

# “A FEELING OF *IF* ”: THE EXPERIENCE OF GRAMMAR IN JAMES, STEIN, AND WHITEHEAD

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In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein challenges William James's assertion that words like "if," "and," and "by" correspond to felt experiences. This controversy gets at the heart of debates over literary modernism, which is often aligned either with James's endeavor to represent the stream of experience or with Wittgenstein's articulation of its limits. I argue, however, that both Gertrude Stein and Alfred North Whitehead pursue the project of James's radical empiricism in ways that complicate distinctions between experience and structures, like logic and grammar, thought to lie outside of it. In the writings of Stein and Whitehead, "feeling[s] of if" are occasions that demand a more expansive conception of experience.



It has been remarked that Ludwig Wittgenstein seems to have written his *Philosophical Investigations* with a copy of William James's *The Principles of Psychology* open on his desk.<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein's numerous references to James, both implicit and explicit, reveal the considerable influence of the American psychologist and philosopher on Wittgenstein's thought, as both a spur to criticism *and* a positive source for some of Wittgenstein's most important ways of thinking, as Russell Goodman demonstrates in his illuminating book on the two thinkers. One particular point of contest between them opens onto a key debate in literary studies. If Wittgenstein's side of the contest represents one possibility for twentieth-century literature, I will argue, Alfred North Whitehead and Gertrude Stein take up James's example in ways that suggest another.

Wittgenstein's most pointed disagreement with James arises over a famous passage from Chapter IX of *Principles*, "The Stream of Thought." "There is not a conjunction or a preposition," writes James,

and hardly an adverbial phrase, syntactic form, or inflection of voice, in human speech, that does not express some shading or other of relation which we at some moment actually feel to exist between the larger objects of our thought.... We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*. Yet we do not: so inveterate has our habit become of recognizing the existence of the substantive parts alone, that language almost refuses to lend itself to any other use.<sup>2</sup>

In Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*, the fragment on the "Philosophy of Psychology," Wittgenstein interrogates James's "feeling of *if*." He doesn't mention James by name but seems to enter into conversation with him directly as he shifts from the first

person "we" and "I" in which the foregoing paragraphs are phrased to the second-person singular "you":

39. Are you sure that there is a single if-feeling, and not perhaps several? Have you tried saying the word in a great variety of contexts? For example, when it bears the principle sense of the sentence, and when the following word does.

40. Suppose we found a man who, speaking of how words felt to him, told us that "if" and "but" felt the *same*. – May we not believe him? "He doesn't play our game at all," one would like to say. Or even: "This is a different type of human being...."

41. One misjudges the psychological interest of the if-feeling if one regards it as the obvious correlate of a meaning; it needs, rather, to be seen in a different context, in that of the special circumstances in which it occurs.<sup>3</sup>

Wittgenstein may have taken James's assertion a bit too literally. James does not, I suspect, mean that there is "a single if-feeling," but that there are as many "feeling[s] of *if*" as there are hypothetical or conditional situations that might arise in the stream of thought. Even so, Wittgenstein's line of questioning leads him to a compelling contradiction of James's claim that the word "if" corresponds to a felt experience: "43. The if-feeling is not a feeling which accompanies the word 'if.'"<sup>4</sup>

Goodman writes of how frustrating James's error, as Wittgenstein saw it, must have been for Wittgenstein. For some of the most exciting moments in *Principles* are those in which James identifies and refutes precisely this type of error. James's method of scrupulous introspection often leads him to discover no experience, or a shifting myriad of experiences, where language gives us a static (or hypostatic) noun. Goodman writes, "[t]he lesson that one can recognize one's desk without an act of recognition, that one can rise up without an act of will, and that one can speak without a separate

layer of thought backing up one's words are the sort of positive lessons Wittgenstein was able to draw from James as he began reading *Principles* in the early 1930s."<sup>5</sup> The most spectacular example of this maneuver occurs not in *Principles* but in the essay "Does Consciousness Exist?" in which James scours his experience for an entity corresponding to the word "consciousness" and comes up empty-handed. From Wittgenstein's perspective, the problem revealed by James's attachment to the feelings of *if*, *but*, and *by* is the problem of empiricism: as Goodman puts it, "[w]ith his general empiricism and his incipient radical empiricism, there is nothing in James's universe *other than experience*" for anything to be.<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein's investigations, in contrast, draw attention to things that we *don't* experience — things that belong, instead, to the logic of grammar.

