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“The ‘insistence’ of transgressing conventionality: The Counter-Cultural  
Configuration of the early twentieth-century movement of New Woman in  
Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives*.”

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## Introduction

The relationship between language and mind can display possibilities about reality, that are significant to the social order. According to Bergson (1946), by itself, the human mind is fixity-oriented of things, and therefore, conveys a system of truths, which is understood as habits of mind, that have been imposed by human experience. This is not a surprise if we reflect on configurations led by a social oppressive system of truths that have marginalized systematically the existence of women, homosexuality, the human race as a whole, among other issues. But interestingly, with language, the fixity of mind may be transgressed through perceptions and feelings based on new affirmations about reality. Getting involved with this process of rational comprehension about reality, assumptions of a cultural dominant paradigm are challenged by the transformation towards a new mindset.

Accordingly, by using repetitions in her style of writing, Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) develops a kind of pragmatism that invites us to experience language rather than getting vague impressions from it without really being involved. In other words, becoming aware of language should be understood as the sense of disruption within conventional constructions, that are transgressed by new experiences. Thus, as this exploration of the limits of language challenges generic-fixed conceptions, a new configuration of mind is built as a form of movement affecting culture. For Stein, truths are made up of experiences. This makes sense in the praxis, however, the plight comes when these conceptions challenge the cultural paradigm. In this sense, Gertrude Stein grew up being criticized by the white-male dominant discourse, since she was totally aware of the oppressive inventions that force to generalize things in reality, specifically in terms of marginalization of women. This issue has endured several changes for many centuries in history. During Stein's times, late nineteenth and twentieth-century, the configuration of women in relation to the demand of their rights was a counter-cultural movement known as the New Woman. According to both literary and press discourse, mid- and upper-class women challenged the oppressive system of truths led by patriarchal configurations. In this sense, the dependence of men was subverted by rejecting marriage,

having an important impact not only on their sexuality or economic self-sufficiency but also on the perception of racial diversity of women conceived as a whole. However, as this movement was only constituted by a marked white social class. Consequently, lower-class women, who were mostly immigrants, remained oppressed and marginalized as their opportunities to challenge the oppressive social order were null.

Fictionally, within her 1909's publication named as *Three Lives*, Stein describes the struggles of New Woman's feminist themes but within the characterization of three marginalized women: Anna, a German lesbian immigrant who works as a servant; Melanctha, a black woman in the searching of her identity; and Lena, a German immigrant who works as a servant and then is forced to get married. The stories are focused on the representation of the complex consciousness of women through the description and the repetition of their desires, thoughts, and experiences. In this sense, *Three lives* portrays the development of the feminine identity and the struggles of marginalized women with African-American, immigrant identities and gender-stereotyped conventions. This unconventional prose demands a new sense of process formed by a descriptive characterization made up by thematic repetitions, which are coined by Stein as "insistence". Thus, the movement of repetitions became her philosophy, that not only implies the manifestation of rhythmic patterns in text, but also the emphasis of repeated vivid images of reality, that are new to habits of mind, as the text is an entire world in construction.

Given these points, this dissertation sets out to analyze and interpret Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* as a transgressive narration that makes visible the struggles of marginalized women, in contrast to The New Woman movement, which was carried out only by white women from upper social class. Therefore, the approach that this study will follow is a feminist criticism, as we consider the New Woman movement a model which is still tightly related to the beliefs of a patriarchal system, because of its racial and sexual exclusion. By the contrary, Stein, through her style of writing, defies beliefs, thoughts, moral values, and behaviors through the literary resource of insurances, based on James's pragmatic theories of truth. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis: in Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* the sexually and racially fictional image of oppressed, marginalized women is portrayed by the repetition of discursive 'insurances' in her style of writing, that transgresses the fluctuating cultural movement of the New Woman, in the early twentieth-century, constituted by a strong white-male oppressive system of truths.

It is a relevant topic to explore since, in *Three Lives*, the reader can hear voices of complex female characters who struggle to survive in a conventional society that has fixed rules concerning women's role and behavior, including issues of homosexuality, marriage, money management, and physical appearance. In fact, the text is a counter-cultural world in construction that challenges such fixed rules about femininity, exposing the hidden reality of marginalized women of the early twentieth century. In this sense, feminist theory has been subjected to reconceptualize the idea of privilege not only between women and men, but also among themselves, by taking into account the exclusion of gender, race, and class. Carasthesis (2014) advocates for intersectional feminism as a response to theoretical and political problems for contemporary feminism that excludes marginalized women. The arousal of Black feminist movement in the United States, which includes women from all different marginalized spaces (Latin women, for instance), who the majority of them were "lesbian-identified" (306), is a key to consider the experience of a holistic system of oppression, rather than acknowledging distinctive analytical ones, such as "class" and "gender" oppressions, that "distorts their simultaneous operation" (305) within their marginalized context of life (e.g. immigration, social class differences, economic opportunities, physical appearances, etc.). Thus, their experiences are conveyed as part of "multiple categories of oppression in play at once" (308). From the analysis of Stein's narratives, it is essential to highlight that stereotypes and prejudices concerning race and sexuality remain in this day and age. Therefore, it is an issue that oversteps the fictional barrier.

Taking this hypothesis into account, we develop the following objectives to guide a close reading focused on key concepts that unfold the configuration of the consciousness of the marginalized female characters:

- Collect textual repetitions of insistences in the narratives of Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* that are related to the oppression of sexual and racial marginalized female characters.
- Relate philosophical theories of mind to Stein's conception of language.
- Interpret *Three Lives* and the relation between the consciousness of female characters and the philosophy of mind.
- Analyze and identify insistences not only in micro but also macro spectrum between the complete portray of characters.

- Illustrate and compare critically the images of marginalized women that represent a transgressive configuration of an outcast female thought and behavior by the social conception of New Woman.

The dissertation is structured as the following: a theoretical framework, presentation of methodology, and the analysis and interpretations of insinuations in *Three Lives*. First, the theoretical framework is composed by two subsections; one presents the transgressive nature of William's James Pragmatism concerning the structure of habits of mind and its influence in Stein's style of writing, and the other provides information about the New Woman and the repercussions it has in the American society. Both sub-sections are crucial to contextualize the novel in a period characterized by cultural changes that question the social order. Second, we develop a methodology to collect and analyze insinuations to conduct the interpretation in the following section. Third, in the interpretation of the results section, we integrated the information of the theoretical framework to analyze the configuration of the consciousness of each female character. Finally, in the conclusion section, the main themes detached from the analysis are highlighted concerning the repercussion they have in the literary field and the current society.

## Language and the New Configuration of Mind

The complexity of language has been used and formulated as a mechanism of transgression Gertrude Stein's works as she has experimented with new forms of repetitions and non-conventional patterns in her writing. Most of her experimental treatment of language must be acknowledged and understood from her early knowledge of both science and art, which are meant to avoid generalities and confusion in her prose. Philosophically, Bergson treats language as a "confusion" in the realm of "science and metaphysics" (Bergson 12) since the human understanding of change or movement tends to seek for their fixity (13), in which images and position of the movement are expected, rather than their duration in the creation process. Taking into account the latter aspect of duration as the main feature to be considered for the measurement of change and movement, Gertrude Stein and her Jamesian continuous present technique by portraying characters and events has definitely contributed to explore what Bergson considers "a certain number of extremities of intervals, or moments" (10). Nevertheless, and as it was stated, the complexity of language within the configuration of its movement leads to reflect on the "creative evolution" of duration, in which "there is perpetual creation of possibility and not only of reality" (20). In other words, a "retrograde movement" is reached from the flux of different affirmations that are considered as valid for measuring both "a series of positions and ... states" (16) within movement, since language's scope not only prefigures the present but the "past and an explanation of itself by its predecessors" (24). Bergson's philosophical system in Gertrude Stein's conception about language reflects a part of reality that can be grasped "in its natural purity" (29) within a series of meanings that are embedded in her repetitions and the unconventional depiction of reality in readers' minds that transcends time. In fact, Stein's philosophical discourse in her prose shares with Bergson the idea of "melody as a metaphor for temporality" (Posman 106). This is evident in the notion of temporality gained from Jamesian influence within the stream of consciousness technique, especially from 1910 onwards, "by the rhythm of the persons ... she portrayed" (107). Wagner-Martin discusses the characterization of thought in which her fiction in *Three Lives* is full of mappings that conform complex characters (Wagner-Martin 17).



## The influence of American Pragmatism in Gertrude Stein's writing

Several authors have considered William James a significant force in Stein's writings concerning American Pragmatism. Watson cites James' book *Pragmatism*, in which James explains that Pragmatism represents the empiricist attitude since it turns away from fixed principles, closed systems, absolutes, and origins (3). That is to say, Pragmatism is a transgressive field against dogmas and the pretense of finality in truth, opening new possibilities of nature (6). James questions what has been affirmed in philosophy and psychology, regarding consciousness, mind, and introspection; in fact, he considers consciousness an entity with independent functions from the body in which individuals acquire knowledge through an internal observation. According to James' theories, introspection involves both observation and introspection (Myers 22), since individuals notice states that they have already *felt*, so they observe their consciousness saved in short-term memory. In a similar fashion, Stein's influence in the development of an unconventional style of writing and configuration of truth had its ground in relation to James and his conception about reality. For instance, Bergson discusses James' theory of truth, in which affirmations are configured by the simplicity of mind (Bergson 248) "beyond human experience ... [through] ways of generalization" (250). Accordingly, both perceptions and feelings are taken into account "before being thought" (252). This conception implies an individual contribution which is always changing, and opposing what modern philosophy discusses about, whereby "experienced is organized by human thought in general" (253). In this sense, Gertrude Stein's style of writing in *Three Lives* remarks through the integration of insistences in her narratives the innovative feature of truth in American Pragmatism, created from what does not exist (254). Following this line, what is relatable to James' Pragmatism and theory of reality with Stein is the utility of reality, which "results in a reversal of the order," placing a diversity of configuration of truths (257). Besides, Flanagan explains William James's Pragmatism as:

A method for doing what matters most: finding a way of believing, thinking, and being that will make life meaningful, that will make life worth living in the widest possible

sense. Pragmatism involves first and foremost the intellectual virtues of honesty and humility. (25)

Therefore, Pragmatism emphasizes people's minds configuration concerning their thoughts, feelings, habits, beliefs, and what makes their lives meaningful, which is discovered through the process of introspection. Similarly, Stein emphasizes how the consciousness of her *Three Lives'* characters influences their decisions, beliefs, and feelings, and how it builds the reality of the American society of the early twentieth century. Ultimately, this unconventional part of an integrated reality is significant for the themes that will be discussed within her narratives, in which marginalization on women functions not only through a single system but also through different mechanisms of oppression.

Concerning James' conception of truth, Putnam, explains that James understands the idea that human beings "help to create truth" combined with the Peircean notion that truth is related to the judgments we are fated to believe based on experiences. In brief, people's actions determine what will happen, and hence, what will be true in the world (167). He adds that the criterion for considering something real is linked to what we are fated to believe, in which *it*, we believe, may be an ideal of moral order. It is important to highlight that both Pierce and James disagree with the "Consensus theory of truth" which consists in that "the community of inquirers will agree on a certain opinion, in the long run, is that the opinion is true" (169); a community cannot decide what it is true since we are coerced by both reality and the body of previous belief (170). In fact, James insists that truth must put individuals in contact with reality.

Regarding James on "agreement with reality, he defines truth in light of Pragmatism. In Pragmatism, truth is an agreement with reality or realities, in which truth happens to an idea; "it becomes true, is made true by events" (172). James says that true ideas are those we can "assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify" (172). Additionally, how ideas correspond to reality presupposes the notion of "conjunctive experiences." Since impressions are not simple in mind, they are not "impressions" but "pure experience" (174); as James explains, "Reality just *is* the flux of 'pure experience'" (Putnam 174). Thus, it is the search for external relations that leads James to seek particular "conjunctive relations" that can be observed to connect our ideas with what they are about (175). According to this theory, beliefs are made true by the

process of retroactive verification. Any particular verification terminates at a time; however, the process of verifying is endless. For instance, past theories —as Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean space, Aristotelian logic, among others— have influenced the present scientific methods (177-178). Accordingly, James explains that verified claims are "true within those borders of experience" (Putnam 178), but only future experiences can decide whether they are absolutely true. Thus, one statement which is verified may later turn out to be false.

