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METATEXTUALITY OF GERTRUDE STEIN'S METHOD

The article considers the basic prerequisites for the development of the modernist method of composition in art, literature in particular, based on the analysis of the literary critical and dramatic works of the American writer Gertrude Stein. Literary essays, searching the issues of compositional dynamics, chronological flexibility, punctuation irregularity, semantic abstractness, and grammatically determined temporality are textually formalized not only by the author's intention, but also by internally organized metatextual connections that build a conceptually complex dichotomous system of (self-)perception of the text as an act of production or action juxtaposed with the oppositional interpretation of reproduction or reaction. The metagenre uncertainty, openness, and universality of Stein's plays are represented by their translations into Ukrainian as an example of objective language reduction, translational depersonalization, and the paradox of a word blocked in the text. Stein's artistic method adds to the linguistic field, among other structural elements, implications for hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches in literary theory, as well as extra-literary contaminations in the field of fine art, cubism and absurdism in particular, photography and cinematography, such as the reinterpretation of collage composition and assemblage, which will develop into cut-up technique in the second half of the 20th century.

Key words: metatextuality, composition, modernism, theatre of the mind.

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METATEXTUALITÄT DER METHODE VON GERTRUDE STEIN

Der Artikel untersucht die grundlegenden Voraussetzungen für die Entwicklung der modernistischen Kompositionsmethode in der Kunst, insbesondere in der Literatur, basierend auf der Analyse der literaturkritischen und lyrisch-dramatischen Werke der amerikanischen Schriftstellerin Gertrude Stein. Literarische Essays, die sich mit Fragen der Kompositionsdynamik, der chronologischen Flexibilität, der Unregelmäßigkeit der Zeichensetzung, der semantischen Abstraktheit und der grammatikalisch bestimmten Zeitlichkeit befassen, werden nicht nur durch die Absicht des Autors, sondern auch durch intern organisierte metatextuelle Verbindungen textlich formalisiert, die ein konzeptuell komplexes dichotomes System der (Selbst-)Wahrnehmung des Textes als Akt der Produktion oder Aktion bilden, dem die gegensätzliche Interpretation der Reproduktion oder Reaktion gegenübersteht. Die metagenerische Unsicherheit, Offenheit und Universalität von Steins Stücken werden durch ihre Übersetzungen ins Ukrainische als Beispiel für objektive Sprachreduktion, translationale Depersonalisierung und das Paradox eines im Text blockierten Wortes dargestellt. Steins künstlerische Methode fügt dem

linguistischen Feld neben anderen Strukturelementen auch Implikationen für hermeneutische und phänomenologische Ansätze in der Literaturtheorie hinzu, sowie außerliterarische Kontaminationen im Bereich der bildenden Kunst, insbesondere des Kubismus und Absurdismus, der Fotografie und Kinematographie, wie etwa die Neuinterpretation der Collagenkomposition und Assemblage, die sich in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts zur Cut-up-Technik entwickeln wird.

Schlüsselwörter: Metatextualität, Komposition, Moderne, Theater des Geistes.

Introduction

The importance of Gertrude Stein's literary heritage is difficult to overestimate, given her colossal influence on the formation of the modernist method in art. Genre diversity and hybridity of artistic and critical searches of the "obscure" innovator, gender polarity and bohemian lifestyle literally turned her into a drama queen of the first half of the 20th century. The increased interest in the study of Stein's work in the English-speaking academic environment is negatively correlated with its absolute absence in the Ukrainian-speaking environment, therefore the relevance of the essay lies in focusing on a metatextual component of her extremely complex poetics as part of the methodological tradition in Stein's studies in Ukraine.

The **purpose** of the study is the analytical systematization of the main characteristics of Gertrude Stein's compositional method based on close reading, translations of her early plays and artistic transformation of the original text by means of modern theater of the mind. The **object** of the research is metatextuality and intermediality in the genre of drama as an alternative for revisiting, restoring and transforming modernist experiments in dramaturgy that are fundamentally closed for staging due to their (closet plays) eccentricity, illogicality and abstractness. The **subject** of the study is the analysis of some dramatic works by Gertrude Stein, in particular the plays "What Happened. A Five Act Play" (first translated into Ukrainian in full by O.Koliada), "For the Country Entirely. A Play in Letters", and "Counting her Dresses" as examples of a complex textual game, which rules are explained by metatextual and intermedial projection.