Wittgenstein's divergence from James on the matter of *if* adumbrates the broader movement in twentieth-century philosophy known as the linguistic turn. But it also points to an ongoing question in the understanding of literary modernism (and, consequently, of the postmodernism that follows it). Is the primary impulse of modernism "to record or transcribe the movements & make-up of one's consciousness" — what Charles Bernstein calls "[t]he modernist assumption"?<sup>7</sup> Or is modernism essentially critical of the impulse to represent experience, and concerned instead with the ways in which words either stop short of representation — existing as objects in their own right — or reach beyond it, articulating rational structures that transcend the particulars of "the stream of thought"? Clearly, the answer depends on which works and writers one takes to be central to modernism, not to mention which literary genres and forms of art, and any attempt at an answer must begin from the understanding that the works we describe as modernist follow not one pattern but many. Nonetheless, the question continues to generate conflicting accounts of the modernist field — and, in the case of Stein, of a single body of work. James, of course, seems to come down squarely on the side of experience. I want to suggest, however, that the writings of two of James's most penetrating and creative interpreters, Stein and Whitehead, develop

a central impulse of his thought in ways that trouble the distinction that Wittgenstein draws — and subsequent critics reinforce — between experience and grammar. In the same way that James’s introspective investigations led him to revise the atomistic conception of experience that experimental psychology had inherited from empiricist philosophy, in the writings of Stein and Whitehead, “feeling[s] of *if*” arise within the field of experience and demand a more flexible, expansive conception of that field. One consequence of the “methodological postulate” of James’s radical empiricism, that “[e]verything real must be experienceable somewhere and every kind of thing experienced must somewhere be real,” is that experience ceases to look like the purely private realm of sensations and emotions — the realm that the modernist “stream of consciousness,” for example, is often understood to describe — and appears, instead, as the complex fabric of the actual, from which individual subjects are only one type of event to emerge.<sup>8</sup> By tracing the course of “a feeling of *if*” through Stein and Whitehead, I hope to contribute to a sense of James as not simply allied with subjectivist tendencies in literary modernism, but engaged in a profound reorganization of the concept of experience that informs our understanding of twentieth-century texts.

#### **STEIN BETWEEN GRAMMAR AND EXPERIENCE**

Stein’s sense of grammar has been alternately aligned with James’s and with Wittgenstein’s. Like James, with whom she studied at Radcliffe in the 1890s, Stein is a champion of prepositions, articles, and conjunctions, the parts of speech that pass beneath notice but are “varied and alive” — that “work and as they work they live,” as she writes in “Poetry and Grammar.”<sup>9</sup> For many scholars, this resemblance is more than superficial: Stein’s writing, as they understand it, carries on James’s project of describing the intricate workings of experience. Lyn Hejinian quotes the characterization of her writing that Stein, in the voice of Alice, offers in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*: “Gertrude Stein, in her work, has always been possessed by the intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality.”<sup>10</sup> From this perspective,