In light of James' notions of truth and reality, it is almost mandatory not to think of the oriental vision from Tao's epigrams on the movement of perceptions about reality. This movement reflects both an inward "rational comprehension" and a "poetic sense" (Soublette VI) that set out an "internal transformation" (VII) of individuals. It is crucial to acknowledge Bergson's retrograde movement of the truth, as changes of perception create possibilities in reality. Not surprisingly, the plight appears when these possibilities subvert those "assumptions about reality and human nature" that belongs to a dominant "cultural paradigm" (II). Interestingly, throughout history, the system of truths constituted by a passing paradigm has been crucially conceived as universal, which as a consequence brings oppression and marginalization of groups of people. Conversely, the real human experience has proved that conventional assumptions are "provisional and susceptible to change" (IV). Thus, Tao of Lao Tse considers that the "mutation of all events" in reality shapes our "world knowledge" (9), as it transforms thoughts, perceptions, and values (II). Ultimately, even though this movement is open to an "infinite variety" (9) of truths and possibilities, it is ruled by a structure or "Internal Law" (9) enacted by the image of the Wise. Due to its simplicity in terms of approaching real knowledge, the wise play a significant role in the arousal of a "new mindset" (II), as it justifies the reason for existing without any moral tendency supported by cultural paradigm (9).

Epigrams XIV and XVI introduces a retrograde movement as a medium to comprehend reality, which is considered a spiritual experience. Firstly, the verses of epigram XIV "return to the not-Being/ Form without form/image without object/ it is the dark of chaos" (13-16)<sup>1</sup> refers to the movement toward the internal essence of the consciousness that is called "retrograde movement" (Soublette 64). This spiritual movement toward the not-Being is similar

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<sup>1</sup> Translated version: "Retoma al no-Ser /Forma sin forma /imagen sin objeto (13-16)

to James' retrospection thesis, that "precede confident verdicts about one's one aesthetic, emotional, conceptual, and moral needs" (Myers 22). Both Tao's retrograde movement and retrospection involve an internal inspection that is not made contemporaneously, but it is looking back on past experiences. The purpose of this inner movement is described in the following verses, "Who sticks to the old path/ to order the Being of nowadays/ can know the primordial beginning/ such is the Tao's connecting thread" (19-22)<sup>2</sup>. The last verse represents the principal traditions designed by the word "Chi" that have been given orally from the past generations to the present ones (64). In essence, in Taoism, previous knowledge is relevant to understand current and future time, similar to Bergson's modern perception of time, emphasized on the *durée* "the persistence of the moment from the past into the present, and bridging the present into the future (2)".

Epigram XVI refers to the Return or movement in which the Wise goes toward the Not-Being, represented by the Roots (70):

who finds the perfect void/ keeps his complete serenity/ from the ten thousand beings  
who are moving/ then, he can contemplate his own evolution.

.....  
return to the Root means quietness/ quietness means to return to the original condition/  
return to the original condition is the Eternal Law (1-4, 7-9)<sup>3</sup>.

The Not-Being may be pure essence, or, in psychological terms, a mental state without content (70). Moreover, the complete serenity is the state in which the individual can capture the meaning of the world. This comprehension is portrayed in nature, where leaves and petals return to the field they had emerged. Concerning the quietness, it is the valorization of the receptive attitude of the life in front of the action emphasizing the simple things, the silence, humility, frugality, meditation, and discretion that converge in the movement toward the Root

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<sup>2</sup> Translated version: "Quien se atiene a la vía antigua/para ordenar el Ser de hoy/ puede entonces conocer el primordial comienzo. Tal es el hilo conductor del Tao." (19-22).

<sup>3</sup> "Aquel que alcanza el vacío perfecto/ mantiene su plena serenidad./ De los diez mil seres que se mueven/ puede entonces contemplar su evolución." (1-4)  
Volver a la raíz significa quietud/ quietud significa volver a la condición original volver a la /condición original esa es la Ley Eterna. (7-9)

(70). Additionally, Soubllette explains that the Eternal Law is paradoxical, because of the constant mutation of things, which changes in a deep sense when they go out from the non-existence (consciousness) toward the existence (the external body) and back again to the non-existence. Thus, who follows the Tao improves his understanding of humanity and keeps safe because of the law of cosmic reciprocity (71). Taking Soubllette's interpretation into account, we may compare the first verses with the idea of an unconventional individual from the thousands of ones that can evolve because of his open perceptions that question the set of truths of beliefs in society. It is the transgressive attitude of one person that allows the dynamic mutation of social order and values.

## Gertrude Stein's style and The Configuration of the Mind

Regarding language and mind, William James suggests that “language is one form of experience” (Watson 36); however, phenomena cannot be experienced; thus, people fix them in their memories. Additionally, he says that “the dance of the ideas is a copy, somewhat mutilated and altered, or the order of phenomena,” and this dance is represented by words (36). Thus, language is not only experienced but also a means to record experiences. In fact, through her innovative perspectives, Stein creates “a laboratory of conceptual and intellectual thought,” which was criticized “stressing the insanity of Stein’s prose” (Sitrin 104). Furthermore, Watson explains that language produces the structure of the mind, assuming this theory as partly true, Stein could try to change her readers’ habits of mental association by changing the arrangement of words. In *Principles of Psychology*, James states that the mind consists of arrangements and arrangements of arrangements formed by the linguistic experience. Stein applies this scientific theory about the brain as an attempt to change people’s minds through her unconventional style of writing (Watson 37). For instance, in *Three Lives*, Stein uses several insinuations together with transgressing grammatical rules. This use of language motivates the readers to rearrange their minds in order to read and interpret Stein’s works. According to William James’ theories, future actions will be affected by each mental experience; therefore, Stein’s works can have consequences beyond the field of literature since they offer new ways of understanding not only language but also the social order. In fact, James asserted when he states that the brain is “an organ whose internal equilibrium is always in a state of change” in which “the figures are always rearranging themselves” (Watson 39). Following this line, Schoenbach (2004) proposes that Stein follows the American Pragmatism concerning the relationship between shock and information with immersion (240). It is based on James’ *Principles of Psychology*, which aims to break off habits that determine human values, beliefs, actions, and also conceptions about history since pragmatic modernism “defies traditional understanding of modernism and of cultural critique” (240). Hence, Stein, through Pragmatism, aims to shock the audience using

insistences that question the habits and social conventions since they have “an intensifying effect—a snowballing logic of repetition and amplification” (245).

Accordingly, Sitrin argues that the state in which mind operates in Jamesian psychology as a stream of consciousness is defined by the "repetition of words and concepts" that both change and alter their meaning (105-106). For instance, insistences in the narratives of *Three Lives* play a significant role in the development of a form of characterization, which emphasizes "characters' stream of consciousness and an omniscient narrator ..., [accepting] the Jamesian notion of characterology" (107). In this sense, we agree with the author as the archetype in which characters in *Three Lives* are set, configures a limit to significant changes. Therefore, readers compelled "to consider all the facts equally" (108), since the information about characters is repeated continuously and emphasized "regardless of time or event" in which the story is developed; another Jamesian notion which is known as "continuous present" (108). Interestingly, Gertrude Stein can be contrasted with later contemporary writers, such as Virginia Woolf. The latter also developed a form of characterization in which the idea of stream of consciousness, conceived a style of writing, is taken by Bojesen in one of her most representative works, *The Waves* "as a pioneering exploration of the experience of consciousness" (Bojesen 99). In this exploration, a philosophy of education appears concerning how the dispositions of individuals within *The Waves* undergo both an "education of consciousness" and a "conscious understanding of who they are" (101). Conversely, Stein's notion of characterization in *Three Lives* does not imply a change of the archetype in which female characters are set, as her radical and unconventional way of presenting information through insistences struggles with Woolf's technique, in which characters not only "consciously ... communicate their dispositions to themselves but ... [also] with one another" (111). In fact, Stein accounts for a "constant cycle of assertion and realization of the same simple thing" (Sitrin 107) within the development of characters in *Three Lives*, in which language affects the way thought is built. Thus, new perceptions about the notion of reality are set by Stein's style of writing to distinguish different forms of truth, as she does by configuring different images of marginalization that affects women in *Three Lives* that are comparable to the experience of American women during the early twentieth century.

Kirsh discusses how Stein uses grammar, by transgressively supposing that “grammar uses invention” within her process of composition (p 285). Otherwise, grammar becomes “useless” (p 293). Indeed, Stein resists to think about rhetoric as a study reduced to oratory, and therefore, separated from speaking, logic, philosophy, literature, and poetry. By the contrary, Stein includes those disciplines in the topics since her early writings to portray the human experience. For Stein, grammar does not concern rules of correct usage, but it is “a kind of discovery that occurs during the composition process, a discovery made possible within the act of composing” (293). Concerning insistences, it underscores the contingency of language: it changes over time even if we use the same words since duplication is always contemporaneous in itself (297-298). Stein’s interest in repetition is concerned with how ideas are transferred from writer to audience, past to present, and memory to words (298); in this fashion, writing is an activity and an intellectual recreation. Following the Jamesian particular influence of movement and change in Stein’s composition, Emerson relates the empirical philosophy of William James to Stein’s contribution by exposing the “distinction between experience and grammar” (Emerson 75); from her prose to the latest more abstract writings. For instance, the compelled experience towards readers within her 1909’s narratives in *Three Lives* was the description of three working-class women stories in a “strangely repetitious language” (Wagner-Martin 3), which makes reality the scenario for the workings of experience. In this sense, Emerson asserts that the experience unconventionally challenges language as it is capable of breaking its habits of which are mechanically acquired (76) without letting a path to difference.

Moving into her original writing by using repetitions, Stein's conception of language responds to the need for movement and existing in her composition. As a matter of fact, her particular system of expression, which is developed through her style and language elements, may "exist within the general system of language ..., [that] create a vivid image" of reality in her prose (Manjavidze 2). She herself has affirmed, in "Portraits and Repetitions", in terms of being that the idea about "moving is existence" (Stein 165), which allows us to agree with her in the acknowledgment of repetition by the transgressive function of its essence. Within the internal part of a repetition, she considers that emphasis makes a significant change because "we all insist [on] varying the emphasizing (sic)" (Stein 168). Even though her conception of emphasis as the self of repetition can be perceived as pretentious, it is important to highlight



that movement is part of our "inevitable repetition in human expression" (168), and that regardless of the type of repetition in writing, "even with no particular placement of the words" it is emphasis that will be provided (Manjavidze 2). Moreover, the stylistic device of repetition embedded in language "carry more or less [a] degree of emotiveness" (3), which is directly connected to Stein's claiming on insistences whose emphasis implies to be alive, and "if it is alive it is never saying anything in the same way" (Stein 171). Accordingly, apart from the explicit repetition of key-words and key-phrases in a piece of writing, in Stein's *Three Lives* is likely to associate the insistence structures with two different compositional patterns that allows what Manjavidze has classified, on the hand one as Scattered Repetition, in which "a word, a phrase, [or] a sentence is repeated throughout the whole text several times, ... [but] without any definite order" (7); and on the other, as Thematic Repetition, in which a "theme of the text is repeated without any models of repetition" (7). To illustrate the functions of these two types of repetitions, *Three Lives* separated into three different narratives portrays the arduous and complex life of three marginalized women, Anna, Melanctha, and Lena who are affected in terms of gender and culture by a global system of oppression that leads them to experience a deadly end; which compromises both a similar behavior and configuration of other female voices around them in the narratives as well.

Stein's conception of reality within the use of repetitions in her writing is related to Deleuze's difference philosophy in several relevant points. Both authors consider repetition as a mechanism to discover something new, making repetitions significant and purposeful. Firstly, Deleuze differentiates generalities from repetition, the previous one refers to the qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences in which one term may be exchanged for another (Deleuze 1). Conversely, "repetition is a necessary and justified conduct only in relation to [what] cannot be replaced" (1). For instance, in the domain of lyrical language, every term is irreplaceable and can only be repeated; however, that one word can pass by degrees from one thing to another does not prevent it being different in kind (2). The degree of each repetition that marks a difference is similar to Stein's proposal about the distinction between repetition and insistence. She says in "Portraits and Repetitions" that repetition always has the same theme, but if such repetition starts to express, then it is not repetition but insistence as it is the essence of that repetition (Stein 167). Thus, both authors

identified the singularity of repetitions or insistences (in the case of Stein), since they contain a unique essence that differentiates them from the term which is replicated.

Besides, both Deleuze's repetition and Stein's insistences are transgressive. Deleuze explains that "in every respect, repetition is a transgression. It put the law into question; it denounces its nominal or general character in favor of a more profound and more artistic reality" (3); Indeed, repetition is against the equivalent form of the laws, which represent the resemblances of nature through generalization. In opposition to generalization, repetitions offer a new singular power that differs from the resemblances of nature, and because they confront the rules of the laws of nature, they are transgressive. The same as Stein, such transgression is shown through listening, speaking and the arts. Deleuze says that the sign of repetition forms the real power of language in speech and writing since both give to words the existence of *hic et nunc* [here and now] (13). Stein understands language through speaking and listening as a way of knowing since, through conversations, people's will to live is expressed (Stein, 170). Additionally, in speaking, we can notice when individuals add something new to something, making such insistence different and therefore unique. The memory of habits (Deleuze) and remembering (Stein) do not allow difference. When people repeat habits, it is an automatic action that does not allow the addition of new elements, and therefore it is static and does not develop a different idea. Similarly, Stein says that remembering is confusion, so it cannot be insistence. In both cases, There is not any singularity about an idea or the essence of repetition, and therefore, it may not be transgressive.

