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——论格特鲁德·斯泰因的文化政治

Mapping and Transgressing Patriarchy: Gertrude Stein's Cultural Politics

宋德伟 著

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内容提要

格特鲁德·斯泰因（Gertrude Stein, 1874—1946）是英美现代主义文学运动的先驱，其审美实验与观念创新曾影响了以海明威为代表的“迷惘的一代”，其艺术沙龙与慷慨资助则孵化了一系列现当代西方文坛最先锋性的创作思想和表现技法。20世纪60年代后出现的女性美学，包括西苏的“身体写作”，伊瑞格瑞的“女性书写”以及克里斯蒂娃的“符号学”，甚至70年代后美国的语言诗歌都不同程度地打上了“斯泰因风格”的烙印。批评界把她与惠特曼、福克纳、庞德相提并论，认为其创作“对现代主义和后现代主义均有所贡献”。

作为一位多产女性作家，斯泰因一生共创作了包括小说、戏剧、诗歌、散文、文论、传记等大大小小作品九百多件。其中《三个女人》、《美国人的形成》、《软纽扣》为其思想与艺术的代表之作，值得进一步关注。构思创作于大多数男性现代主义作家藉怀旧否定现代而寻找主体性的某种超验根基的时代，构思创作于庞德诡异地沉溺于古希腊古罗马文化探询艺术创新灵感而走向法西斯主义的时代，构思创作于叶芝狂热地吸收文化与宗教符号建构自己个体象征系统的时代，构思创作于艾略特诡秘地宣称审美创新基于传统与个人才能的时代，斯泰因也同样走进过去，走进现代遗产的传统，期望有所发现。但与上述现代主义大师不同，她却发现了一种特殊的文化细胞，一种无所不在的、扩散性的、可以自我复制的、甚至是传染性的文化结构。这种结构从历史上控制着，现在仍然控制着现代主体与社会，催生了循环往复的社会与个人悲剧。正如她这三部属于不同体裁的作品所展示的，这种文化细胞就是父权符码，一种文化病理，尽管如泡沫如鬼影，但它总是存在着：《三个女人》对现实生活视野中女性的社会悲剧进行拷问，从文化表征寻找答案，揭示了父权文化符码在资本主义体制中的渗透与撒播及其对女性主体遏制的社会文化机制；后两部作品则

是由悲剧引发的深刻的叙述艺术与语言意义生成过程思考，从历史书写到叙述颠覆，从语义传统到语言本身之解构，展示了斯泰因对父权符码之深层结构的寻觅过程。

现代主义所坚信的文化传统及文学创作中的古典复兴明显蕴涵作家的某种政治观念；那么，斯泰因对催生人类悲剧的文化病理的表征与探索也蕴涵某种相应的政治动议。本文以辩证唯物主义与历史唯物主义为指导，从西方当代女性主义与左翼意识形态文化研究汲取批评活力，通过文化语境之重构及历史还原，重读《三个女人》、《美国人的形成》、《软纽扣》，阐述其中所表征的斯泰因之文化政治——一种寻找父权符码之外、消解了性别“二元对立”的文化政治策略，探讨斯泰因试图通过消解具有异质同构的、流通性的父权符码来颠覆父权社会文化象征系统的艺术努力，揭示斯泰因通过文化倡导批判当时西方政治的创作动机。

文化政治研究集中探讨政治的文化意蕴和文化的政治意蕴，因此斯泰因之文化政治就要研究其以文学创作为代表的文化理论及实践与政治权力话语相互交叉、相互阐述的互文机制。在当代斯泰因的女性主义与文化政治研究中，基于颠覆父权传统之批评经典浩瀚，最主要的批评范式可以归结为三类：其一，通过解读斯泰因的叙述密码，阐述其作品隐含的同性恋主题，探索因主题的特殊性所采取的极其晦涩的表征模式或同性恋话语；其二，从其语言的颠覆性分析其文本所蕴涵的反父权意识形态，追溯其反逻各斯中心主义的前俄狄浦斯的语言特征；其三，分析斯泰因的对话诗学，认为其作品打破了传统的叙述单声，体现出作者与读者、叙述者与读者、自我与他者之间的对话关系。围绕上述三类阐释，批评者们更多借助后现代主义、后结构主义、新历史主义、符号学精神心理分析等理论试图解剖斯泰因的“不可解读性”。从女性主义视角进行跨学科研究的成果有助于拓宽斯泰因的研究视野，帮助理解她艰涩的作品，但是如果过分阐释斯泰因的同性恋身份，把她的创作动机仅仅看成是为了掩盖或诉说同性恋，这就忽略了她自身先锋创作的有意识行为；她的同性恋身份是确定的，但该身份对其创作的影响程度不能主观定论。斯泰因作品中存在对话关系，但是具体到某部作品不能望文生义，理论框架与文本分析也欠吻合。如果将斯