In the foreword to Gertrude Stein's lyric-dramatic collection "Geography and Plays" (1922) Sherwood Anderson marks: "<...> every artist working with words as his medium, must at times be profoundly irritated by what seems the limitations of his medium <...> to create in that reader's mind a whole new world of sensations, or rather one might better say he would like to call back into life all of the dead and sleeping senses <...> the extension of the province of his art one wants to achieve <...> these books of Gertrude Stein's do in a very real sense recreate life in words".

Stein's lecture-essay "Composition as Explanation" [14], which she delivered in 1926 at Cambridge and Oxford, the same year first printed by (Lenard and) Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press, is important for two reasons, namely as 1) a theoretical introduction to her method of new experimental prose, presented in an experimental manner (to a refined public) and 2) the period of temporary co-location in the same geographical dimension of the two leading English-speaking modernists, Stein and Woolf, despite their mutual critical attitude as opponents in the corresponding (modernist) literary direction (for comparison Woolf's essays "The Narrow Bridge of Art", "The Anatomy of Fiction", "A Sketch of the Past"). Woolf would probably find Stein's prose to be unduly defeminized

(instead, Stein would problematize Woolf's style as overtly feminine). The irony of gender discrimination in this particular case is that Stein and Woolf chronologically pioneered the modernist method of writing traditionally attributed to Faulkner and Joyce.

Stein's "Composition as Explanation", a quote below, is an example of an idiosyncratic polemic with itself, syntactically and verbally abstracted from the formal boundaries of the printed page and the lecture hall thanks to the conventionally academic style of content presentation, a style that, due to constant repetitions, self-references, grammatical duration of time (present continuous (for the expression of a certain action that takes place directly at the moment of speaking)), paradoxically complicates the act of reading and is absolutely not perceived by ear, unless, of course, the lecturer is a talented actor in the art of intonational transformation, in order to delicately emphasize rhetorical vectors. Stein explains the artistic-aesthetic composition in the way of articulating in real time a metatextual mantra as a content-form entangled in self-obsession, which has a decompositional effect — ignoring or confusing the addressee on purpose ("can they and do they") discrediting the subject of the lecture (thematic and subjective basis of the composition is built literally through the individualistically determined and artistically argued accumulation of simple phrases in a technically perfect form of stream of consciousness):

"There is singularly nothing that makes a difference a difference in beginning and in the middle and in ending except that each generation has something different at which they are all looking. By this I mean so simply that anybody knows it that composition is the difference which makes each and all of them then different from other generations and this is what makes everything different otherwise they are all alike and everybody knows it because everybody says it. It is very likely that nearly every one has been very nearly certain that something that is interesting is interesting them. Can they and do they. <...> The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks, it likes it as it is, and this makes what is seen as it is seen. Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition. <...> Writing and painting and all that, is like that, for those who occupy themselves with it and don't make it as it is made. Now the few who make it as it is made, and it is to be remarked that the most decided of them usually are prepared just as the world around them is preparing, do it in this way and so I if you do not mind I will tell you how it happens. Naturally one does not know how it happened until it is well over beginning happening" [14].

The study of psychology under the scientific guidance of the founder of the American psychological school, William James (Henry James's cousin) at Harvard University has obvious consequences, although Stein prefers to characterize her style not as an automatic stream of consciousness, but an "excess of consciousness", when the creative materialization of word formation overcomes denotative or purely graphic limitation, which Anderson mentions in the foreword, thus rejects semantic clarity for the sake of sensorial modification of linguistic aesthetics (the acoustic component of writing). The finest examples of the latter are, debatably, Stein's book-not-for-translation "Tender Buttons" (1914) and Woolf's experiment "The Waves" (1931).

Stein's monologue is Hamlet's soliloquy in the period of modernity, addressed to himself, which according to the conventions of the genre, no one should hear; it is the language of the subconscious spoken out loud. Notation of many possible combinations, nominally with the help of grammatical selection of time constructions, as if groping for the most optimal direction or the most diverse word combination ("it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks, it likes it as it is"), is the central feature of Stein's discourse, which is directed to infinite openness by the repetitive dynamics of meaning-making options, rather than being definitively framed as a single choice by a constant category of meaning reproduction. The attempt to explain the composite nature of art, as a basic matrix with plastically functioning elements that form unity, is extremely important in view of the original meaning of "explanation" as the core of the hermeneutic method.