Interestingly, Deleuze's mechanism of repetition and difference takes place in the individual's mind in which repetitions allow the movement and the expression of ideas. There are two kinds of repetitions: static and dynamic. Static repetition "refers to back to a single concept, which leaves a simple only an external difference between the ordinary instances of a figure" (20). Conversely, dynamic repetition involves the acting cause, and it evolves in a bodily movement; because of this movement, it carries an internal difference from one distinctive point to another (20). Both categories compose the structure of the repetition; that means, it is crucial not only to consider the external of the concept, since the difference is internal to the idea, and this difference allows the creativity of dynamism that corresponds to the idea (24). Explicitly, external repetition is an ordinary one, but the internal is distinctive and singular. They are interconnected since "the consequences of the first are unfolded only in

the second (25)", that means, the external form is mere repetition if it does not contain the singularity of the internal, which includes the essence and the "self" of repetition. It is essential to highlight those static repetitions are related to memory, habits, generalities, and references. Deleuze explains that a concept may be the principle of a particular existing thing, having an infinite comprehension which makes possible remembering, recognition, memory and self-consciousness (11); in static repetition, novelty passes to the mind which represent itself; because the mind has memory and habits, it is capable of forming new concepts and subtracting something new from the repetitions. Additionally, Freud identified a blockage of consciousness of knowledge (14); he explains this blockage as repression or resistant that makes repetition a real restriction. Given these points, individuals repress themselves through generalization and memory since they repeat habits automatically without making any change or adding a new idea; by the contrary, when people subtract an original idea from repetition, it allows the movement toward difference.

Likewise, Stein is aware of Deleuze's mechanism regarding static and dynamic repetitions, evidenced in the way she uses language in her works. Watson says that Stein expresses the meaning between words and utterances in conversations that shows the circumstances in which people live (3). Besides, her style of writing makes people being aware of their linguistic processes: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (4) since she highlights communication and how it influences the way the world is seen and manipulated. Watson cites Rorty, who says that "a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change" (6). In a few words, Stein uses language as an instrument of cultural change since she focuses on everyday conversations. In fact, Stein's unconventional style of writing proposes to the reader a brand-new method of reading because reading in a different way involves changing the order of individuals' minds that may also affect the arrangement of the personal and social life.

Interestingly, Stein's unconventional and "marginal mode of communication" (Chevaillier 450) makes her style develop and refine "gender roles and [their] representation" (450) as well. In fact, the number of emphases conveyed by each insistence in the narratives of *Three Lives* is an invitation to reflect on the nature of language (455) along with its materiality to both describe and probe "cultural restrictions on women's lives" (Wagner-Martin 8). Besides, it is important to highlight the impact of repetitions in Stein's style of writing from which

variations are composed not only with regular but also irregular patterns of repetition (456). Brito defines these variations in Stein's composition as the liberation of the literal conception of language. The language throughout her literary works has been configured as an unconventional systematic notion that can be personalized (Brito 423). In fact, this is the proof about the importance of experience to depict a continuous representation of reality, challenging the mental habits to capture language (224). For instance, the exposition of marginalized women in the prose of *Three Lives* denotes not only an intellectual but an emotional balance within the use of insurances contained in sentences and paragraphs (225). Additionally, Davidson reflects on the nature of her prose as a world in constant construction and which "can no longer be taken for granted" (Andrews & Bernstein 197), because static paradigm of rules and features in language become an active process of exchange of meaning rather than following a conventional model of fixed meanings (198). This process implies the acceptance of consciousness in her writing, as a liberation of past meanings and connotations, acquired individually through the mechanism of the mind (Brito 226). This Jamesian reference in her writing invites us to reflect again on her development of language as an unconventional mode of representing the unconventional reality eclipsed by a global oppressive system of truths on women.

According to Lehrer, within the structure of *Three Lives* language is taken itself as a subject, which is definitely a consequence of her experience in science (Lehrer 145) as well as of her close relationship with works of both Henry and William James. Through language, she questions individual mental habits that compel readers to both pay attention and to develop a new sense of closeness from her unconventional writing (147). From her early writings, including her 1909's book of narratives, Stein gave special treatment to the "usefulness of description ... to the point of reiteration" (Wagner-Martin 17). Furthermore, Lang considers Stein's style of writing as a radical understanding "of traditional generic distinctions" in which things might be renamed by the rhetoric of her emphasis (Lang 1-2). In fact, Stein develops awareness about the structure of the language which must be acknowledged by the innate use of words and expressions (Lehrer 157). In other words, a new arrangement of language is established by her unconventional composition since its realism challenges the mind by reading without remembering (151) the events embedded in her writing. In this sense, the arousal of this new expression of reality and existing proves to Lang a pedagogical dimension of her unconventional narrative in which both thinking and writing require the recognition of

knowledge and narration (Lang 4). In other words, Stein's new conception of language conveys a new configuration of mind since her prose by using repetitions emphasize a world of ideas which "from a different angle" (6) are developed to question habits of language.

Finally, within this new arrangement of language, a "part of the structure of the brain" (Lehrer 167) is also involved as Stein's complex composition challenges conventional approaches when acknowledging the importance of new realism, during the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the new configuration between her prose and thought implies the existence of rhythmic patterns (Lang 7), which are essential to the processes of listening and speaking in her composition. Moreover, through saying and listening it is possible to understand people's thoughts, feelings, and intentions by the movements of what they are saying and how they are using insistences and rhythm as a way of expression. In fact, Stein emphasizes the meaningfulness of sounds concerning repetition due to repeating is "to come to know and understand, to gain a 'completed understanding'" (Pound 27).

To sum up, Stein has an unconventional and complex conception of language, which is evidenced in her writings. It can be explained through philosophical theories that challenge the understanding of language and how it works in the human mind. Firstly, Bergson treats language as a confusion since it is always in movement, which humans try to seek for its fixity. Equally, to William James and Stein language is considered dynamic; therefore, it allows changes, creative evolution, and movement. Additionally, Stein considers language a system with vivid images that represent a human expression. Secondly, since language changes, it can modify the human mind and habits. Several authors point out the ability of language to build up the structure of mind and changing realities. In fact, William James' theory of truth explains that truth has to agree with reality through experience, in which a language records experiences and sets them in the memories. Stein notices the need for challenging conventional reality, and she did it through the use of language. Thirdly, repetition is a useful resource of language to allow change. According to the studies we mentioned, repetition may emphasize new realities from a different angle; it is a way of liberation of language; it portrays the human experience, and it can provoke a shock in the human mind because of its snowball effect. It is essential to highlight Deleuze's philosophy of difference, which states repetition allows movement and always adds new elements that trigger on difference and, therefore, in evolution. This understanding of repetition is similar to Stein's insistence and its dynamic nature. Finally, it is crucial to understand this view of language and how it works in mind since *Three Lives* portrays an alternative reality of marginalized women. Indeed, Stein, through a continuous present and

insistence, applied theories regarding pragmatism and philosophy to show the truth of unconventional women.

## The New Woman's Counter-Cultural Movement

### Modernism and the New Woman

Since this literary work has a feminist criticism approach, it is crucial to contextualize the role of women in Modernism, which implies changes in the social structure, starting with the conception of female identity. Bradshaw & Dettmar explain that Modernism points out the present or “just the now” (2) that evokes the daily and the stubbornly ordinary even the sordid (3) since the ordinary becomes the road to the extraordinary. Additionally, “the truth of modernism was always more complex, various, messy than was maintained in the official (and reactive) version” (3). Regarding American Modernism, Morrison explains that American writers gain a dominant cultural force related to the configuration of national identity through the arts (12). In this context, questions about what is a nation emerge as, could immigrants, Native Americans or Afro-Americans considered truly Americans? For instance, some people argue that Afro-Americans have a crucial role in cultural contribution as they pointed to jazz, blues, dances, and folklore (13). Henceforth, American writers create an “imagined community” expressed by American literature.

Concerning philosophy in modernity, Rabaté says that most historians consider it “a movement of thought that rejected religious authority and ended up stressing the political freedom allied with scientific knowledge” (9). Albeit in philosophy, arts, and literature, “modernism” keeps having an ambiguous designation, Pippin summarizes it as “both a heightened and affirmative modern self-consciousness ... as well as an intense dissatisfaction with the sterile, exploitative, commercialized, or simply ugly forms of life apparently characteristic of social modernization” (10). Additionally, the authors agree that philosophy must be radically transformed, beginning from the most basic assumptions, starting with the truth (12). This brief description of modern philosophy reflexes the influence it has in Stein's works since, in *Three Lives*, there is a criticism against a system of truths imposed by institutions that organize paradigms of society; meanwhile, it creates a new way of living based on the experiences of marginalized women who live in Bridgepoint. In the matter of language,



there was a relation between linguistic structures and political structures, in which the later was approached more directly concerning race, class, and gender. According to Berry, the role of language was to explain such approaches concerning economic and social forces (121). This definition matches with the themes portrayed in fictional female characters in *Three Lives* concerning the struggles of women in a marginalized context to achieve social freedom.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, many conceptions between the image of women and their roles started radically to change, transgressing not only a patriarchal system of oppression but also a social mindset of truths. Significantly within this period, or as Ledger has called the *fin of the siècle* (Ledger 1), a new movement was developed, mostly by the existence of a literary culture (1), known as The New Woman. In fact, its configuration was "predominantly a journalistic phenomenon' and novelistic 'product of discourse" (3) that struggled with the unstable conflict about the idea of gender (2). In 1894, the cultural idea about the New Woman started to become 'the center of controversy' (9), as it was subjected to a male-dominant culture. Nevertheless, it was also formed by multiple identities, both coming from fiction and from the 1880s and 1890's periodical press (2). This latter context encouraged the merge of the first generation of the New Women throughout those years that challenged the nineteenth-century ideal of women's behavior. According to Cruea, in this period, the model about the True Womanhood "was ... imprinted upon girls', whose behaviors and habits of mind were oppressively 'trained to be obedient and exhibit great-self control" (Cruea 188). Conceptions about how social habits of mind were configured on the image of women started to be transgressive in this first approach as a countercultural movement.

Not surprisingly, this new configuration of women before social constraints took place exclusively in upper and middle-class women's life. Therefore, racially marginalized women, who belonged to either a lower-class or working-class saga, had to remain oppressed by a male social system of truths. In their case, mostly as domestic servants, they were 'employed by "new bourgeois" families,' where they had neither chance nor support from these families for their own well being (Cruea 194). In other words, due to their position in society that classified them in terms of appearance and social class, these women are marginalized regarding the primary focus of the 'The New Woman phase ... on entirely "emancipating" women from the social expectations and conventions' (198), led by a traditional oppressive system. In light of this unstable scenario, both the male and bourgeois class promoted an ideological discourse "on the New Woman ... in order to ridicule and to control renegade women" (Ledger 9). Fortunately, many social issues "that plagued nineteenth-century women' were primarily dealt with



solutions by the presence of literature that 'allowed women a public forum' (Cruea 197) to confront their concerns about social restrictions.

Getting into the twentieth century and near the second generation of women's movement, this female emancipating process became definitely "a product of the middle and upper classes" (Ledger 16). Conversely, Rabinovitch (2017) defines the idea of The New Woman as 'a contemporary, modern understanding of femininity, one that emphasized youth, visibility, and mobility as well as demand for greater freedom and independence' (2). She adds that those women "varied by age, class, race, ethnicity, and geographical region, offering a spectrum of behaviors and appearances with which different women could identify" (2). Therefore, this new women's movement searches for being autonomous and for developing their own identity through the visibility of their demands. However, we disagree with Rabinovitch when she says this movement included women of different ages, class, and race as this manifestation was exclusively conducted by young white women of middle and high social classes. Consequently, the latter may not share the difficulties of marginalized women, who still struggle with racial stereotypes and financial limitations.

In opposition to the True Womanhood ideal, the Real Womanhood belief set in The New women's movement was different in nature in various dimensions, most importantly within employment opportunities as a means of survival (Cruea 191). In this sense, a white-economic privilege played an essential role as women started to participate in the public sphere of 'sports activities such as ... gymnastics [and] skating' and to bring 'changes to fashion' (192). In fact, the Gibson girls, as a representation of the "New Woman," enjoyed the "privileges of white ladyhood" (Rabinovitch 6).