Stein's radically unconventional writing is a response to the challenge implicit in James's lines, quoted above: if "language almost refuses to lend itself" to experience as it actually occurs, then writing experience requires breaking the "inveterate... habit[s]" of language. This is what Hejinian means when she contends, *contra* nineteenth-century realists like Emile Zola, that realism *does* require a "special way of writing";<sup>11</sup> John Ashbery makes a similar point when he compares *Stanzas in Meditation* to the late novels of Henry James (themselves often discussed in relation to the psychological theories of Henry's brother): "If these works are highly complex and, for some, unreadable, it is not only because of the complicatedness of life, the subject, but also because they actually imitate its rhythm, its way of happening."<sup>12</sup> To designate Stein a realist in this sense is not to propose that she held a naïve view of language's referential capacity: as Hejinian explains, "Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, it is the autonomy of the writing — the high visibility of its devices and even its intrusive strangeness — that authenticates the accuracy of its portrayals and gives the work itself its authority."<sup>13</sup> It is, however, to emphasize the mimetic function of her modes of composition. In addition to the general Jamesian project of analyzing and describing experience, scholars frequently relate Stein's work to James's particular theories. Her employment of repetition with difference, for example, seems an extension of his claim, in "The Stream of Thought," that "*no state*" of the mind or body "*once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before.*"<sup>14</sup> (Indeed, Stein herself explains her use of repetition with reference to "what William James calls 'the Will to Live.'"<sup>15</sup>) Recently, both Lisi Schoenbach and Liesl Olson have connected Stein's modernism to James's conception of habit. And Wendy Steiner and Steven Meyer each advance versions of the argument that after her early opus *The Making of Americans*, Stein developed a style of writing intended to impart what James calls "knowledge of acquaintance," in contradistinction to the more abstract mode of "knowledge about."<sup>16</sup>

If many Stein scholars emphasize her Jamesian realism, however, other interpreters see her work, and modernism itself, in a

different light. Marjorie Perloff, one of Stein's most ardent and prolific explicators over the past several decades, casts Stein as a key progenitor of an avant-garde strain of modernism that has more in common with Wittgenstein's thought than with James's. Just as Wittgenstein denies that the word "if" names an event in the stream of thought that exists prior to its naming, the hallmark of the modernist aesthetic that Perloff champions is the "conviction that the poet begins, not with ideas to be embodied in words, but with the words themselves."<sup>17</sup> In books like *Wittgenstein's Ladder* and *21<sup>st</sup>-Century Modernism: the "New" Poetics*, Perloff presents a Stein whose experiments with language are emphatically *not* intended to represent experience, but to highlight the materiality of language. Jennifer Ashton, in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: American Poetry and Theory in the Twentieth Century*, disagrees with this portrayal of Stein as a "literalist," but her own reading also echoes Wittgenstein's challenge to James's empiricism.<sup>18</sup> Stein, Ashton argues, was not content with experience as an ultimate or sufficient category — and certainly not experience as James conceived it, as a continuously flowing stream of psychic states. In "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans," for example, Stein describes encountering the limitations of writing in the mode of James's "knowledge of acquaintance": "When I was up against the difficulty of putting down the complete conception that I had gradually acquired by listening seeing feeling and experience, I was faced by the trouble that I had acquired all this knowledge gradually but when I had it I had it completely at one time."<sup>19</sup> Ashton relates Stein's need for a language capable of expressing abstract wholes to mathematics — a structure that, like Wittgenstein's grammar, is not part of experience but prescribes "the logical conditions of its possibility."<sup>20</sup> The major transition in Stein's style, in Ashton's assessment, is "a movement from ... a phenomenological model of composition to a logical one."<sup>21</sup>

The divergence between James and Wittgenstein on the subject of *if* appears to be absolute. Either *if* belongs to experience or it belongs to grammar: in neither Wittgenstein's writing nor James's do we see the possibility of a middle ground. Ashton, likewise,

presents logic and experience as mutually exclusive. When it comes to the *ifs*, *ands*, and *bys* of Stein's writing, however, one would be hard pressed to discern between the phenomenological and the logical. Take, for example, the word "if" in "If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso," which appears eighteen times in the first eight sentences:

If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him. Would he like it would Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it. If Napoleon if I told him if I told him if Napoleon. Would he like it if I told him if I told him if Napoleon...<sup>22</sup>

For me, there is no question that these lines produce a feeling of *if*. The repetition of "if" and "would" produces in my mind a sustained feeling of conjecture, in which the state of conjecturing feels very definite while the content of the conjecture remains vague. It is entirely possible to understand this feeling as one color in a palette of psychic tones in which Stein has painted Picasso's portrait, in combination with other shades that emerge as the portrait continues, like presentness and exactitude. Whether the word *if* can produce a feeling of *if*, however, is a different question from whether it represents one. Furthermore, the "if" in "Picasso" has to be understood as a sound-particle and perhaps even a visual particle, entering into compositional relations in the portrait that have nothing to do with its conventional signification *or* its grammatical function.