泰因的文化政治做完全语言化的处理，又会最终削弱该问题的政治性，因为斯泰因并不是“为艺术而艺术”。她试图通过一定的文化政治从社会规范、历史叙述、语言符号系统三个“异质同构”的层面上消除父权之话语权力及其衍生的社会悲剧，特别是女性的社会悲剧。

斯泰因从社会悲剧追溯文化渊源、从历史书写追寻叙述症候、从语言传统探索主体悲剧的深层结构，实验语言象征系统的“无穷可能性”，因此对这种流通性控制结构的探索彰显其作品之复杂性和阅读难度，批评家对其密码性的符号进行解读也具有高度的学术挑战性。一方面，批评界对斯泰因之“不可解性”众说纷纭，因此出现将意义强加给文本的“阐释盈余”或因过分谨慎而“阐释不足”；另一方面，由于斯泰因语言缺乏传统意义上的连贯性，针对文本进行阐释的确难度较大。笔者从当代英美马克思主义批评家伊格伦顿与詹姆逊之“意识形态化”与“历史还原法”中找到文本分析立足点，从现实的社会存在开始追溯，跟踪父权符码在社会视野、主体心理、历史书写、叙述艺术、语言意义过程等不同存在领域的流通轨迹及路径，揭示斯泰因遏制符号流通的文化政治。

第一章聚焦《三个女人》中女性的社会性与家庭生活层面，揭示斯泰因所呈现的社会视野中女性的生存性悲剧。笔者通过考察分析作者所叙述的三位女性的现实生活悲剧及其主体心理，从具体的美国资本主义社会体制中的性别角色定位与婚姻模式以及阶级观念、种族观念，特别是女性本身的自卑与自虐心理等方面，揭示了父权文化符码的表层病理症候：社会传统对女性美德的要求迫使她们成为“屋子里的天使”；婚姻失去感情因素，只是人类生存和再生产的工具；阶级和种族歧视致使下层有色妇女处境更加艰难；男权传统对女性的界定已内化为女性的自卑和自虐。三个女主人公的最后死亡——安娜死于为顾主的过度操劳，莉娜因过度生产而死亡，梅兰克莎不能屈从传统婚姻又不能得到同性爱而抑郁而死，显露了斯泰因从现实生活向文化深层结构的投射：死亡既是女性生存的象征符号，也是女性终结父权文化控制的唯一方式，证明了作品主人公不断重复且贯穿整个作品的生存名言：“我不幸，这不是我的错，也非命之过。”

为了消解这种生存悲剧与社会病理，斯泰因也试图寻找一种作为文化政治的解读方式：越界，但这并不是男性现代主义的“创新”越界，而是跨越性别区分之界。作为女性，她提出将姐妹情作为一种生活方式，甚至婚姻模式，目的在于消除父权符码象征系统中的性别“二元对立”机制。但是，社会视野中的父权角色定位、性别规约、传统习惯等表征控制属于非常表面化的社会控制方式。斯泰因并没有停留在这种“表层结构”上，而是深入到控制历史书写的文学叙述策略上。第二章以《美国人的形成》为互读文本，解析斯泰因试图从根状“反叙述”的艺术表征中寻求父权之外的一种“中性”叙述方式：首先，长达 925 页的家族史因大量的分裂性叙述而停滞，故事千头万绪，任何一点都可以回到另一点；其次，词句以及段落的重复强调的不仅是声音效果，更重要的是故事的非连续性；第三，“持续现在”的不断出现使情节始终处在“当下”状态，强调现在而非线性物理时间；第四，全知全能视角被不确定的“我”所代替，讲故事的“我”与自说自话的“我”交替出现，话题不断转换，谱系家庭的故事线索时断时续，主体的叙述权威和父权制的单声也被解构；第五，建立在性别差异基础上的传统人物塑造亦被拆解，没有典型环境中的典型人物，仅有的四个主要人物最终被不定代词代替。这种背离情节、类似于德勒兹和加塔利的根状茎结构的叙事从根本上动摇了“父名”所捍卫的逻各斯秩序和因果关系，目的是呈现一个新逻辑、新秩序、非统一的“弑父”历史叙述。