## **Ambiguous and Transgressive Configurations of The New Woman**

The process of configuration of the New Women's ideal, and the encouragement from press and literature, led it to challenge the dominant social, sexual, economic, and racial codes. Interestingly, "The New Woman as a category was by no means stable" (Ledger 10), due to different conceptions about marriage, economic independence, and homosexuality, since it was regarded as "sexually transgressive ... and as a force for change" (6). There was total marginalization against this counter-cultural movement, as it was meant both as morally and sexually decadent, in which women became stigmatized as "mannish" and as an "asexual biological type" (16). Struggles regarding these new transgressive relationships began within the 'upper- and middle-class women's choices' that challenged marriage and motherhood (Cruea 187). Consequently, new arousal of consciousness among privileged women started to be reinforced by their seek for an intellectual position as "an educated spinster, able to support herself, as more desirable than that of an unhappy or abused wife" (193).

Following this line of intellectual development on upper- and middle-class women, Halleck (2016) highlights the necessity of achieving independence of opinion in America during the nineteenth century to become autonomous. In this context, he considers Emerson's "The American Scholar" (1834) as an intellectual declaration of independence (112-113). Emerson explains that the "Man thinking" has to renounce the conventional way of learning concerning to repeat what others had said like a parrot, instead of that, the Man thinking should develop his own mind (23). One of the steps to develop the mind is learning from ordinary life, as he says, "life is our dictionary" and "thinking is the function. Living is the functionary" (33). This new configuration of The New Woman implied the transgression of new forms of thinking about the image of women in the public realm, which were oppressed by male-dominant systems of truths. Women became not only 'engaged in the cultural realm' (Cruea 196) of patriarchal oppressions but also in 'close-knit, female-only environments' (201). Suarez (1997) states that this new configuration of women's behavior and relationships became a "problematic ... to the tradition of authority, as well as to the authority of tradition" (Suarez 22).

The sexual segregation of the public space imposed on women during the late nineteenth century (Cruea 193) led them to subvert social beliefs about sexuality that challenge marriage and heterosexual relationships. In fact, after Wilde's trials in 1895, the idea of The New Woman 'also became associated with homosexuality' (Ledger 5). Crucially, lesbian relationships in this period were oppressed as they were considered inaccurate and hidden under the euphemistic term of "Romantic Friendship." Summers explains that during this period, romantic, exclusive, and sometimes erotic romances among white women of middle and upper classes were usually with the condition that it cannot affect heterosexuality and marriage (601). Besides, Furneaux (2009) adds that Romantic friendship was not considered just a prelude for a wedding but also a "subversive outlet for ambitions and hopes that went beyond familiar domestic subjects" (25). Thus, female romantic friendship between white women implies the invisibility of lesbian relationships not only of themselves but of marginalized women, which is triggered by their disconformity with heterosexism, as the only sexual orientation morally accepted and, therefore, imposed in society. According to Downey & Friedman (1997), heterosexism is the moral system of heterosexual practices that "denies, denigrates, and stigmatized," any form of behavior not associated with it (481). In opposition to oppressive psychological theories, the preference of women for a female company is not a pathology as Freudian hypothesis said, but simply that those homosexual desires arise for the intimacy among women who feel that "other [women] are warm, supportive, understanding, empathic, expressive, and caring" (489).

In tandem with the development of this female movement, cultural manifestations started to be instinctively more involved with gender and the way women were socially structured. Therefore, Suárez's *Modernism and Gender Trouble* (1997) highlights Foucault's ideas about power and freedom to define not only the "collective" but also the "individual identity." These configurations are constituted by phenomena associated with 'the emergence of ... gender, gender-related behavior, and sexuality' (16). Crucially, from Foucault's point of view, Rozmarin (2005) concludes that individuals both endure and articulate power, which means a struggle when taking into account the 'open dynamic of effects between individuals' (2) as they interact, because of different social conventional conceptions limited to sex, class, and race. The 'focal point of resistance,' in other words, their counter-cultural behavior in front

of forces of power, are subjected to 'a set of practical political possibilities' that either subvert or maintain 'imposed social mechanisms' (5). Ultimately, Suarez reinforces the impact of this issue by identifying the appearance of gender in European modernity not only as a struggle for developing an individual identity but a social one that ambiguously normalizes the marginalization of these oppressed identities (Suarez 19).

Getting into the early twentieth century, Balsam states that stereotypic oppression "involved [a] clinical practice" (85), from which the cultural invisibility of immigrants, black and lesbian women became a social taboo. This resistance implies segregation and invisibilization against these communities (because we believe they are not minorities), as Blackmer (1993) states that they were treated "as biologically inferior entities or social problems" (262). This misogynistic view from society responds to a behavior pattern from this powerful counter-cultural movement through new marginalized relationships to make themselves visible in front of a patriarchal system of values. In fact, Kingstone (2009) argues that homosexual relationships developed in marginal spaces subvert and constitute a form of resistance against "boundaries of conventional masculine culture" (8). Additionally, in this sense, the inferiority of racial and class stereotypes became reinforced by the arrival of immigrants to America. Markel comments on the social conception about their "biological inferiority" as the attribution to racial degeneracy of most [these] nonwhite groups, in terms of their condition as "impoverished, malnourished, or suffering from a particular ailment" that marginalized them as "bad stock" (761). Consequently, white-dominant American cities became not only the center of "outspreading slums" but also of class tensions (762). Apart from racial stereotypes, female immigrants had to endure the marginalization of their gender within the image of the New Woman in a social paradigm of patriarchal values.

In light of this, within the psychological arena, women were also marginalized as they endorsed men's hegemony in society. In this sense, Balsam asserts that Freud's psychoanalysis ignored "lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, and racial issues" (99). Sexually oppression was developed since women were "incapable of sexually active behaviors" (85). In addition to the bias that psychoanalysts had on homosexuality to conclude that their model of behavior is framed by the phallus representation from their fathers, Downey and Friedman's reference to Siegel (1988) is key to support this study. Thus, he considered them "a consequence of their severe psychopathology" (475). In this sense, women are not only reduced to male prominence but to the symbolism of phallus. Conversely, we believe these mechanisms of oppression

accepted in society led them to establish those psychologically analyzed symptoms, such as the "lack of stable object relations, poorly developed gender identity, suicide attempts, sadomasochistic interpersonal interactions, and micropsychotic episodes" (475).

All things considered, The New Woman's struggle in developing a 'civic identity' away from marriage in society had effects' about establishing her own economic' (Cruea 200) as well. Not surprisingly, male-dominant culture and society, in general, believed that "the New Woman posed a threat to the institution of marriage ... and the image of women as dependent and protected" (Ledger 11). In fact, as a prototype, women who rejected marriage and motherhood were regarded pejoratively as Wild Woman, since it meant "a threat to the English' race" (18) and a "radical social disruption" (19). This prototype of the New woman was mostly "vilified in the periodical press during the last two decades of the nineteenth century" (12). According to Butler, marriage is an institution that benefits men in the conservation of their patrilineal identity, in which wives do not have any identity, but they only reflex the masculine image and allow the reproduction of the name of the man (53). Therefore, the culture managed by men promotes a hierarchy order in which the subordination of the female and the domination of the male is naturally conducted by a model of domination (50). Marriage endorses this model as it assures male domination; meanwhile, it leaves women with neither identity nor autonomy, but as an object with the function of reproduction. Most women were oppressively "dependent upon their husbands [only] for financial support" (Cruea 187). Therefore, motherhood as an imposed condition throughout the bourgeois contract of marriage was part of an oppressive set of beliefs about women's duties in terms of fulfillment and essential values (188).

Accordingly, marriage also represses sexual freedom of women as it is an institution within the basis of a "heterosexual matrix" which normalizes heterosexual relationships, meanwhile banned homosexual affairs are considered a failure in the genital norm according to Freud (Butler 33). As a model of domination, the institution of marriage works as an oppressor of female social freedom, since Butler considers it represents the reality of "the self-grounding postures of the masculine subject" (61). Moreover, these social postures were reinforced by psychoanalytical theories by Freud and Lacan that developed not only a heterosexist hypothesis but also the absence of women. The exclusion is clearly enacted since the Oedipal Complex that Freud treats to explain sexuality and configuration of identity is based on the misogynistic idea of the Phallus. As women do not possess a penis, they "are said to "be" the Phallus" (61); thus, women seek an identity that reflects the maintenance of the male heterosexual predominance by this embodiment of oppression. On the whole, Foucault

considered this exclusion as a result of a symbolic and complex configuration of power, which through symbolic actions in society, such as texts, lead them to social oppression within a patriarchal sphere of mechanisms (Rozmarin 2005). As a matter of fact, on this day and age, women's movement of the early twentieth-first century still have an essential resonance from the ideals of The New Woman, not only in terms of better employment conditions regarding wage-earning and motherhood but their "sexual morality and 'freedom'" (Ledger 6).

### **Comparison between the New Woman and the Marginalized Woman**

As it has been noted, the struggles of the New woman are different from the Marginalized woman. Given the fact that they belong to opposed social spheres, they have different points of view regarding marriage, money, sexuality, and physical appearance. It is essential to compare both configurations regarding their consciousness and behavior in front of the male-dominated system. For this purpose, the literary texts of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century were a medium to represent several points of view of the women's movement through fictional works (Ledger 1), in which we consider Stein's *Three Lives* as the attempt of making visible the reality of marginalized women. It is important to highlight that the male-dominated system is a hindrance to the autonomy of both privileged women and marginalized ones. However, how they deal with it is entirely dissimilar.

Henceforth, marriage for privileged women not only means to be a respectable lady in society but also ensures economic stability. Eventually, several postures of the New Woman still support marriage to maintain their social status since "marriage is the best profession for a woman" (Ledger, 11). Additionally, women's civil rights had improved by the end to the nineteenth century concerning marriage, which consisted of denying conjugal rights of men toward their wives' bodies without their wives' consent (11). Therefore, married women are portrayed dependent and protected by men; conversely, women who do not want to marriage had been seen as a threat.

On the other hand, marginalized women do not receive any benefit from getting marriage with other poor men. In fact, marriage used to impoverish women making the possibilities of being economically autonomous impossible. For instance, in *Three lives*, Mrs. Drethen and Lena live in precarious conditions as wives and mothers. Thus, in the marginalized sphere, it could be better to work instead of getting married; however, since marginalized

women do not have access to education, they can work mainly as a servant. Regarding African American communities, Smethurst explains that the upper social classes see black men as sexual aggressors and black women as sexually deprived (157). Consequently, the sexual deviances (homosexuality) and free sexuality were associated with them, resulting in an enactment of "antimiscegenation" laws prohibiting marital relationships across the color line during the first two decades of the twentieth century (156). Thus, black communities cannot get any advantage from marriage, and even they were banned from having interracial relationships.

Following this line, only radical feminist activists promoted sexual freedom, which considered women as sexual agents and sexual citizens, both heterosexual and lesbian (Smethurst 146). Nevertheless, the leading activists of New Woman find free sexuality a moral decadence (Ledger 16) than a political issue to gain independence. In the marginalized fictional world, characters in *Three lives* as Anna and Mrs. Lenthman have a lesbian relationship but not in the public sphere, showing that social prejudices still affect sexually. Meanwhile, Melanctha and Jane do not hide their relationship, although conservative black characters criticized such behavior for being immoral. It is important to point up that for marginalized women, sexuality is not an issue related to politics since they were excluded from the movement for gender equality rights.

Regarding physical appearance, the New Woman's fight is related to fashion and doing physical activity to show a good impression in the public sphere as a manner of showing their female empowerment. Conversely, for marginalized women, fashion is an irrelevant issue since they first have to fight to survive in the precarious condition in which they live. Besides, their arduous life and the lack of money do not allow them to have the privileges of the ladyhood as paying for expensive dresses. Nonetheless, in *Three Lives*, German immigrants as Anna and Mrs. Haydon care about the physical appearance to avoid being careless as a manner of being respected in society. It is different for black women since society stereotyped them as "antifeminine and lacking in beauty" (Smethurst, 159) by nature. Moreover, their economic condition was critical; thus, they do not have the mind to think in fashion. These facts demonstrate that since women belong to different realities, their behavior, thoughts, moral values, and priorities are also different.