The *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* of *Stanzas in Meditation* remain more situated in their grammatical functioning. Unlike the *ifs* in the portrait of Picasso, these conjunctions and other "colorless connecting words," as Ashbery refers to them in his famous review of Stein's *Stanzas*,<sup>23</sup> do not lead double lives as elements in a sound-collage; rather, they enter into compositional relationships in the poem precisely on the basis of their grammatical function of establishing relationships between other language elements. As in the portrait of Picasso, the connections themselves are much more

precise than the matter they articulate. Both a logical and a phenomenological interpretation of this fact are available. The opening lines of Part Two, Stanza III feature the trailing wisps of narrative and the insistent presence of an unidentified "they" that characterize the poem as a whole:

They may lightly send it away to say  
 That they will not change it if they may  
 Nor indeed by the time that it is made  
 They may indeed not be careful that they were  
 thankful  
 That they should distinguish which and whenever  
 They were not unlikely to mean it more  
 Than enough not to decide that they would not  
 Or well indeed if it is not better  
 That they are not cautious if she is sleepy  
 And well prepared to be close to the fire  
 Where it is as if outside it did resemble  
 Or may be they will relinquish.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, it is possible to conjecture about the matter under discussion in this stanza: maybe the first part is about a book manuscript sent off to a publisher. The picture of a sleepy woman, or perhaps a girl, emerges quite distinctly at the end of this passage, but it is conditioned by an "if" which is itself more definite than the sleepy figure, whose sleepiness, after all, is only a possibility: "if she is sleepy." On one hand, the definiteness of the logical operators in this stanza might be seen to confirm Wittgenstein's suspicion about the "feeling of *if*": through the vague and discontinuous context, the *ors*, *nors*, and *ifs* march on, establishing the form of continuous sense that is just that — mere form. In this way, *Stanzas in Meditation* might be said not to imitate experience but to expose experience's conditions of possibility. On the other hand, this specious continuity might be understood as accurately mimetic of the Jamesian "stream of thought," which is composed as much of feelings of transition and relation as it is of more stable impressions

like blue or cold — and which, James points out, is as liable to unfold according to the form of a thought as it is to its content.<sup>25</sup>

Stein's poetry conveys the impression that experience and grammar are bound together in a way that makes it impossible to imagine excluding one from the operations of the other. And this impression is borne out by her statement from "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans," "I was faced by the trouble that I had acquired all this knowledge gradually but when I had it I had it completely at one time." To repeat, Ashton sees Stein's shift from "a phenomenological model of composition to a logical one" as a definitive turn away from "experience itself as the defining feature of knowledge."<sup>26</sup> If we look closely at Stein's statement, however, we see that she is not opposing knowledge gained through experience to an abstract knowledge that exists outside of experience, but noticing the experience of two different kinds of knowing: "when I had it I had it completely at one time."<sup>27</sup> The form of Stein's remark is highly reminiscent of James's methodology: through an act of introspection, she discovers a multiplicity of distinct psychic states which our psychological vocabulary — or in this case, her own compositional practice — had failed to distinguish or accommodate. In this case, what she discovers is a demand for a language of abstraction emanating from within experience itself.