叙述最基本的意义单位是语言，而语言是最结构化、最深层之文化建构，所以斯泰因对语言符号意义系统之颠覆，具有后结构主义之文化政治特征。第三章从四个方面对其“密码性”的《软纽扣》进行解读：首先，斯泰因通过分离能指与所指的规约性关系，舍弃名词的定义功能，避免描述性强的形容词，语言从约定俗成、武断的语意参照中解放出来，消除了传统父权符码的污染，语言呈现出中性的几何性或代数性；其次，“滥用”或不用标点，颠覆句法规则，强调非规约性和非确定性，目的是颠覆控制语法规则的文化结构；再次，通过重复强调字词的音韵和节奏，儿语般的重复呈现出一种未被菲勒斯中心的象征秩序所污染的前俄狄浦斯式的语言特征，这种新的话语模式能够有效表达女性的独特体验；最后，表面上看起来支离破碎的文本被赋予无穷的意义，开

放的文本引领读者参与到文本意义的生成过程，书写主体与阅读客体的界限被完全消解，语义之流通与主体建构成为可能。

综上所述，本文得出如下结论：首先，斯泰因从社会与主体心理分析走向文化分析，从历史分析走向叙述分析，最后到对最深层文化建构之语言结构进行消解性尝试，父权符码的图绘与颠覆是多维的，反映了斯泰因探索整个社会现实、情感深层结构、经济过程、艺术倾向形成及语言意义过程的文化政治策略；其次，斯泰因不仅体现出一个现代主义者对女性问题和女性身份的关注，而且她对反叙述及颠覆性语言的运用标示着具有后现代主义特征的女性主义文本的出现；第三，斯泰因对菲勒斯中心主义进行批判时，是站在中产阶级的立场上，因此在看待构成父权的各种意识形态要素时，强调了性别而弱化了阶级、种族对女性的压迫；第四，她努力寻找的是一种逃离父权束缚的“存在”，而不是一味地否定父权社会，她本人也从未给自己贴过女性主义者的标签，所以其颠覆性的文化政治不能够简单归结为女性主义文化政治；第五，斯泰因反叙述的目的是颠覆菲勒斯中心主义所笃信的具有等级秩序的“树状思维”逻辑，使艺术本身脱离资本主义物质控制与管理审查，具有某种“精英主义”文化政治意味；第六，斯泰因的语言实验不以游戏语言为目的，其意义在于呈现语言的多样性和开放性；最后，斯泰因的颠覆性语言范式被后来美国语言诗人借鉴和模仿，显示了其文化政治的先锋性。

本文的创新之处在于：首先，在论述斯泰因之诗歌时，笔者创新性地提出了“几何诗歌”或“代数诗歌”的全新概念，这种中性的、数学式的、不受传统意义束缚的开放文本观念或互文性观念还原了语言本质，打破了语言符号所指的父权传统意义；其次，本文所探讨的父权符码结构在社会、历史、主体心理、文学表征、语言系统的“流通”方式超越了传统批评与后结构主义批评的虚设界限；第三，斯泰因这种三位一体的性别诗学超越了后现代主义的文字游戏，深入到资本主义的文化逻辑内部批判菲勒斯中心主义，具备现代主义和后现代主义的双重特征；第四，斯泰因在看待种族、阶级对女性的压迫问题上表现出模棱两可，折射出包罗万象的女性主义本身的复杂性和矛盾性。

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations will be employed when Gertrude Stein's works are quoted:

ABT	<i>The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas</i>
EA	<i>Everybody's Autobiography</i>
GHA	<i>The Geographical History of America or the Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind</i>
HW	<i>How to Write</i>
LA	<i>Lectures in America</i>
MOA	<i>The Making of Americans</i>
TB	<i>Tender Buttons</i>
TL	<i>Three Lives</i>
SW1	<i>Gertrude Stein: Writings 1903-1932</i>
SW2	<i>Gertrude Stein: Writings 1932-1946</i>
SWS	<i>Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein</i>

The editions employed will appear in the Bibliography.

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Introduction

Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition.

—Gertrude Stein

What persuades men and women to mistake each other from time to time for gods or vermin is ideology. One can understand well enough how human beings may struggle and murder for good material reasons – reasons connected, for instance, with their physical survival. It is much harder to grasp how they may come to do so in the name of something as apparently abstract as ideas. Yet ideas are what men and women live by, and will occasionally die for.