By and large, both marginalized women and the New Woman consciously turn away from fixed principles associated with the supremacy of the men in society. Additionally, both challenge the conception of truth regarding gender roles. On the one hand, the New woman

activists search for their space in the educational, political, and working world. On the other hand, marginalized women aim to economic and social freedom starting with the domestic environment in which they refuse male company. Concerning the structure of the mind, for the New woman is more challenging to change habits related to marriage; meanwhile, immigrants and Afro-American communities are more eager to change their habits and choose free love instead of marriage. Finally, the use of language in this stage was fundamental to legitimate or to delegitimize issues concerning female sexuality. In fact, men had not considered women as sexually active individuals until writers, as Stein wrote to make it visible and normal.



## **Gertrude Stein: The Jew lesbian writer**

At this point, it is essential to look through Stein's biography, since she fits into the conventional model of the New Woman and the marginalized model —not integrated into this movement—. According to Wagner-Martin, the role of women from German Jewish families was learning to be sociable through activities like playing the piano, drawing, and wearing velvet dresses (4). Nonetheless, Stein was dissatisfied with this role, and she preferred to be like her brothers who learn difficult subjects. Thus, as a woman of upper social class, she was interested in education and becoming a writer instead of managing the household and the children (4). Her fight for gender equality and education portrays the effort of many women of the late nineteenth century (5) who represent the fight of the New Woman.

Additionally, Stein also struggles with money management, in which marriage is not an option for her. After her parents' death, she has to depend on his brother, who managed her expenses. This fact demonstrates the lack of autonomy that women had over their economy, although she had the privileges of her social status, she was not able to make decisions about financial issues. Grogan analyses Stein's attitudes toward money, and she highlights the Stein writings in which she talks about her desire for money, and love for spending money (8-9). The disconformity against the patriarchal familial structure triggered her ambition (10), which narrow the possibilities of economic independence for women. This author also highlights the frugality and thrift that characterize Anna in *Three Lives* in addition to her hard work as matters of moral judgments in which mismanagement or excess are marked as immoral, like Miss Mathilda's attitude toward money which is "careless" (9). In sum, money is a crucial issue in Stein's life because it is an achievement to gain her own money and to be spent without the supervision of a man; however, through female characters as Anna, she portrays the difficulties of being economically autonomous.

On the other hand, since Stein was a Jew and lesbian person, she was also marginalized. Concerning racial stereotypes, Wagner points up that "to be a Jew was to be not only different but objectionable" (19) since the American society not only despises Jews for being immigrants

but also because of their religion. Consequently, her classmates discriminate against Stein. Wagner explains, "Gertrude Stein, as a college and then a medical student, felt increasingly marginalized by her Jewishness, she developed a bond with others who were outside the cultural mainstream, and whose very lives were threatened by that marginalization" (263). Thus, in spite of Stein's clear skin and wealth, it is likely she felt like a marginalized woman instead of a privileged one. Correspondingly, Stein confessed in the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* that she was inspired to write by vulnerable women that she had seen during some walks through London (84). Concerning her experience, she says that "life in California came to its end when Gertrude Stein was about seventeen years old. The last few years had been *lonesome* ones and had been passed in an *agony of adolescence* (75). This confession shows the suffering she endured for her marginalized condition (as an immigrant and Jew) that results in a state of loneliness. So, she empathizes with vulnerable women since she also was discriminated against. Thus, Stein also transgresses the literature depicting the hard lives and the non-white bodies of marginalized women. Rowe (2003) reinforces this idea of social class marginalization and skin color when he states:

In the two other narratives of *Three lives*, Stein also challenges prevailing stereotypes of African-American and immigrant identities as racially or ethnically hereditary or essential. She [Stein] makes several connections between her German-American protagonists and African Americans, sometimes by the way their shared working-class conditions and other times in terms of racial coloring (222)

Stein challenges the stereotypes related not only to female identity but to the ethnicity of her main characters. Rowe says that color skin suggests the variety of colors of people who inhabit the region (223) as Melanctha is pale-yellow, Rose is a real black, and Lena is brown. Thus, Stein, through her narrative, tries to make visible that exists a variety of women in America who do not fit in society because of their social class and their skin color, and they want to develop their female identity, which is different from white women of high social class.

Concerning homosexuality, it was a taboo, and therefore, not included in the New Woman's demands. In fact, the social order and disciplines, like psychoanalysis, constituted homosexuality as pathology and perversion (Wagner-Martin 260). For this reason, the first lesbian relationship of Stein was troublesome. Summers explains that the medical school in Baltimore caused the awareness of Stein's lesbianism as she was involved in a group of college

women composed by Mabel Haynes and Grace Lounsbury, who had a relationship hidden by the euphemism of Romantic Friendship (682). Mabel ended this relation and began a new affair with May Bookstaver; immediately, Stein felt a strong attraction toward May. In fact, it was Bookstaver who introduced Stein to sexual love. Summer compares this Stein's first lesbian relationship with the fictionally experienced Jane and her relationship with the naive Melanctha (682). However, in the end, Bookstaver excluded Stein from this romance that led to Stein's frustration. As a result, Stein, since her adolescence, felt depressed and melancholic, triggered by the struggles she had to endure as a marginalized Jew and lesbian.

All things considered, it is not strange that *Three Lives* aims to the visualization of marginalized women instead of writing about themes related to upper social class. Wagner explains that Stein "found value in describing and probing cultural restrictions on women's lives: the Victorian period put women in spheres separate from men" (8); in *Three Lives*, Stein invites readers to question such separated spheres. For this purpose, she configures a New Woman who attempts to transgress her role imposed by the patriarchal order. Besides, Stein challenges American realism by writing about marginalized women that she had met. For instance, in Baltimore, she attended pregnant patients (mainly black women) who had no other medical attention. This encounter among races was significant for Stein since she appreciated the knowledge she acquired from *African American Women* (9). Later, she was going to portray this reality in the characters of Melanctha, Jane, Rose, and 'Mis' Herbert. Moreover, the fictional character Anna was inspired by a servant that Stein met in Baltimore, characterized by being "good" and for her "arduous and troubled life" (9). Meanwhile, the story of the character Lena aims to "criticize the well-intentioned, first-generation immigrant relatives in the States who saw no alternative but marriage for the wistful young German cousin brought to America as a serving girl." (10).

Certainly, Stein was a pioneer in the emerging of Modernism (1980-1920) since she challenges the rules of writing in literature through *Three Lives*. Her style as a modernist writer is characterized by its "reduced vocabulary that allows key, repeated words, phrases, and motifs, to acquire an open-ended richness of accumulated meaning, that shifts and grows as the narrative develops ... [which] defamiliarizes and reinvents the familiar or ordinary world" (Dekoven, 184). Moreover, Bradshaw & Dettmar explain that modern themes in literature "have been queered; racialized, their whitewash stripped away; gendered, regendered, and cross-gendered; classed; globalized; post-colonialized; popularized" (4). We agree with both

authors. In this sense, we consider that Stein's *Three Lives* is a critic of New Woman, who still follows misogynistic ideas as the Victorian woman. Therefore, Stein, through her playful writing style, not only portrays the reality of women who are marginalized, and despised by their race and sexuality, but also criticized by order of society represented in canons of arts, literature, and morality. For this reason, she was known as the "Mama of Dada," since she was "a person to be avoided rather than read" (3).

## Methodology and analysis of insistences in *Three Lives*

### Procedures

For the purpose of the current study, the approach we have followed for the interpretation of data collection in terms of language is feminist literary criticism. In this sense, within a thematic analysis based on a mixed-method, the quantification of Stein's insistence structures in her text *Three Lives* deploys a well-organized comparison of results that help to configure a nonconventional marginalized image of women to be qualitatively contrasted with conventional oppressive configurations of the New Woman.

Regarding the corpus, we analyzed from *Three Lives* those insistences developed with an explicit repetition that configures the depiction of marginalized female characters, selected from the narratives of "The Good Anna", "Melanctha", and "The Gentle Lena". From a minimum of two instances per each character, through the construction of tables, it is delivered both an exploratory and explanatory approach to identify in them a complete portray or thematic idea that considers their thought and behavior. Moreover, data from tables were developed by both micro and macro dimensions of analysis between female characters. In the case of the narrative "The Good Anna", the characters of Anna Ferderner, Mrs. Lenthman, Miss Mathilda, and Mrs. Drehten have been considered as the most representative ones for this data collection. The same follows for the selected female characters from "Melanctha": Melanctha, Rose, Jane, and Melanctha's mother; and those from "The Gentle Lena": Lena, Mrs. Haydon, and The German Cook.

## Tables' Description

In the following tables, insistences portraying images of oppression of female characters have been identified in the text and then, quantified. It is important to highlight that we only found insistences related to the female characters of the table; thus, some women were discarded from the tables because there was little or no information about them that could contribute to the analysis. Thus, there are two tables for each narrative; the first one represents the repeated keywords and the second represents key-phrases. Additionally, the distribution of the female characters is not mandatory for each table in an equal number. Accordingly, there were some insistence structures taking place repeatedly on one single page. Finally, as it was stated, the purpose of this method of categorization is to facilitate the sociological analysis in *Three Lives*.

Concerning the qualitative analysis of the tables, firstly, it was identified that the narrator makes a portrait of each character through the repetition of nouns, adjectives, and verbs; some of them present different inflections. Such words represent the characters not only physically but also mentally, showing their personalities and their role in society as marginalized women. In the same line, key-phrases are used to represent the states, thoughts, desires, and actions of each character of the list. Secondly, the words and phrases selected were analyzed in their narrative context to achieve a deep understanding of the depiction of the characters; due to the fact that the meaning of the insistences may vary according to the context, it is placed. Finally, after the individual analysis, the characters' portraits and actions represented by repetitions were compared to get a macro picture of the marginalized women in contrast to the conventional New Women in the early twentieth century.

## **Analysis of insistences**

On the whole, according to data collection and the analysis of female portraits illustrated in tables 1 to 6, within the three narratives, there is possible to identify a clear tendency to stereotype and marginalize Black and German women, and to configure an image of women's non-conventional sexuality, whose features in terms of behaviors and thoughts, subvert and are not included in the broad institutionalized conception of New Woman.

### **“The Good Anna”**

In the case of female characters in the narrative “The Good Anna”, keywords such as “helpless”, and “patient” are the most repetitive, which configure a racial stereotype, mostly on German women, that is connected with oppressive conventional behaviors. In this sense, characters such as Miss Mary is several times configured as “helpless” (Stein 11(x2), 12, 13(x4)) but “large” (11(x4), 12, 13(x2)) in table 1. This ambiguity of the relationship between these two keywords leads us to the idea of resistance from her condition as a single woman in front of a global system of oppression reflected on the image of New Woman. This irony depicts her impotent condition as a woman, as she was in charge of two children and was dependent on Anna's sense of rightness about her life and behavior. Within the diversity of images displayed by the insistence of ‘helpless’, there are three references involving her body. This oppression made her ‘burned with the care of two children’ (11), and being in charge of female servants led Miss Mary to become physically degraded. In the following quote, Miss Mary fainted since she was overwhelmed due to the argument between Anna and little Jane:

“Miss Mary!” cried Anna running to her mistress and supporting all her *helpless weight* back in the chair. Little Jane ..., bringing smelling salts and brandy and vinegar and

water and chafing *poor Miss Mary's wrists*. Miss Mary slowly opened her *mild eyes*. ... She herself managed to get Miss Mary *quiet* on the couch (Stein, 13)

The repetition of all insistence structures regarding the keyword “helpless” on this page of the book configures an image of resistance regarding the oppression of the New Woman’s ideals. Firstly, there is the issue of the caring of children in Mary’s life. These insistences are the reflection of oppressive configurations about her body, a “helpless weight” with “poor ... wrists” and “mild eyes”, that is enduring the burden of imposed responsibilities that are molded within the image of the New Woman; in terms of challenging marriage as she is a single woman, and of keeping her behavior oppressed as well. Besides, her experience visualizes a single-parent family, which means a charge for her.

Table 1. Key-Words of insistence in “The Good Anna”

<b>Female Characters</b>	<b>Anna Federner</b>	<b>Mrs. Lehtman</b>	<b>Miss Mathilda</b>	<b>Miss Mary</b>	<b>Mrs. Drehten</b>
<b>Key-Words</b>	conquered (2)	widow (10)	careless (3)	helpless (7)	patient (8)
	operation (4)	careless (6)	poor (2)	large (7)	poor (6)
	headaches (3)		cherished (7)		worn (6)
	poor (8)				
	worn* (10)				
	spare (4)				
	thin (10)				
	sharp (7)				

\*Also *worn-out* as a descriptor of her body.