#### **WHITEHEAD AND THE "IMAGINATIVE PERCEPTION OF EXPERIENCES"**

In explaining the interest that mathematics held for Stein, Ashton quotes from Whitehead's popular *Introduction to Mathematics*: "Mathematics as a science commenced when first someone, probably a Greek, proved propositions about *any* things or about *some* things, without specification of definite particular things."<sup>28</sup> It isn't hard to see the pertinence of this conception of mathematics to the writer who preferred pronouns to nouns because "[t]hey represent someone but they are not its or his name [and i]n not being his or its name they already have a greater possibility of being something than if they were as a noun is the name of anything."<sup>29</sup>

Both Stein and Whitehead here extol a way of speaking about the world that abstracts from particular experience. But by the time he writes *Process and Reality*, published in 1929, Whitehead is unequivocal about his philosophy's basis in a radical empiricism, expressed in what he calls the “reformed subjectivist principle”: “that apart from the experience of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness.”<sup>30</sup> What Goodman, writing about Wittgenstein, criticizes in James as a shortcoming — that he can imagine nothing other than experience for anything to be — Whitehead, the mathematician, claims for himself in the strongest terms. Before he was able to reconcile his respect for logic with his commitment to empiricism, however, the relation between them struck him as a troubling dilemma.

Gertrude and Alice were guests of the Whiteheads on the day when England entered World War I. Because the war prevented them from returning to Paris, their weekend visit turned into a sojourn of more than two months at the Whiteheads' country house in Lockeridge. During that time, according to *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, “Gertrude Stein and Doctor Whitehead walked endlessly around the country. They talked of philosophy and history”;<sup>31</sup> “The long summer wore on ... , and Doctor Whitehead and Gertrude Stein never ceased wandering around in it and talking about all things.”<sup>32</sup> I am not the first reader to be tantalized by these references in *The Autobiography*.<sup>33</sup> What would Stein and Whitehead have discussed as they rambled through the English countryside in August through October of 1914? The war itself, certainly; but judging from Alice's remarks in *The Autobiography*, Stein's interest in the particulars of current events would quickly have been exhausted. As a writer, Stein had left behind the prose style of *Three Lives* and *The Making of Americans* and been working for several years in the more abstract modes of the portraits and *Tender Buttons*, which had appeared in print that May. As for Whitehead, his philosophy was in a moment of transition. *Principia Mathematica* had been published, and while he continued to teach mathematics during the war, in his writing, he began to turn to philosophy and the natural sciences.<sup>34</sup> This work would culminate

in the publication of *The Concept of Nature* in 1920 and *Science and the Modern World* in 1925.

It is conceivable (although to imagine it is to engage in a speculative fiction — to entertain, that is, “a feeling of *if*”) that Stein and Whitehead discussed the problem of how the abstractions of logic, math, or grammar relate to the inchoate stream of experience. And it is possible to picture both of them straining toward a discovery which it would take Whitehead many more years to formulate, that the answer to the problem lay in radically reformulating the concept of experience. The problem itself arises in Whitehead’s writing two years after his walks with Stein. In September of 1916, he gave a lecture to the British Association for the Advancement of Science that broaches the relationship between the natural sciences and the “logical science” that was his field of expertise.<sup>35</sup> What is fascinating about this lecture, titled “The Organisation of Thought,” is how emphatically Whitehead affirms both the empirical basis *and* the logical basis of science without being able (a) to overcome what he still perceives as the incompatibility between the worlds designated by the two modes of thought, or (b) to clarify the relationship between them, beyond insisting that there is one.

Whitehead takes as the “starting-ground” of the sciences the world of which we are aware through sensory and felt experience: what he will later, in *The Concept of Nature*, define *as* nature. In “The Organisation of Thought” he writes that the task of science “is the discovery of the relations which exist within that flux of perceptions, sensations, and emotions which forms our experience of life. The panorama yielded by sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, and by more inchoate sensible feelings, is the sole field of its activity.”<sup>36</sup> There seems to be a possibility for a rapprochement between logic and empiricism here in the notion of “relations which exist within” the flux of perceptions, etc., but as the lecture continues, *even though* Whitehead continues to insist that “[s]cience is essentially logical,”<sup>37</sup> the two realms grow increasingly incompatible. Whitehead describes the relationship between the

sensory “panorama” and the organizing operations of scientific thought in terms reminiscent of Henri Bergson or James:

