialogue:

Fourth Capital.

They said that they were safely there.

Third Capital. Safer there than anywhere.

Second Capital. They came there safely.

First Capital. They were said to be safely here and there.

(Stein, *Capital Capitals* n. pag.)

In this play/anti-play, the speaking characters are still not engaged in a dialogue as in her other plays. However, these lines seem to be variations on one theme, just as in music. As seen in the previous lines, each Capital is saying a line about safety but in a different way and in a different length and rhythm.

Stein also experiments with her fascination with language itself as an exhibit. The play's opening continues:

We have often been interested in the use of the word capital. A state has a capital a country has a capital. An island has a capital. A main land has a capital. And a portion of France has four capitals and each one of them is necessarily on a river or on a mountain. We were mistaken about one of them.

(Stein, *Capital Capitals* n. pag.)

Stein is thus playing on the different meanings and usages of the word "capital". Her prose achieves an effect that is opposite of what the "stream of consciousness" used to achieve; of letting the mind wander into past and future, along with the present. Here the language is emptied of any context and thus the spectator cannot help but remain in the present.

Language as a game or word play is also in Stein's space of experimentation. In one of the lines, it is said: "The climate of capital four is the climate which is not so strange but that we can be acclimated to it. We can be acclimated to the climate of the fourth capital" (Stein, *Capital Capitals* n.pag.). Again, the playwright here is trying to shift the focus of the reader/spectator from the obsession with comprehending the text to focus on the rhythms and musicality created by language letters and syllables. In another example, the four speakers juggle some of the confusing words or homophones, as in the following example:

Fourth Capital. Except me.

Third Capital. Accept me.

Second Capital. Expect me.

First Capital. Except me.

(Stein, *Capital Capitals* n. pag.)

Stein is thus trying to show how words in language can be very similar, but with slight variations. Homophones are words that sound the same but mean something different. So, with a slight variation in letters, different words are created. So, similar to a descending musical scale, Stein makes the speaking characters experiment with the use of similar words that change with slight variations. This was the pattern she tried in her unique use of language and here she is using it at the level of words. The characters that are in the play are the same: they are variations on the same theme.

Stein's narrative plays have been more popular. These plays have some story but are still in the present and with no action. This type is the closest to conventional theater because of the use of acts, stage directions, plot and character; however, there is no conventional

development of characters and unraveling of plot. *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938) is divided into three acts. It has characters and stage directions. For example, the stage directions at the beginning read as follows: "Faust standing at the door of his room, with his arms up at the door lintel out, behind him a blaze of electric light" (Stein, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* 400). Also, there are clear characters such as Mephisto and Doctor Faustus, and they are also assigned lines to speak.

In this play, characters engage in a dialogue and respond to one another. For instance, at the beginning there is the following exchange between Mephisto and Doctor Faustus:

Faustus growls out. _ The devil what the devil what do I care if the devil is there.

Mephisto says. But Doctor Faustus dear yes I am here.

Doctor Faustus. What do I care there is no here nor there.

(Stein, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* 400)

Right from the opening of the play, the playwright is questioning the concepts of time and space when the main character says there is no here or there. So, Stein has not dropped her fascination with the continuous present or the experimentation with having the past, present and future cease to exist in a theatrical performance.

Stein seems to have decided to solve the problem of temporality on stage by making Doctor Faustus reveal the story right from the beginning. He says, "if I had not been in a hurry and if I had taken my time I would have known how to make white electric light and day-light and night light and what did I do I saw you miserable devil I saw you and I was deceived" (Stein, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* 400). As can be seen, we know he invented electric lights, sold his soul to the devil, and feels deceived. The play is still situated in the present because he already tells the audience that he sells his soul at the beginning of the play. In addition to full exposition from the beginning, the play seems to solve the difficulty of moving between past, present and future by having three versions of the main character, perhaps representing these different existences in time.

There are three versions/personalities of the main character: Faust, Faustus and Doctor Faustus. This schism in personality appears in other characters too. For example, the female character is also split as Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel (who seem like a double). She resembles the Biblical character of Eve. She was stung by a viper and Eve was deceived by a serpent.

Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* includes some Brechtian or epic qualities, such as the chorus and the song of Doctor Faustus. It can be considered postdramatic, and it also includes other forms of art such as ballet. So, similar to other of her plays, Stein seems to be influenced by the style of the opera in this play too.

Stein's Faustus feels compelled to fulfill his destiny and go to hell. Mephisto tells him to commit a sin in order to go to hell, but how can he commit a sin when he is without a soul, says Faustus. He decides he, or the viper, can kill the boy and dog in order to go to hell. Mephisto also turns Faustus from an old man into a young man in order to take with him to hell Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel who refuses to be deceived and falls into the arms of the man from over the seas. Mephisto feels deceived, and the play ends on a song.