Similarly, Anna’s following mistress, Miss Mathilda, is described as “careless” (9(x2), 27) by the narrator. Moreover, Anna’s scoldings configure an ideal in terms of the appropriate use of money and acceptable use of clothing for a “poor” (6, 33) woman like Miss Mathilda. This concerning has to do with Anna’s idea about appearances and stereotypes on the beauty of women, that are conventionally associated with the New Woman’s. Regardless “Miss Mathilda was not a romance in the good Anna’s life, ... Anna gave her so much strong affection



that it almost filled her life as full” (Stein 28). In contrast to Miss Mary, Miss Mathilda has an explicitly bond with Anna that can be considered as lesbian, since the narrator always insisted in repeating the image of Miss Mathilda as the Anna’s “cherished” (9, 18, 28(x2), 31, 33, 34) mistress. In this sense, within their relationship, Anna overprotected and appreciated Miss Mathilda and “had a great (sic) pride in her knowledge and possessions” (Stein 9), which was constantly exposed in front of her friends and as well as “THE TRADESMEN of Bridgepoint” (Stein 5) to be admired. Ultimately, Anna’s scoldings about her economic and physical appearance led Miss Mathilda to have an oppressive relationship as she ‘had ... troubles too with Anna’ (9, 10).

Conversely, the character of Mrs. Lenhtman is addressed as “careless” (19(x2), 21, 22, 23(x2)). This configuration responds to her resistance against the New Woman, challenging marriage and motherhood, after enduring the oppression and economic dependence of a husband. As well as Miss Mary, she represents the single-parent family without the presence of men, which stands against the idea of their supposed fundamental support. Interestingly, part of the repetition of insistence structures portraying her as “careless”, was Anna’s views related to motherhood and her “generous and good and honest” (Stein 23) attitude towards other people, especially marginalized women. Moreover, despite the significant insistence about her as a passionate ‘widow’ (12, 13(x2), 17, 20, 23, 25, 28, 30, 32) in front of people and other friends, table 2 illustrates how the narrator portrays her relationship with Anna as “the romance in ... [her] life” (13, 15, 31), revealing a strong lesbian bond between them during her time together. Interestingly, this idea of homosexuality, that challenges sexuality in front of the conventional notion of the New Woman, is reinforced by the narrator when states that she “was the only romance Anna ever knew“ (23, 24(x2)), which makes a reference to Anna’s emotional state after becoming apart.

It is interesting to point out that Anna, Mrs. Lenhtman and Mrs. Drehten share the feature of a resistance that affects their health. Both Mrs. Lenhtman and Mrs. Drehten have endured complex operations because of a tumor since both women are degraded by husbands and by her social resistance against an oppressive conventional set of habits and beliefs. Following this line, Mrs. Drehten is configured several times as a “worn” (20(x3), 30(x3)), and as a “poor” (22(x4), 30, 35) woman, with “a german husband to obey” (20, 30). However, she is configured as “patient” (20(x3), 21, 30, 35(x2), 36) because of her nature as a German and

her condition as an oppressed marginalized woman, who is “large and motherly, with the pleasant, *patient*, soft, worn, tolerant face, that comes with a german (sic) husband to obey, and seven solid girls and boys to bear and rear” (Stein 20). The configuration of her patience most of the time implies a resistance from the oppression of her husband and the responsibility of destructive motherhood, that challenges the conventional idea of marriage, money, and sexuality of the New Woman.

The character of Anna Federner presents an ambiguous configuration of resistance through her thoughts and behavior, and a degradation portrayed by three main different emotional states. Firstly, the insistence that described her as a german woman who had to “led an arduous and troubled” life (5, 6, 9) configures an image of her as a model of resistance against the oppressive conventional beliefs about women and specifically by the New Woman, as Stein’s description of Anna suggests:

The good Anna was a small, *spare*, german woman ... Her face was *worn*, her cheeks were *thin*, her mouth drawn and firm, and her light blue eyes were very bright. Sometimes ... they were always *sharp* and clear (6).

In this excerpt, the narrator presents a general description that contains certain keywords that were considered in table 1 and that configure a portrait with adjectives not only related to people but also to abstract things. Stein’s repetition of insistence structures such as ‘spare’ (6, 15, 17, 18) are evenly related to her in terms of the simplicity her body features, and of the representation of the free time out of work, she spent with her romance, Mrs. Lenhtman. The abstraction implied within the mental image of Anna leads us to think of a particular emotional state of simplicity and a strong attitude as the repetition of the keyword ‘sharp’ (6, 12(x2), 16, 19(x2), 21) implies. Anna’s emotional state is strong and serves as a model of resistance since her scoldings are direct advice for marginalized and oppressed women. By repeating this key-word, Stein is playing with senses to represent reality, as the author not only requires to visualize her “sharp eyes” and “body” (6, 12(x2)), but to configure and hear Anna’s voice every time she said things in a short and sharp way (16, 19(x2)) to her friends or when she simply laughed out loud (21). Interestingly, the repetitions of key-words “thin” and “worn” are only

related to Anna in terms of the description of her face to configure the emotional state of her degradation.

Moreover, Gertrude Stein's style of writing and the impetus to represent reality at all levels acknowledges by means of human senses the configuration of a real portrait of Anna's thought and behavior. Firstly, as table 2 illustrates, there are some insistence structures that configure an image of Anna from the manifestation of her dominant attitude by her "shattering slam" (12, 20) of doors or "the sound of her hand upon the knob" (6, 9), at Miss Mathilda's house; whenever she wants to scold the pets or other female servants. From the noise described in the narrative deploy mental images that configure a portrait of behaviors that are connected to Anna's impetus of Miss Mathilda as being "conquered" (5, 13) by her, in terms of the way she should look and get dressed; because Anna has a real "sense of what was the right" (11, 18, 29, 32) way for a girl to behave, think, and even wear clothes. It seems that Anna's configuration is related to a battlefield where she struggles to survive. Interestingly, even though Anna's scoldings and encouragements can be considered oppressive, they challenge the New Woman's idea about marriage, sexuality, motherhood, and money.

Secondly, Anna's degradation responds to her lesbian relationship with Mrs. Lenhtman and the impact on her health not only by being racially oppressed but also because of the negative impact of homosexuality against the ideal of a woman. The insistence of "poor" (15(x2), 22, 24(x2), 25(x2), 33) is related to both a negative emotional state triggered by her separation with Mrs. Lehntman and to her relationship with her brother's family in the sense of not being really close to them because of her lack of a "strong natural feeling to love children" (11(x2)). In this sense, the idea of sexuality is challenged in front of an oppressive conception of New Woman's institutionalized heterosexual matrix reflected on Anna's rejection of motherhood and marriage.

Table 2. Key-Phrases in “The Good Anna”

<b>Female Characters</b>	<b>Anna Federner</b>	<b>Mrs. Lehntman</b>	<b>Miss Mathilda</b>	<b>Mrs. Drehten</b>
<b>Key-Phrases</b>	Anna led an arduous and troubled life (3)	Mrs. Lehntman was the romance in (...) Anna’s life* (3)	had (...) troubles too with Anna (2)	that comes <i>with/from</i> a german husband to obey (2)
	at the sound of her hand upon the knob (2)	Mrs. Lehntman was the only romance Anna ever knew (3)		
	shattering slam (2)			
	sense of what was the right (...) (4)			
	had no strong natural feeling to love children (2)			
	grew always more tired (2)			

Ultimately, the final emotional state is related to tiredness and the physical deterioration after her separation with Mrs. Lenhtman and Miss Mathilda’s farewell. It also configures the degradation of Anna, by resisting a conventional image of women. As “Anna’s anger had changed ... [and] sadness had come to her” (Stein 21) after her distance from these two important women in her life, her body and mental model of resistance start to degrade. As it was mentioned above, since the very beginning in the narrative she is described as “thin” (6, 12, 14(x3), 17(x2), 18, 35) and “worn” (6, 7, 8, 12, 17, 18, 20, 35(x2), 36). Her resistance throughout her life is complemented by these two insistence structures. The former is related to her body, especially to her face that comes to a deterioration. The latter is more connected to both mental and physical deterioration, as she “attempt[s] to make the younger generation do all that it should” (Stein 7). In other words, Anna was degraded by her resistance and encouragement to endure the oppression of conventional beliefs about women, which are definitely sustained by the concept of New Woman. As a matter of fact, this oppression regarding her sexuality affects her health as Anna has to attend to two sessions to be given an “operation” (14(x2), 36(x2)), due to unbearable “headaches” (14(x2), 35) that made her “grew

always more tired (35(x2)) ... and in her face more thin and worn and worried” until the end. Ultimately, this can be considered a defeat in contrast to her impetus for surviving and her struggle against her own marginalized condition.

### **‘Melanctha: Each One as She May’**

Within the narrative of ‘Melanctha or Each One as She May’, tables 3 and 4 illustrate a mode of resistance from female characters that also presents an ambiguity regarding the conventional conception about the New Woman. Accordingly, there is an evident challenging configuration of marriage, sexuality, motherhood and racial stereotypes, that are portrayed by non-conventional behaviors regarding lesbian relationships and a special treatment about following a regular life imposed by the New Woman’s cultural movement.

Firstly, the character of Melanctha is configured as “a *graceful, pale yellow, intelligent, attractive* negress ... [who] had not been raised like Rose by white folks but then she had been half made with real white blood” (Stein 38). In this quote, there is an emphasis on race in Melanctha’s description that is compared with the marginalizing white supremacy. Moreover, Melanctha presents a mental degradation divided into three different emotional states. Her general description leads to the analysis of her degradation. In her configuration, keywords that describe her as ‘pale yellow’ (38, 40, 47(x2), 58) and ‘graceful’ (38, 44, 47) are a marker that portrays her as a non-common marginalized “negress” since she was born from an interracial relationship between her white mother and a black father. Interestingly, Stein’s repetition of insistence structures requires the use of senses to visualize her as uncommon giving a new diverse path to the reference of colors when representing reality. Throughout the whole narrative, references of her as ‘intelligent’ (38(x2), 46, 47, 56, 83(x2), 87) and ‘attractive’ (38(x2), 47, 58, 83, 87) are emphasized from Rose and Jefferson Campbell, whose perceptions are related to the New Women’s ideal, even though she was stereotyped as a promiscuous black woman who struggles with regular life.

Table 3. Repetition of Key-Words in “Melanctha or Each One as She May”

Female Characters	Melanctha	Rose	Jane	Melanctha’s Mother
Key-Words	poor Melanctha (10)	white folks (13)	roughened (4)	‘Mis’ (32)
	break neck courage (4)	selfish (9)	her drinking (4)	Melanctha of yours* (father’s voice) (2)
	coward (3)	stupid (5)		mysterious (4)
	subtle (5)	decent (18)		pale yellow (2)
	intelligent (9)	lazy (9)		sweet appearing (2)
	attractive (6)	sullen (9)		pleasant (2)
	wander*(43) (inflections)	childish (5)		
	foolish (11)			
	peace and quiet (4)			
	pale yellow (5)			
	graceful (3)			

\*wander within inflections such as: *wandered* and *wandering(s)*

Having all things considered, her first emotional state is characterized by her seek for wisdom through her early wander[ings] (43(x5), 44(x2), 45(x3), 46(x2), 47(x5), 48, 57, 61(x3), 63(x5), 65(x3), 77(x5), 78, 79, 83(x2), 85, 86, 89(x2)). We understand this action not only as a mental but as a physical movement that through her experiences sets out changes to social order of her own marginalized context, as she struggles to keep herself in the public sphere rather than the domestic one. In fact, Melanctha’s description as ‘intelligent’ and having a ‘good mind’ reflects an empiricist attitude concerning her searching for knowledge. In other words, her resistance against her marginalized condition as a black woman, in front of a white image of The New Woman, is not only developed by watching men work but acquired throughout her whole life as an activity to live new experiences and become conscious of her perceptions about reality, by sharing with other black women such as Rose and Jane. Interestingly, her relationship with Jefferson Campbell makes her stop wandering for a while, which is retaken with the company of Rose. Additionally, in this first emotional state, although

Melanctha's thoughts conceive herself as a 'coward' (42, 43, 44), as she did not know what she "badly wanted" (42, 43, 44), she is configured as a woman who has a 'break neck courage' (40(x2), 43, 45) against the male figures such as her father or the working men. This is an important aspect of this emotional state that configures her as a black woman who is active in the seek for her wisdom, with a non-conventional competitive attitude in front of men, from whom several times she 'made herself escape' (44(x5)) from the dangers of such experiences.