I insist on the radically untidy, ill-adjusted character of the fields of actual experience from which science starts.... This fact is concealed by the influence of language, moulded by science, which foists on us exact concepts as though they represented the immediate deliverances of experience. The result is that we imagine that we have immediate experience of a world of perfectly defined objects implicated in perfectly defined events which, as known to us by the direct deliverance of our senses, happen at exact instants of time, in a space formed by exact points, without parts and without magnitude: the neat, trim, tidy, exact world which is the goal of scientific thought.<sup>38</sup>

By the time he arrives at *Science and the Modern World* and even *The Concept of Nature*, Whitehead will see modes of abstraction as much more tightly involved in “actual experience,” so I find it fascinating that in 1916 he is still writing about them in such antagonistic terms. Even in this lecture, however, there is a building sense that “actual experience” as it is here understood is itself too trim and tidy a concept. Like Stein, he finds that it leaves out too much, and again like Stein, he finds this *through* his careful consideration of experience itself. Where Stein felt that her psychological vocabulary needed to expand to include the experience of “knowing something all at once,” Whitehead feels the pressure of what, in the following passage, we might well call a “feeling of *if*.” “[N]either common sense nor science,” Whitehead avers,

can proceed with their task of thought organisation without departing in some respect from the strict consideration of what is actual in experience. Think

again of the chair. Among the experiences upon which its concept is based, I included our expectations of its future history. I should have gone further and included our imagination of all the possible experiences which in ordinary language we should call perceptions of the chair which might have occurred. This is a difficult question, and I do not see my way through it. But at present in the construction of a theory of space and of time, there seem insuperable difficulties if we refuse to admit ideal experiences.<sup>39</sup>

By “ideal,” Whitehead simply means “not actual.” That is, these “perceptions of the chair which might have occurred” do not have the same actuality as perceptions of the chair that have in fact occurred. But they do have actuality as perceptions of possibilities — of ways in which the chair might or will be, *if* certain conditions arise. And Whitehead feels strongly that these perceptions are part of experience: he goes on to say, “[t]his imaginative perception of experiences, which, *if* they occurred, would be coherent with our actual experiences, seems fundamental in our lives. It is neither wholly arbitrary, nor yet fully determined. It is a vague background which is only made in part definite by isolated activities of thought.”<sup>40</sup> The feelings of possibility that were supposed to be departures “from the strict consideration of what is actual in experience” are discovered here *in* experience. At this stage, Whitehead cannot “see his way through” this; he can only pose it as “the fundamental question of scientific philosophy”: “How does exact thought apply to the fragmentary, vague continua of experience? I am not saying that it does not apply, quite the contrary. But I want to know how it applies.”<sup>41</sup> Both Whitehead and Stein are Jamesians, I argue, in that they do not seek to articulate an alternative to experience, but make their writings a venue for creative and relentless inquiry into the “fundamental question[s]” that experience poses.

Sandford Schwartz, in *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, & Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Thought*, describes James as one of four representative philosophers (along with Bergson, Nietzsche, and Bradley) whose "sharp opposition between conceptual abstraction and the flux of concrete sensations" is mirrored in the work of modernist poets.<sup>42</sup> This characterization of James is valid, of course; but a different James is reflected in the work of Stein and Whitehead. For this James, immediate experience is not simply a refuge from the dehumanizing abstractions of science and capitalism, as some critics imagine it to be.<sup>43</sup> Rather, James's way of conceiving experience becomes an impetus for what Bruno Latour calls "the most arduous question of Whitehead": "to decide whether or not empiricism can be renewed so that 'what is given in experience' is not simplified too much";<sup>44</sup> for Brian Massumi, too, James issues a call for "an expanded empiricism."<sup>45</sup> From both Whitehead's perspective and Stein's, James's conception of experience may indeed not be open *enough*; Latour explains that with James, "as with Bergson, rationalism is not given its full due."<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, this James's characteristic impulse is to expand, rather than to exclude. His example discourages the either/or distinctions that critics often employ to talk about twentieth-century literature: either logic or experience, either modernist or postmodernist, either romantic or avant-garde. And it raises the question of whether it might be possible to describe a field of modernism with Stein at its center, which, in contrast to the familiar exclusionary rhetoric of Pound's "go in fear of abstractions" and Williams's "no ideas but in things," is defined by its attention the possibilities that experience tenders in the form of "a feeling of *if*."<sup>47</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Gale, *The Divided Self*, 165, qtd in Goodman, *Wittgenstein and William James*, 61.