—Terry Eagleton

The turbulent period from 1880 to 1930, within which modernism emerged and rose to preeminence as the dominant art form in the West,^① is also the heyday of the first wave of feminism.^② Modernism, as an international cultural movement

^① “Modernism” covers an extremely unstable and diverse range of cultural objects and tendencies. Its definition remains problematic. The widest definitions of the term would make it coterminous with modernity, stretching from the 18th century, or even earlier, to the present day. The consensus, however, is for a narrower periodization, located between the 1880s and the 1930s as defined by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane in their influential *Modernism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976). In general, in the more standard view, the term denotes artistic experiment and novelty, a radical overhaul of existing forms of representation and available traditions and, as such, is seen to set itself against the emerging mass or popular culture of the same period. However, as the different arts produced different modernisms at different times, and as novelty was crucial to their definition as modern, there can be no convincing description of the essence of modernism. See, Peter Brooker, *Cultural Theory: A Glossary* (London: Arnold, 1999), pp. 160-63.

^② Feminism originally means to promote the political, social, and educational equality of women with men. The movement has occurred mainly in Europe and the United States. It has its roots in the humanism of the 18th century and in the Industrial Revolution. Feminist issues range from access to employment, education, child care, contraception, and abortion, to equality in the workplace, changing family roles, redress for sexual harassment in the workplace, and the need for equal political representation. Feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth

that tends to express disillusionment with tradition and interest in new technologies and visions, is found to be same with feminism in disrupting the old for the new. Influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's iconoclastic post-Christianity, Karl Marx's view of consciousness as a product of socio-historical factors, Sigmund Freud's view of the unconscious as the determinant of motivation and behavior, Henri Bergson's new theories of time and the dislocating effects of the carnage and devastation of the war, modernism embodies a lack of faith in Western civilization and culture – its humanism and rationalism.^① Modernists therefore participate in a general questioning of all the values held dear by the Victorians, that is, the dominant and dominating conventions of nineteenth-century art and culture. In poetry, fragmentation, discontinuity, allusiveness, and irony prevail; in fiction, chronological disruption, linguistic innovation, the stream-of-consciousness, and multiple points of view abound; in art and theater, expressionism and surrealism team.^② Edward Said takes modernist disruptions of realist narrative as disruptions of structures of authority for he links nineteenth-century realist narrative to the

century is often called the first-wave feminism, and the activity which began during the early 1960s and lasted through the late 1980s the second-wave feminists. Feminist activity and study beginning in the early 1990s is identified as third-wave feminism. Whereas first-wave feminism focused largely on officially mandated inequalities, second-wave feminism saw unofficial inequalities as inextricably linked issues that had to be addressed in tandem. Third-wave feminists often focus on "micropolitics," writing about forms of gender expression and representation that are less explicitly political than their predecessors. They also challenged the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females. For further information, see, Peter Brooker, *Cultural Theory: A Glossary* (London: Arnold, 1999), pp. 93-95; Charles E. Bressler, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000), pp. 178-89.

^① Humanism is a broad category of ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all people, based on the ability to determine right and wrong by appeal to universal human qualities—particularly rationalism. Humanists reject religious beliefs and center on humans and their values, capacities, and worth. Rationalism, in the broader, popular meaning of the term, is used to designate any mode of thought in which human reason holds the place of supreme criterion of truth. Rationalism has long been the rival of empiricism, the doctrine that all knowledge of matters of fact ultimately derives from, and must be tested by, sense experience. As against this doctrine, rationalism holds reason to be a faculty that can lay hold of truths beyond the reach of sense perception, both in certainty and in generality. For further information, see, Peter Brooker, *Cultural Theory: A Glossary* (London: Arnold, 1999), pp. 119-20.

^② Expressionism is a term used to describe artistic style that departs from the conventions of realism and naturalism and seeks to convey inner experience by distorting rather than directly representing natural images. The expressionist transforms nature rather than imitates it. As literary and art movement, surrealism is influenced by Freudianism and dedicated to the expression of imagination as revealed in dreams, free of the conscious control of reason and free of convention. See, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory* (NY: Garland Publishing, 1997), pp. 392-93.

structures of authority that support imperialism, bourgeois class hegemony and the male-dominated family (Dekoven, *Politics*, 676). Rachel Blau DuPlessis directly addresses the relation between modernism and feminine discourse: “literature by women, in its ethical and moral position, resembles the equally non-hegemonic modernism in its subversive critique of culture” (Dekoven, *Politics*, 677).

Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) writes in the years when modernism mingles with feminism. She imbues her modernist concern with gender within her texts, and she goes so far beyond modernist boundary that she is acknowledged as pioneer of postmodernism. Her experimentation with language is so radical that her hermetic writings keep driving reviewers closer as well as distancing them. In order to decode her secret codes the dissertation is to construct Stein’s cultural politics based on her pathological diagnoses on culture. Stein finds an omnipresent, disseminating, self-reproducing, and even contagious cultural cell that has structured and is structuring the modern subjects, and that has generated cycles of social as well as individual tragedies. The cultural cell, or the patriarchy as she reveals in the aftermentioned three works of different genres, is a pathological structure which is always “being there”, soap-like and fluid as it is. *Three Lives* (1909) examines the social tragedy of women, intending to expose the pervasive dissemination of patriarchal culture structure in capitalism and its restraining power on women’s subjectivity. *The Making of Americans* (1925) and *Tender Buttons* (1914), triggered by the social tragedies, attempt to subvert the deep structure of patriarchal culture, from the historiography to the traditional narrative, from the signification process to the language itself. Through deconstructing the heterogeneous and circulating patriarchal codes, Stein intends to subvert the whole symbolic system and construct an alternative outside patriarchy free of binary oppositions.

Different from the early women’s movement which began at the end of eighteenth century and which was predominately concerned with women’s suffrage, the modern feminists have already set out to explore gender bias in a microscopic domain, looking for more individual approaches to fashioning women’s positions within society by granting women the privileges men already possessed. They demand for higher education, entrance into trades and professions and married women’s right to property. Realizing women are historically and culturally

constructed by social conventions, they encourage them to establish their own individuality or subjectivity by gaining independence through work as well as by conducting their lives free of societal conventions. The ideal woman they are calling for is “New Woman,”^① who is independent, educated, relatively sexually liberated, and oriented more toward productive life in the public sphere than toward reproductive life in the home. As Virginia Woolf passionately explains in her essay “Professions for Women,” the New Woman is dedicated to the murder of the “Angel in the House” (*Professions*, 285).^②

With the surge of feminism, more modernists, both male and female, show unprecedented preoccupation with gender issues in their literary works, though they make sharply different responses. The male modernists fear that the loss of hegemony might result in women's new power. Just as Marianne Dekoven has put it, the new order of both gender and class relations in the modernist historical moment is simultaneously alluring and terrifying to male modernists – alluring in its promise to destroy bankrupt bourgeois culture; terrifying in its threat to destroy their own privileges (*Doubleness*, 21).^③ Their works, where they display either masculinist misogyny or fascination and strong identification with the empowered

^① The New Woman was a feminist ideal which emerged in the final decades of the 19th century in Europe and North America. It was a reaction to the role, as characterized by the so-called cult of domesticity, ascribed to women in the Victorian era. Advocates of the New Woman ideal were found among novelists, playwrights, journalists, pamphleteers, political thinkers and suffragettes. By general consent, a “New Woman” was supposed (1) to have received an adequate education and to be able to use her knowledge wisely; (2) to earn money and thus be financially independent; (3) to participate in political discussion and decision-making; (4) to decide herself if, when and whom she wants to marry and how many children she wants to have; (5) to show outward signs of being different by wearing more comfortable clothes; (6) and, generally, to defy convention and social norms in order to create a better world for women. For further information, see, Marianne Dekoven, “Modernism and Gender,” *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2000), ed. Michael Levenson, pp. 174-93.

^② The “Angel in the House” is a poem by Coventry Patmore, first published in 1854 and revised up until 1862, which describes a perfect Victorian wife: intensely sympathetic, immensely charming, utterly unselfish and above all, pure. Following the publication of the poem, the term “angel in the house” came to be used in reference to women who embodied the Victorian feminine ideal: a wife and mother who was selflessly devoted to her children and submissive to her husband. Later feminist writers have had a less positive view of the Angel. Virginia Woolf famously wrote that this Angel “bothered me [Woolf] and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her” (*Professions*, 285).