However, Melanctha's resistance starts to degrade as she experiences relationships with her family, Jane, and Jeff Campbell. According to table 4, she "was so blue" (38(x2), 40, 87(x2), 97) that her negative thoughts became a constant emotional state, coming from her childhood. In light of this second part of Melanctha's degradation, the insistence of 'poor' (41(x2), 83, 84, 88(x4), 92(x2), 94) is present from the beginning of the story since she struggles with her father because of her early wanderings. As Melanctha had endured complex relationships with Jane and Jeff, she was addressed as 'poor' by Rose and her husband Sam as a form of pity, since Melanctha lacked of a regular life in comparison to Rose, and in accordance to the New Woman's conception about women's life. Even though, both Jane and Jeff acknowledge that Melanctha 'had a good mind' (49(x2), 50(x2), 52, 54, 56, 61(x3), 83), it is the latter who never understood what 'Melanctha really wanted (54, 60, 62, 66) from the very first time they met while he was taking care of Melanctha's mother health. This is significant in the sense of Melanctha's configuration as it is oppressed by Jeff and his conventional beliefs about women that Melanctha transgresses, in terms of marriage and sexuality.

Finally, Melanctha's third emotional state of degradation is marked by the repetition of the keyword 'foolish' (90(x3), 91(x4), 92(x2), 93(x2)). This insistence configures her as an oppressed woman who is a victim of relationships materialized by symbols of marriage, represented in the ring she wore while having a relationship with Jem. According to Rose's thoughts, both love and joy with Jem made her become and act as a foolish woman. In fact, Rose becomes a great support to Melanctha's emotional state, as the latter 'cling[s] to her' (87, 88, 95, 96) in a desperate need of sororal affection. In this sense, as Melanctha is not a conventional oppressed woman by marriage and a male figure, she looks for a sororal relationship with Rose and her regular life instead. Moreover, Melanctha is described as a 'subtle' (38, 39, 83(x2), 87) black woman, who wants to offer her service to Rose at her home



in order to surpass her emotional state by attempting to have a regular life with her. Unfortunately, despite Melanctha's desire about being in 'peace and quiet' (41, 86, 88, 94) in her life, she always found 'new ways to be in trouble (39, 41, 86(x2), 88, 94) or 'new ways to get excited'(41, 86(x2)), as she was always meeting new people to reach wisdom. The repetition of these key-phrases configures in Melanctha the complexity of her thoughts and behavior, as she struggles with the cultural habits of a regular life and homosexuality against her unconventional configuration as a black woman. In other words, she avoids becoming a conventional oppressive married woman with the burden of children. This oppression is evidenced by her constant need to 'kill herself' (40, 87, 93, 94(x2), 97(x2)), during the course of the narrative, which is not only configured within her own thoughts but Rose's as well, as she '... certainly do think [Melanctha] will most kill herself some time' (Stein 97).

Table 4. Repetition of Key-Phrases in "Melanctha or Each One as She May"

<b>Female Characters</b>	<b>Melanctha</b>	<b>Melanctha's Mother</b>	<b>Rose</b>
<b>Key-Phrases</b>	she was so blue (6)	Melanctha of yours (2).	had strong the sense (5)
	new ways to be in trouble (6)	little wandering in her ways (2)	to bring her baby to its birth (2)
	Melanctha really wanted(4)	as her neighbors called her (2)	
	made* herself escape (5)		
	had a good mind (11)		
	find new ways to get excited (3)		
	kill herself (7)		
	cling to her (4)		
	wanted badly* (7)		

\*syntactic difference: *wanted badly* and *badly wanted*.

Similarly, this impetus of stereotypical descriptions is a significant feature of the configuration of the character of Rose in the narrative, as it is New Women oriented. On the



one hand, Rose is depicted as ‘decent’ (38(x2), 39, 83, 86(x2), 87(x6), 88, 89, 94, 95, 96(x3)) and who knows how ‘decent’ girls behave. Additionally, although the narrator presents her as a black woman, Rose herself is emphatic to remind the reader and her fellow female acquaintances that her background makes her different from black women. She is consistently configured as a ‘decent’ black girl who was grown up by “white folks” (38(x4), 39(x4), 83(x2), 86(x2), 90), and who “had strong the sense” (39, 87(x2), 89(x3)) about both women’s decent life and behavior, in accordance to her white sense; which is emphasized syntactically different to scold Melanctha or gossip about her with either her husband or everybody who knows about her relationship with Melanctha. In the narrative, Rose is privileged by the ‘... money she got every little while’, as ‘her white folks’ left a little money to ... Rose’ (Stein 39). However, and in light of this conventional and stereotypical spectrum, Rose’s ideal portrait of behavior is opposed by insistences that portray her as ‘selfish’ (38, 83(x3), 87(x2), 88(x2), 93), as her behavior was subjected to take advantage of Melanctha’s willingness to offer her services in order to spend time with her and her regular life, “... doing everything Rose ever needed” (Stein 89).

Additionally, Rose is not only configured five times as a ‘stupid’ (38, 83(x3), 88) woman but also complemented by descriptions such as ‘lazy’ (38, 39(x2), 83(x3), 87, 88, 89), ‘childish’ in behavior (38(x2), 87, 88, 91), and ‘sullen’ (38(x4), 83, 87(x2), 88, 91). As a matter of fact, her ambiguous acknowledgment about the New Women’s conception and the latter descriptions about her make an important configuration about her impetus to avoid marginalization from a white-male dominated system of truths. Moreover, although Rose is content with her relationship with Sam and their regular life, she is unconsciously oppressed by the fact of being validating a conventional women’s behavior, in which the concept of money is dependent on her husband and not directly related to her, becoming inferior to him. Finally, within the realm of marriage, the issue of motherhood seems to be exposed as a hardship scenario of her unconscious oppression. In fact, in the narrative twice the reader is warned that she had lost her baby due to her negligent behavior, which is definitely not a feature of New Woman’s motherhood ideals; and that turns Rose into troublesome ‘to bring her baby to its birth’ (38, 92). For this reason, this issue of motherhood encompasses the story as it is emphatically repeated at the very beginning and the end of it. As a symbol, the dead babies

represent the marginalization of black people in society, as ‘these things came so often in the negro world in Bridgepoint’ (39), segregating them from the white-dominant world of truths.

The characters of Jane and Melanctha's mother, although they are not related to a considerable amount of insistence structures, take part in an image that resembles resistance to marginalization. The former is associated four times to her alcohol abuse and her main feature as a severe person. We can relate this fact as a way she resists marginalization as it is shown since her early description,

Jane Harden always had little money, and she had a room in the lower part of the town. Jane had once taught in a colored school. She had had to live that too on account of her *bad conduct*. It was *her drinking* that always made all the problems for her, for that can never be really covered over ... Jane's *drinking* was always growing worse upon her. (Stein, 46)

In this quotation, it is evidenced the precarious conditions in which Jane lives—in a small room and with little money—; Indeed, it represents the low quality of life concerning black people in the early twentieth century which was normalized in the eyes of society. However, women as Jane feel dissatisfied with this imposed social order which is evidenced through her behavior, presenting "bad conduct" which may mean her rebellion against conventionalities. Moreover, the phrase “drinking always make (sic) problem for her” portrays not only her resistant but also her degradation as it "was always growing worse". The insistence about "her drinking" (46, 47(x3)) and "roughened" (46, 47(x2), 49) appear in successive paragraphs intensifying the worsened Jane's condition in line with her breakup with Melanctha (47). It seems that "her drinking" is an addiction that Jane acquired as a resistant attitude toward a system of oppression that labels Jane as a woman with "bad habits" because of her behavior and sexuality. In fact, Jane is a smart character who attended the black school, but most importantly, she acquired wisdom through experiences and free sexuality which was banned by society for being immoral. Curiously, the adjective "roughened" is rarely used to describe people; in fact, it refers to the texture of objects that are opposed to "smooth". Thus, Jane has an unfriendly and severe personality, even aggressive as "sometimes she abused Melanctha" (46). Additionally, in the depiction of Jane, she is described through several insistence structures as "strong" (46, 47(x2)),

49 (x2), 51 (x2)); her strength helps to make Melanctha stronger and also inspired admiration on Campbell. Indeed, this feature makes Jane an unconventional woman showing her effort to endure her hard life and resist the stereotypes regarding the New Woman. Finally, "her drinking" covered everything, including her identity since it triggers the loss of Jane's strength resulting in the degradation of both, her mind and body.

On the other hand, the character of Melanctha's mother enacts a powerful woman who also may resist marginalization. Firstly, according to the portrait of 'Mis' Herbert, she is pale yellow (40, 48), sweet appearing (40, 41) and pleasant (40, 41). This description agrees with the New Woman's stereotypes because 'Mis' Herbert's pale yellow skin gives her a sweet appearance accepted by the society, which considers clear skin colors superior and beautiful. On the contrary, James Herbert "looked very black and evil" (41); thus, it seems that skin colors are related to moral values as it is also shown with Rose who "had the simple, promiscuous unmorality (sic) of the black people" (38). Besides, she is considered "pleasant" because of her submissive attitude toward her abusive husband and her rebel daughter, who oppress 'Mis' Herbert. As a consequence of her hard life, she "was very sick" (48) and, finally, she died.

Secondly, throughout the narrative until her death, she was always portrayed by an emphatic 'Mis' (40 (x2), 41, 43, 48, 50(x7), 51, 52, 54 (x10), 56(3), 57(x2), 59 (x2)). In fact, thirty-one times, the narrator addresses her as someone who is known to have a husband but without being institutionalized married. In light of this, her resistance interestingly not only implies her condition as an unconventional 'married' woman but an image of being "mysterious" to other people living in Bridgepoint. Regarding the insistence "as her neighbors called her" (40, 41, 48), it shows the habits of a regular life through prejudices against her for not being regularly married. This is crucial since it could be linked as a mirror of the oppressive American set of beliefs that both prohibited and punished interracial marriages, affairs, and intercourses. Although she is "little wandering in her ways" (40, 41), the fact of having a relationship out of the norms of society banned her style of life. Moreover, the ungrammatical spell of "Mis" with capital letter together with the use of single quotes remember us that grammar uses invention, since it shows how Stein plays with language to transfer to the reader the irony behind the word 'Mis' and how the use of a capital letter immediately define the identity of Melanctha's mother becoming the word 'Mis' a proper noun.

Finally, in 'Mis' Herbert's case, motherhood is developed as an issue in relation to her, since she lost a child as well as Rose. Additionally, it is a clear rejection of motherhood as 'Mis' Herbert "never like her daughter any better" (50) and she "did not think much of this daughter" (50). Although those quotes are not structured within the same insistence but thematic repetition, the idea of rejection of motherhood is reinforced by the insistence "Melanctha of yours" (40, 42) in which James Herbert emphasizes the role of women in the education of children, denying any responsibility as a father. This event is proof of Melanctha's father's lack of presence and abuse towards her, which may also be applied to Melanctha as well. Thus, it is not unusual that women as 'Mis' Herbert feel dissatisfied with the imposed responsibility of motherhood.

### ‘The Gentle Lena’

In "The Gentle Lena," Lena is described physically and psychologically through several adjectives that evidence her physical appearance related to German stereotypes and her emotional states, which change in the development of the narration. Lena is depicted as brown eleven times (99(x10), 100); in fact, this adjective is found nine times in just one paragraph. Stein emphasizes Lena's skin color to visualize the variety of skin colors to transgress the belief of the prominence of white skins,

"Lena was a *brown* and pleasant creature, *brown* as blonde races often have them *brown*, *brown*, not with yellow or the red or the chocolate *brown* of sun burned countries, but *brown* with the clear color with the clear color laid flat on the laid toned skin beneath."  
(99)

The quotation above is an excerpt from Lena's portrait that the narrator structures unconventionally with rhythmic patterns as the insistences appear. The apparent insistence in color "brown" has the purpose of normalizing this color since it is a color that "blonde races

often have,"; in addition to mentioning other skin colors like yellow, red, and chocolate brown challenging the supremacy of white skins. The use of language in this paragraph may have an effect in mind regarding the conception of races since it proposes not only two skin colors (white and black) but a degree of several colors that people have in reality. It is essential to highlight that in the description, there is no sign of disapproval toward brown skins; by the contrary, positive adjectives as "peaceful" and "pleasant" complement the physical description of Lena.