<sup>2</sup> William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1:245-46.

<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 190-91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>5</sup> Goodman, *Wittgenstein and William James*, 88.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>7</sup> Bernstein, “Stray Straws and Straw Men,” 46.

<sup>8</sup> James, “The Experience of Activity,” 160.

<sup>9</sup> Stein, “Poetry and Grammar,” 315-16. One of the first to comment on the relationship between Stein’s and James’s treatments of grammatical particles was Ronald B. Levinson, who suggested in a 1941 essay that Stein’s more experimental pieces represent “the attempt to put into practice some notions of the ideal function of language, ...which were in all probability derived from

the distinguished teacher of her Radcliffe days, William James." Levinson, "Gertrude Stein, William James, and Grammar," 125.

<sup>10</sup> Stein, *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 865-66, qtd in Hejinian, "Two Stein Talks," 89.

<sup>11</sup> Hejinian, 94.

<sup>12</sup> Ashbery, "The Impossible," 252.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> James, *Principles*, 1:230.

<sup>15</sup> Stein, "Portraits and Repetition," 289.

<sup>16</sup> See Steiner, *Exact Resemblance*, 29-30 and 41-42; Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Perloff, *21<sup>st</sup>-Century Modernism*, 74.

<sup>18</sup> Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 8. Ashton objects to Perloff's characterization of Stein on the grounds that literalism, while it counters the idea that language is *expressive of* experience, simply replaces it with an emphasis on the experience of the reader. By disengaging language from its referential function, that is, literalism produces an indeterminacy of meaning that solicits the participation of the reader, whose experience becomes an essential component in the construction of the text. "Stein, by contrast," Ashton contends, "insists on the autonomy of the work of art precisely by refusing any relation whatsoever between the work and anyone who might experience it, including the author herself." *Ibid.* 7-8.

<sup>19</sup> Stein, "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans," 277-78, qtd in Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 49.

<sup>20</sup> Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> Stein, *Writings*, I: 506.

<sup>23</sup> Ashbery, "The Impossible," 250.

<sup>24</sup> Stein, *Stanzas in Meditation*, 82-83.

<sup>25</sup> See James, "The Stream of Thought" in *Principles*, 259-65.

<sup>26</sup> Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> Stein, “The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans,” 277-78, qtd in Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 49.

<sup>28</sup> Whitehead, *Introduction to Mathematics*, 7, qtd in Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 56.

<sup>29</sup> Stein, “Poetry and Grammar,” 316.

<sup>30</sup> Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 167.

<sup>31</sup> Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 807.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 812.

<sup>33</sup> Steven Meyer speculates that they might have discussed Whitehead’s thoughts about rhythm and pattern that appear in his 1919 *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*, and which he might have begun to incubate by the time of his rambles with Stein. See Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation*, 180-84. My own imagining of this encounter has benefited from conversations with the Whitehead Reading Group at UC Berkeley of 2013-14, especially Lyn Hejinian and Chloé Thomas.

<sup>34</sup> See Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead*, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Whitehead, “The Organisation of Thought,” 105.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 113 (emphasis added).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-11.

<sup>42</sup> Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> See Lentricchia, *Modernist Quartet*, 30-31 and Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 159.

<sup>44</sup> Latour, “What is Given in Experience?,” 226.

<sup>45</sup> Massumi, “Too-Blue,” 177-226. In focusing attention on this aspect of James, I follow the magnificent example of Steven Meyer in *Irresistible Dictation*, although for Meyer, James remains a figure of nineteenth-century science whose influence Stein outgrows as she develops in the direction of Whitehead’s “more radical empiricism.” Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation*, xx.

<sup>46</sup> Latour, "What is Given," 229.

<sup>47</sup> Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," 201; Williams, *Paterson*, 6.