Stein's Anti-plays and the Postdramatic

Stein's anti-plays transcended genre conventions to lend themselves better to interpretation in our present-day multi-media postdramatic theatre. They can be considered paving the path for postdramatic works. Despite being a modernist writer, Stein's plays have streaks of postmodernism. As regards to theatre, many critics prefer not to use the term "postmodern" in relation to theatre and think it is inflationary or superficial to use the term "postmodern theatre" or "postmodern drama" (Jüres-Munby 14). In consequence, the term postdramatic is preferred in association with theatre. Stein's plays can thus be considered a precursor to postdramatic theatre. Stein wrote a few short plays that manifest many of the postdramatic elements, such as narrative fragmentation, focusing on the visual, etc. That is why her plays find better interpretations by the use of other media such as music, painting and visual projections. Her anti-plays can thus be considered as marking the transition to the postdramatic style.

Postdramatic theatre, according to Lehmann, is associated with: heterogeneity; non-textuality; multiple codes; subversion; considering text to be authoritarian and archaic; and being anti-mimetic (Lehmann 25). This type of theatre is de-centering or de-emphasizing the text; it was "the theatre of deconstruction, multimedia theatre, restoratively traditionalist theatre, theatre of gestures and movement" (Lehmann 25). The performance in this type of theatre "becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information" (Lehmann 85). Karen Jüres-Munby maintains that the "turn to performance is thus at the same time always a turn towards the audience, as well" (5). Postdramatic theatre "explores theatre's relationship to the changing media constellation in the twentieth century, in particular the historical shift of a textual culture into a 'mediatized' image and sound culture" (Jüres-Munby1). In addition, there is "the aesthetic borderline that much contemporary performance art and postdramatic theatre has explored: the move from representation to presentation, [...]" (Balme 84). The postdramatic is, thus, shifting from the representation of Aristotelian theatre to presentation instead.

Stein's avant-garde plays remove the centrality of text and invite the directors to think in terms of performance. Starting with the early 20th century, performances allowed for the experimentation with the visual arts. "Stein generated a theatre paradigm which subverted the literary for the visual" (Vinitzki 2). Her anti-theatrical style was innovative and may have invited the use of other media.

Stein's plays were perhaps not popular with directors during her lifetime, unlike what some critics claim that her plays are closet drama that should only be read. However, she thought her plays needed to be performed. Stein's open texts needed innovative directors. In the second half of the twentieth century, and with the rise of interest in the visual, performance-driven postdramatic theatre, Stein's plays were gaining new interpretations. Her plays have been rediscovered by both media and theatre directors. For instance, in the 1950s and 60s Lawrence Kornfield directed a good number of her plays. In 1989 Jaap Drupsteen used computer effect and produced for TV her plays: *In a Garden*, *Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters*, *Look and Long*. American director Robert Wilson staged *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* in 1992 and *Four Saints in Three Acts* in 1996 in Germany. In 1993 Francesco Gagliardi presented *Photograph* in Teatro San Filippo in Torino. Stein's influence is also acknowledged in Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysterical Theater and Judith Malina and Julian Beck's Living Theatre. In the 1990s and throughout the 21st century, The Wooster

Group, an American experimental theater company, also presented *House/Lights* which was directed by Elizabeth LeCompte and which depended on Stein's *Doctor Faustus* and Mawra's film. Elizabeth Lennard staged readings in Paris for *Objects Lie on a Table* and *Counting Her Dresses*. In the 21st century, Heiner Goebbels drew on some of Stein's texts in his stage productions. In 2000 *Doctor Faustus* was directed by Edward Kemp. Virgil Thomson turned *Four Saints in Three Acts* into an opera in 2011. In 2012 *Capital Capitals* was also directed by John Berenzden to the musical score of Virgil Thomson. Another interpretation of Stein's *Saints* was by Alexis Soloski in 2014.

Conclusion

American writer Gertrude Stein was inventive in so many ways. Her plays, such as *What Happened*, *Capital Capitals* and *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights* in particular, subverted genre expectations and many of the traditional elements of conventional theatre such as plot, character, action, etc. These plays could be considered anti-plays for deconstructing what theatre has been. Stein's fascination with cubism helped her recreate a new type of theatre that meant to be authentic and real by trying to keep the spectator's consciousness immersed in the present moment. Stein's anti-theatrical style invoked not only some epic or narrative qualities as Brechtian theatre (in order to alienate the audiences) but also many postdramatic qualities (pertaining to the visual and mediatized theatre). Her plays were not only iconoclast but also ahead of their time; heralding the emerging type of postdramatic theatre. Stein's anti-plays were postdramatic in the mixing of genres, using visual media, along with music and the non-representational modes of painting of the Cubists. Her anti-plays transcended the common conventions of dramatic art not only by breaking away with the Aristotelian unities and focusing on plot, or even by re-inventing the concept of character, but also by re-envisioning time and space.

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