The text spoken by an author has nothing to do with the process of its creation ("indeed talking has nothing to do with creation"), but the repetition of the spoken text in the moment of speaking ("it is very difficult so difficult that it always has been difficult but even more difficult now") captures the author's intention to approach the discursive independence without limits — the limitlessness of the self, to lose control over words, to submit to creation in the way a high priestess bows, caused by the alternative power of her word, the "composition of explanation", from the mental (author's awareness) level to the written (textual lectures) to the oral (recitation) and again to the mental form on the other side of the spectrum (listener's awareness). Stein articulates the autonomy of metatextual action that elicits a response, because it is more difficult to condition meaning-making rather than to cause its critical reproduction; to a certain extent, action coincides with creation and self-affirmation, while reaction — with destruction and denial. On a purely gender level, Stein takes on the masculinity of male productivity, leaving (traditionally) female reproductiveness outside a composition that needs no explanation.

Among other collections, "Geography and Plays" [7] is a meta-genre recreation of poetry in prose ("geography") and drama ("plays") with spontaneous division into chapters or acts and scenes, geographical symbolism and surrealism of specific details in the abstract movement, and therefore, is a forerunner of absurdity in literature: rescuing meaning from nonsense (the action of modernism gives meaning the features of an exemplary model) and at the same time protecting nonsense from seekers of meaning (the reaction of postmodernism is reinterpreted modeling, the expression of what exists outside of meaning).

Repetition of a word is, in fact, a refrain of a sound, a note, a melody, that is a technique of repetition organized according to a musical principle, and should be perceived accordingly not only in Stein's fictitious plays and operas, but methodologically as a whole. Sporadicity of the word space overloaded with objects is a pictographic detail on the canvas, a panorama and a perspective, built according to the pictorial principle, which is (a)logically correlated with the drawing of a series of sketches, (self)portraits in particular, made with the technique of the inner "self" (metatext). Instead, by and large, completely irrational by essence, music and painting are subordinated to Stein's rational literary basis, forming a poetic order (the concept of compositional perfection in architecture), aptly expressed in her thesis about the nature of one's own motivation or the concept of creation as an unlimited

play of words to which anyone can join. The latter is more like a game of cards or tricks with them.

Stein's impossible routine theater of the mind is a catalogue of experiences listed according to a dictionary principle, which should contain as many word-meanings as possible, as well as their derivatives, both structured by the method of compiling modern dictionaries — descriptively (non-prescriptively) for use.

Stein is not satisfied with the abstractness of language, which is oriented to the outside, so her method is linguistically anti-referential, absolutely metatextual with the internal positioning of text and language as referents. "What Happened. A Five Act Play" (1913) is a landmark event for Stein, the beginning of a method, a symbolic birth.

Act 1. Lexically and grammatically inconsistent use of deixis in the original text (instructions in linguistics) — pronominal identification of the participants of the speech act (no personal "I, you, he, she", instead — generalized in singular or plural or nominative third person singular "it"), spatio-temporal localization (no "here, there, somewhere") and perspective (distance, proximity) of interacting objects expressed by demonstrative pronouns and articles (no "this, that, here, there", instead - a numerical index "one, two, five", etc.) — demonstrates the author's fundamental denial of the main linguistic conventions on which the interaction receptor relies for understanding information. The translation into Ukrainian, to be noted, slightly facilitates understanding due to the conditional change of the endings of grammatical forms. Academic linguistic indicators are replaced by sensory counterparts, such as in the first sentence of the play, which aims to activate hearing and sight: hear ("loud") and see ("no cataracts"). The play is built on contrast and grotesque, but most importantly - from an impersonal point of view (not from the first person), which raises Stein's method to a phenomenological one, which, according to Husserl, studies phenomena not by their appearance in a separate consciousness, but in any consciousness. Therefore the awareness of something deixically indeterminate, not necessarily concrete, but fixed by consciousness as an object that has one identity despite the multifaceted perception of this object by others.

Act 2. Stein wanders the market, counting steps; each step has a certain equivalent of the variety of experience captured from the surrounding space or an edible counterpart. Emphasis on left-handedness, even homonymously ("a left hand", "the reason left", "left footed stranger"), closed nature of the objects (oven, box, clam) and obvious changes in their state when opened (something swells in the oven, shines in the box, communication is established through the clam). The weight of the objects in the left hand, probably a basket of groceries, correlates with the stranger limping on the left leg. The musical component of the act is emphasized in each segment by f-alliteration ("four", "five", "flourishing"), twice by s-alliteration ("strange stove", "so sober", "chance of swelling" and "same frame a sadder portal, a singular gate"), twice with k-alliteration ("wide oak", "wide cake", "lightning cooky", "box filled" and "connection, a clam cup connection", "a ticket"), p-alliteration ("apples", "pears", "potatoes"), which again reminds the reader of the expansion of the limits of sensory text perception (not only reading, but also hearing) and Stein's strange proposal to perceive a sentence that is read aloud by others in order to feel its uniqueness, changed condition (open oven, box, clam). In Stein's textbook work on the technique of (modernist) writing, the duplicative essence of the sentence is noted, which is valuable as a witness to the

uncertainty of the "left and right hand". An interesting coincidence: after an X-ray of the portrait of Stein, a work by Picasso, researchers drew attention to the repeated redrawing of her hands, especially the left hand.