^③ In this same article “Gendered Doubleness and the ‘Origins’ of Modernist Form,” Marianne Dekoven also comments on the effect the new order has made on the female modernists. She argues that it is alluring for women in its promise of freedom and autonomy as well as terrifying in its potential for bringing on retribution from a still-empowered patriarchy (*Doubleness*, 20).

feminine, or a rather ambivalent mood, are quite different from the pre-modern male texts which create such stereotyped images either as the “angel in the house” or the “madwoman in the attic.”^① While he squabbles over the artistic creation with his idiosyncratic allusions of the ancient Greek and Roman culture, Ezra Pound holds deep prejudice against women; his language of vorticist manifesto is characteristic of male modernism’s self-imagination as a mode of masculine domination (Dekoven, *Modernism*, 176). While he fervently constructs his private symbolization system with cultural or religious codes, William Butler Yeats constitutes a “contradictory juxtaposition of a fearful misogynist response to the New Woman with an identificatory admiration” (Dekoven, *Modernism*, 177); with his evident misogyny his love poems powerfully exhibit women’s presences and their voices. Henry James always oscillates between “the desire for radical cultural renewal” and “its opposite fear and loathing of such change” (Dekoven, *Modernism*, 178); he deploys the figure of flood to attack empowered femininity and refers women to creatures who have no reasoning and judgment, but meanwhile expresses the endorsement of feminist aims. Sigmund Freud goes too far when he argues that female sexuality is based on a lack of a penis, the male sexual organ, and tries to establish the dominating position of the father and the son with the mother and the daughter dominated. Women are, by Freudian definition, “castrated,” defined by and as “absence” and “lack,” and doomed to permanent moral immaturity and inherently sexual masochism. In modernist works by men, a disgust with the past, both literary and cultural, resulting in the impulse to “make it new,” goes in parallel with a fear of the “new” itself: a fear of loss of privilege and power over women.

^① The writers, who measure women by patriarchal rules, usually describe women either as perfect as angel or otherwise as wicked as mad. The notion that attempts to describe women as emptiness is challenged by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the authors of *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, published in 1979. They draw their title from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, in which Rochester’s mad wife Bertha stays locked in the attic. Gilbert and Gubar examine the notion that women writers of the 19th century were essentially “madwomen” because of the restrictive gender categories enforced upon them both privately and professionally. In their re-examination of these writers, they argue that madness often becomes a metaphor for suppressed female revolt and anger or the author’s double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. In their viewpoint, none of these writers have literal madwomen in their attics; they have all employed unique literary tactics to express their repressed anxieties, thus subverting and remaking texts to give voice to their own concerns. See, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory* (NY: Garland Publishing, 1997), p. 180.

The irresolvably contradictory attitude of the male modernists toward an empowered femininity is contrary to female modernists' supportive response. These females might uphold different ideas with regard to specific items. Some early founding works show the unresolved dialectic – desire for freedom in opposition to fear of punishment, of which Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) sets the example. Some voice their rebellion against patriarchy by exposing men's control of women as inferior. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) expresses rebellion against the imprisonment of home as well as voices women's awakening of their sexuality. Others voice their opinion for being an equal creature with men through describing women's roles in settling the frontier, in keeping families and society going, and in raising their families. Willa Cather's works *O Pioneers!* (1913) and *My Antonia* (1918) are the typical examples that amplify the spatial matrix of American women both geographically and historically. Still others try to establish women's identity through adopting new subjects and new narratives. Under this category, Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale House, Pale Rider* (1939) recasts the typical male narrative by placing the woman at the center of the tale.

Living in the historical context of modernism and feminism Stein finds no escape from the voice of women for equality in microscopic domains. Her active negotiations with her contemporaries have brought forward a panorama of gender debates and gender theorizations. Stein firmly establishes her important position in the so-called modernist movement by her first published novel *Three Lives*, which was composed at the same time as early versions of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). With its fluid, obtuse narration, detached, ironic tone, impressionist temporal structure and disruptions of conventional diction and syntax, *Three Lives* is as innovative as any other works in the modernist fictional canon.^① Through delineating the misfortunes of three heroines, Stein first expresses her rebellion against the confinements and mistreatment of the patriarchal cultural paradigm brought to women, which is indicated by its epigraph, a quotation from Jules Laforgue: "Donc je suis un malheureux et ce n'est ni ma faute ni celle de la

^① Marianne Dekoven establishes Stein as important to the birth of modernism as the modernist founding fathers, such as, Henry James, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. See, Marianne Dekoven, "The Politics of Modernist Form," *New Literary History*, 23 (1992): 680.