Act 3. The careful unhurried cutting of bread focuses attention on the abstract concepts of circumstance, cause and effect in relation to the purity of taste and aftertaste, similar to Proust's Madeleine cookies (*petites madeleines*), which evoked a strange sense of nostalgia. Stein's metaphoricality is unemotionally chaotic, tautological and devoid of a hint of longing for the past though. Metalinguistic use of language that self-reflexively comments on its own use through abstract (cubic) multiperspectivity.

Act 4. The ritual of setting a table for the birthday occasion ("once a season") slows down when the protagonist's fingers leisurely circle her favorite saucer, touching the wavy edges. Stein reflects on the concept of birth and rebirth, perceived as language, sometimes as poison or tobacco, later as a change in temperature, when the cold makes one want to wrap in a blanket and at the same time be uncovered because it is hot ("the question is it really the plague"). The sliced bread of the third act is accentuated in the fourth by polyphonic softness in a naturalistic manner ("use the bread as you would any breath"), and the culprit-appetite controlling all the above-mentioned processes is calmed like an ocean. Birthday every year is a cycle of reincarnations.

Numerals ("one", "two", "three", "four") and their combinations that break the timeline give a total number of 39 (paragraphs). Stein was born in 1874 + 39 = 1913 — the year the play was written.

"For the Country Entirely. A Play in Letters" (1916) [6] is the factual expatriation of Stein, who left her native country for good (and even was not buried in her birthplace (the American town of Allegheny (state of Pennsylvania)), but in the most famous cemetery in Paris, Pere Lachaise, next to the ashes of Marcel Proust and Oscar Wilde). The play was written during the First World War, when Stein lived in Majorca in neutral Spain. In a 1915 photo addressed to Karl van Vechten, she described the problematic of her own artistic method during the war period: "I am making plays quite a number of them. Conversations are easy but backgrounds are difficult but they come and stay". Text and context ("conversations are easy but backgrounds are difficult"), foreground (idea) and background (form) indicate certain difficulties in the dichotomy, in particular the background accompaniment as part of the semantic field localized by the "land", "country", "geography" of space not only from a technical, but also from a socio-political point of view and is the subject of Stein's critical considerations at the time.

The inaccessibility of "almond trees in the hill", as an exposition for a philosophical conversation with various addressees about individual worship ("worship individuality"), is the leitmotif of the epistolary play:

"Almond trees in the hill. We saw them to-day.

Dear Mrs. <...>.

I like to ask you questions. Do you believe that it is necessary to worship individuality. We do."

Specific names and surnames with a certain poetic connotation at the beginning of the letters are replaced by a gender-generalized category or

pronoun agreement ("Dear Mr.", "Dear Mrs.", "Dear girl", "Dear friends", "Dear Master", "Dear me"):

"It's easy to name a street like that.

It is.

With a view

Of trees and a hill.

<...>

Dear girl.

Grandfathers can not make sacrifices for their children.

It is not expected of them and they are not sacrificed. A great many people are sacrificed.

Oh dear yes."

The sacral status of the ancestors is correlated with the central impersonal abstraction ("Dear land") and the sacralized nostalgia for the conditionally unattainable, the lost:

"Dear land.

When I call away I do not mean that I wish the coal to burn.

<...>

Do you like a different country.

Do you mean higher up in the hills.

Not so very much higher."

The Stein-expatriate is a totally logical phenomenon that, in search of a way out of the word, temporarily goes *ex patria* ("outside the homeland"), which, of course, does not exclude the possibility of return; that is why she never fully integrates into the new geographic and socio-cultural landscape as an immigrant. The reluctance of textual identification leads Stein to metatextual identity.

The elliptical "entirely [yours]" in the title of the play is an informal form of farewell in correspondence meaning "always yours, sincerely yours, at your service," but only when the inversion is reversed to "yours entirely" is it possible to understand Stein's bitter irony about "no indeed <...> not in this country." In the treatise "The Ruler" by Niccolò Machiavelli there is a maxim about changeable and ungrateful people, their attitude towards those who succeed. After settling in Europe, Stein did not feel like an exile, because she made a conscious choice ("When I call away I do not mean that I wish the coal to burn"), but like any cosmopolitan, therefore anti-state nomad (Marie Cassatt, Edith Wharton, Juna Barnes), she subconsciously sought for roots, distancing from compatriots, but also isolating from foreigners, French or English, due to a loss of identity as a national attachment. That is why "For the Country Entirely. A Play in Letters" is self-irony, addressed to no-one in particular; these are "questionable" letters by an abstract personality, unattached to any country, and are therefore left unanswered.

Stein's story is a collage (artistic composition) like a deck of cards, which is constantly shuffled in order to obtain the most unpredictable version in a solitaire. To find out the nominal value of a card, you need to turn it over. The play, or rather a vignette, "Counting her Dresses. A Play" (1917) consists of 41

parts, which in turn consist of 1 to 7 acts, each no more than 1-2 short sentences, so it literally takes a few minutes to read the text. All syntagms (from one word, phrase or sentence) are declarative (complete absence of graphic question and exclamation marks; absence of question marks, as if everything is clear, and exclamation marks — nothing surprises, does not excite), syntactically complete, grammatically conditional, usually colloquial, cut off words pulled out of the wider context, so they are perceived as fragments of an overheard conversation, an accidental witness of which is a reader-collector of anonymous business cards with concise, sometimes apt phrases.

The lines indicate thoughts, perhaps telepathically read, recorded at least in several locations: the atelier (shop) and the cafe (salon), considering the remarks about clothes and comfort at the table:

"I do not like this table. <...> A door should be closed. <...> Have you any way of sitting. You mean comfortably. <...> She polished the table."

All the components of the calculation (dresses) are wonderful ("All numbers are beautiful to me"), so they will fit for an alleged meeting:

"For that we will make an arrangement. <...> When can you come. <...> In the evening."

The subject of imagined or recollected conversation between two women is the choice of eye-catching clothing, it proceeds in an imperative manner, emphasizing the subordination of the parties, one of which, obviously, has the trump card at her disposal:

"Do not be careless. I am careful. <...> And obedient. <...> Repeat it. I repeat it. <...> Can you cough. <...> Act quickly. <...> Can you speak quickly. <...> Can you spell quickly. <...> Can you be thankful. For what. For me. <...> And then say. Married. <...> Reflect more. <...> I do not mention clothes. No you didn't but I do. Yes I know that. <...> You do not misunderstand me. I misunderstand no one. <...> Breathe for me."

Emphasis on desire as gambling ends with the systematization of cognition (a set of relations within a defined time interval in the present)

"Have the system."

with a hidden joker:

"The meaning of windows is air. And a door. A door should be closed. <...> We can be proud of tomorrow."

The logical sequence of Stein's syntagms mentioned above is a variant of arranging sentences cut by the collage method and their schematic subordination according to the nominal. Half a century before the (cut-up) experiments of the expatriate Burroughs in the counterculture game or the RNG (Random Number Generator) in modern gaming (literally: the fascination

with computer games), Stein methodically transforms linear time into a puzzle that requires attention and patience to solve.

If nature imitates art, according to Wilde, then art (Cubism) copies Stein. In the memory portrait "Picasso" she probably defines the artistic priority not only of the famous Spanish artist, but also the obvious dilemma of her work: (re)cognition of things not through association, interpretation, feeling or recollection, but only in the present (continuous) moment visualizing them, when seeing equals knowing, as opposed to not seeing = feeling and remembering things in relation to. Hemingway's fact, indexed by Proust's sensuality, together give an egoistic obviousness that borders on psychographic graphomania, but in a progressive tense, the Bergsonian duration of time. Stein's influence on Hemingway's style is obvious, so it is correct to note the antithesis of verbosity and brevity of both respectively. Metaphorically, Dr. "FrankenStein" created, or at least conceptually imagined Hemingway the writer; therefore, Stein's misandry and Hemingway's misogyny. The present continuous tense means incomplete, which is fundamental to understanding the metatextual indivisibility, the triviality of Stein's discourse, hence the inexplicable desire to capture every moment photographically: the past (grammatically) is organized by the completed indirect mode of action (oblique), the future is idealized (perfect) and only the present is real (simple / continuous), real being, and that is why it is not just the author's drawing attention to, but its fixation in the present. Time is always modernity for Stein.

Conclusion. Analytical generalization of the main characteristics of the compositional method of Gertrude Stein in the metagenre (lyric-dramatic) level through the sequential analysis of her early plays based on the aforementioned translations and artistic transformation of the original modern theater of the mind, positions metatextuality and intermediality in the genre of drama as an adequate alternative for the reconceptualization and sound-visualized shift open for interpretation as paradoxical, illogical and abstract examples of a complex avant-garde game with shuffled rules.

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