Table 5. Repeated key-words in 'The Gentle Lena'

<b>Female Characters</b>	<b>Lena</b>	<b>Mrs. Haydon</b>	<b>The German Cook</b>
<b>Key-words</b>	patient (6)	short(2)	good (13)
	silly (5)	good (10)	
	stupid (10)	hard (3)	
	brown (11)	compact (2)	
	poor (20)		
	peaceful (4)		
	pleasant (5)		
	lifeless (7)		
	careless (10)		

Concerning the emotional states of Lena, it was identified three main states that demonstrate the gradual degradation of Lena as a result of a continuous process of oppression she had to endure. In the early stage, Lena is described as pleasant (99 (x2)) and patient (99(x4), 102, 107); she works for a pleasant mistress (99, 102, 105), and the days were pleasant (99 (x2), 100). In the first pages, the narrator is emphatic in the delighted life of Lena when she works for her mistress. Besides, she had a peaceful (99 (x3)) life working as a servant in a house in which only women and children lived as a secure environment for her. However, this insistence disappeared from the narration when she was engaged with Herman. Since this point, she is depicted as stupid (103, 104 (x5), 105, 106 (x2), 107), silly (104 (x2),105 (x2), 112) , and poor (102 (x2), 105, 106 (x5), 107 (x3), 113(x8), 114) . This radical change is triggered by

the separation of Lena from her mistress and the girls she sat with (Mary, and Nelly), the wedding preparations, and the escape of Herman on the wedding day. During this stage, Mrs. Haydon oppresses Lena to get married, arguing that all girls want to be married. Although Lena says she will obey her aunt's decisions, her behavior and feelings expressed through keeping in silent demonstrate her resistant against marriage. In fact, it was this attitude that makes her stupid in the eyes of Mrs. Haydon. The final stage of her degradation concerns her marriage. Marriage means not only the abandonment of her peaceful life, but also the beginning of sexuality, motherhood, the loss of her saving, and therefore, her autonomy. Lena suffers a trauma as a result of this imposed heterosexual relationship in addition to Lena's terror to give birth. This fact is shown in the insistences "lifeless" (111, 113 (x2), 114 (x4)), "careless" (107, 108, 111 (x2), 112, 113, 114 (x4)), and the increased of the insistence "poor". It is evident that Lena is in a deep state of depression at this point; the word "careless" not only refers to physical appearance but also Lena's attitude toward her own life, which is consequently opposed to the New Woman's conceptions about fashion and appearances, since she really portrays racial stereotypes against German immigrants as biologically inferior (Markel 761) for being dirty or "careless". Therefore, she refuses to live as a wife and mother; she stops worrying about herself, including her clothes, hygiene, and feeding habits that lead her to death. Indeed, this insistence is used together with "lifeless" to show that Lena's life ended when she got married. Thus, this demonstrates how the institution of marriage may destroy the life of a woman who was happy being single and independent of men.

Additionally, the key-phrases related to Lena give us hits about Lena's preference for female company. Although Lena's sexual orientation is ambiguous, the insistence "always sat with" (99 (x2), 102 (x2), 103, 105, 106, 107, 108) refers to Nelly and Mery which make Lena's life enjoyable and peaceful. When Lena got married, she traveled through her memories to those days she was with the girls that "she liked so much" (106). Even during the wedding preparations, Lena felt melancholic for her past life, "Lena liked the place where she was with the pleasant mistress and the good cook, who always scolded, and she liked the girls she always sat with (105). Additionally, the insistence "dreamy and not there" (101 (x2), 108, 110); in the context of page 110, the narrator explains that Lena used to be dreamy and that does not care much about what she likes or not when she lived in Germany, a place where she was poor and lived in precarious conditions. This retrospective movement in her thoughts reflects the search

for a solution and escape from the oppressive fixed truths imposed within marriage, in which she is trapped. This insistence also refers to the days previous to Lena's wedding; thus, Lena may use her mind to escape from the stressful situations that she endures as a marginalized woman. Besides, it proves that she does not want to marry Herman.

Table 6. Repeated key-phrases in 'The Glente Lena'

<b>Female Characters</b>	<b>Lena</b>	<b>Mrs. Haydon</b>	<b>The German cook</b>
<b>Key-Phrases</b>	always sat with (9)	had done right (2)	scolded Lena (15)
	would die (5)	scold (5)	stop with all that crying (4)
	dreamy and not there (4)		

Both Mrs. Haydon and the German Cook have a sororal attitude toward Lena; nevertheless, the previous one follows the conventionalities and the ideology of the New Woman, and the later presents an unconventional point of view about how a woman should live. Mrs Haydon is depicted as short (100 x2), good (102, 104, 105, 106, 107(x5), 112 , hard (100 (x2)), and compact (100 (x2)). This portrait highlights the form of her body, but most importantly, her "good" intentions. It may be strange for the reader since Mrs. Haydon is constantly insulting and imposing her ideal to Lena; however, she may be described as a good woman because she honestly believes she is doing the best for Lena. In fact, she rescued Lena from her low-income family, she got a good place for her in the house of a "pleasant Mistress," and search a husband to improve her quality of life (101). Moreover, Mrs. Haydon bought new dresses and hats to Lena since the physical appearance and fashion were crucial to follow the image of the New Woman. Curiously, Mrs. Haydon has to struggle with her family since there is a rejection of her children, as she has a son who "was very hard to manage" (100) and two "stubborn daughters" (101). Even so, she ignores her own experience as a wife and mother and insists on the idea that marriage is crucial for women. It is possible that in the structure of her mind, she only follows the habits and knowledge she acquired from the global system of oppression without questioning it. On the contrary, she only follows what she "had to do" (101) and affirms she "had done right" (103, 114) for Lena.

Similarly, the German cook was also described as "good" every time she is mentioned (103, 105, 107, 111,112 (x2), 114 (x5), 115 (x2)). This German woman does not get married, but she decides to live independently as a servant. As a marginalized woman, she represents the ideal of being independent of men and surviving fixed principles of an oppressive society. Thus, instead of searching for a husband for Lena, she advises her to keep her savings in the bank, as the German cook scolds several times for Lena's good (99 (x2), 103 (x2),105, 107(x2),111(x2), 112 (x2), 114 (x3),115). Moreover, such scolding, plus the insistence "stop with all that crying" (107 (x3), 112), are also ways of encouraging and helping Lena in the last stage of her life to endure her suffering and make her strong. On the other hand, Mrs. Haydon scolds Lena (103, 105 (x2), 106,108) with repression, telling her off as silly, stupid, and dumb to force her to accept the arranged marriage. In sum, both women try to improve Lena's life; however, Mrs. Haydon's conventional principles of her reality lead Lena to the total degradation of her body and mind; Thus, her "goodness" may be an irony that Stein uses to demonstrate that what is considered "good" into the global system of oppression can be dangerous for marginalized women.



## Interpretation of Results

From the analysis of "The Good Anna," "Melanctha," and "The Gentle Lena," we have identified patterns regarding marginalized female characters and their struggle against conventional society. Firstly, the characters' behavior indicates an ambiguous posture about the conception of the New Woman, which detached conscious and unconscious oppressive attitudes not only toward themselves but also toward other female characters. Secondly, there is a tendency to stereotype characters according to their race, social status, and sexuality. Thirdly, marriage is strongly related to conventionalities; thus, it oppresses female sexuality and autonomy becoming a hindrance in women's lives. Fourthly, among the main characters, there is a resistance marked by degradation, which is divided into three emotional states. Finally, repeated insistences found in the three narratives tell us about the behaviors and feelings of these marginalized women.

The ambiguous behavior of female characters can be analyzed according to different issues. First, two characters strongly follow social conventions: Rose and Mrs. Haydon. Both consider conventions a successful manner to overcome marginalization since German immigrants are stereotyped as dirty and poor people; meanwhile, black people are described as inferior and immoral. These two women are aware of such stereotypes; thus, they think society can accept them if they follow the image of the New Woman. Consequently, they got married to get a good position and respect, because that is what white American women from a high social class used to do. Moreover, they want to impose marriage over other girls as a sororal attitude. For instance, Rose persuades Melanctha to have a regular life, and Mrs. Haydon works hard to find a husband for Lena because it was like a duty for her. Notwithstanding, they are unconsciously oppressed by the institution of marriage since it implies motherhood, and both characters struggle against it. Rose lost a child owing to the precarious conditions in which black people live. This fact evidences that marriage does not improve her social status and even forces her to have a child she did not want. Regarding Mrs. Haydon, she has a hard life as a mother since she considers her children stupid and troublesome. Moreover, some hints indicate

that she is deeply dissatisfied with her life, but she represses those feelings and follows with a stubborn attitude toward marriage. In both cases, they do not get any good from marriage, although they still believe it is the best option for a woman.

As it is not easy to endure social conventionalities, Anna and Melanctha also present an ambiguous attitude that is triggered by social oppression. Anna is an unconventional lesbian character that refuses marriage and advice girls to save money. However, she affirms preferring men than women because the first ones are easy to please, which contradicts her tendency of searching for a female company. Moreover, she only helps decent girls and scolds women who are careless in their physical appearance; both ideas follow the stereotype of the New Woman, who should be beauty and decent. In Melanctha's case, she is opened-minded and has an unconventional behavior, since she is always wandering to find new experiences and acquire knowledge. She transgresses all conventionalities to build her own identity instead of following the stereotypes of the New Woman. Nevertheless, at the end of her life, she tried to have a regular one, and even she desired marriage. The narrator judges this change of attitude as stupid, as Melanctha thought marriage to be the only option to survive. Therefore, she consciously represses herself although she cannot avoid searching for new exciting experiences. On the whole, the ambiguous behavior is triggered by the global system of oppression that conditions the characters' behavior and mind. Indeed, Anna and Melanctha question what is considered true in society, and they express those thoughts trying to change their habits. Moreover, this ambiguity also indicates that the characters' mind is not static. Still, they can shift in perception, put in doubt the conventions, and contradict their values to demonstrate the dynamism and the complexity of mind.

Regarding the stereotypes of society, there is a relation between physical appearance with a moral evaluation that categorizes people in society, leaving on the top of the hierarchy white people who are considered decent, and hence, superior. Conversely, with black people, this categorization is evident through the analysis of Melanctha, 'Mis' Herbert and Rose. The portraits of these three women show the playful Stein's style of writing that describes colors, forms, sounds and smells to ensure a better representation of reality. The narrator describes Melanctha and 'Mis' Herbert, who have white blood as pale yellow; Melanctha is subtle and graceful, and her mother is pleasant and sweet appearing. On the contrary, Rose, who was educated by white people, is considered sullen, selfish, and stupid because of her physical

appearance. Therefore, in the eyes of society, skin color predetermines people as moral or immoral by nature. Similarly, German immigrants suffer discrimination and are considered inferior. In "The Gentle Lena" they are depicted as dirty and smelly being marginalized from the American community. For that reason, German women as Anna, The German cook, and Mrs. Haydon care about the physical appearance to avoid looking careless as a manner of facing this stereotype. In terms of sexuality, the stories create an ambiance where only married women deserve respect. On the contrary, lesbian, widow, and single women are marginalized. This is evident by the insistence of labeling Lenhman as the 'widow' and Melanctha's mother as 'Mis'. Besides, Jane and Melanctha have a bad reputation for having a lesbian relationship; for that reason, Jeff and Rose, who have a conventional mind, rejected and judged Melanctha for wandering not only with Jane but also with several men. Thus, the global system of oppression bans free sexuality of women, since the fact that women can decide over their sexuality was very uncommon, disturbing people's minds and the imposed social order.

Money is a controversial issue related to stereotypes since having it is crucial to overcome marginalization. On the one hand, Anna and the German cook encourage young girls to save money and live independently of men. On the other hand, conventional characters like Mrs. Haydon and Rose believe that marriage assures economic stability. However, the narratives demonstrate that the last point is a myth. Actually, Lena lost her savings when she got married and only men manage money. Conversely, Anna is the best model for saving money. However, the insistence that refers to her "hard life" indicates that for Anna being her own economic support was challenging but not impossible, since she belongs to the low-social class. Similarly, the characters of Melanctha, Jane, and Mrs. Lenthman are not interested in money, as they respond to a more transgressive image of The New Woman, without imitating or projecting any white-dominant conception about women in their lives, even though they were poor.

Within a macro analysis of the idea of degradation from the portrait of the three main female characters in *Three Lives*, it is possible to acknowledge an ambiguous mode of resistance against the oppressive image of the New Woman. Conventional configurations of women in the female characters of Anna, Melanctha, and Lena have an impact on their health. On the whole, the three marginalized women can be configured together into three emotional

states of resistance. Within the first emotional state, Anna, Melanctha, and Lena are described with significant keywords that shape their thought and behavior. In the case of Melanctha, she is transgressive in terms of behavior as she seeks for wisdom by experiences and knowledge instead of following conventional oppressive beliefs and habits about women. Interestingly, her unconventional behavior and her seeking for wisdom mirror the notion of Taoism. Through the image of the Wise, longing for a real human experience of knowledge (Soubllette 9), Melanctha struggles to keep herself open to new perceptions of reality by rejecting a regular life. Thus, her “reason of existing” (9) through the repetition of her wanderings, which means being constantly in movement by gaining experiences, reflects her unconventional internal law of behavior. Therefore, a fictional transgressive configuration of her behavior questions the social order as a woman, beyond her color of skin, her sexuality, and her unconventional behavior. Conversely, the characters of Anna and Lena are oppressed by the image of New Woman as they are German women with a developed sense of rightness about women’s behavior, and an oppressed patient personality, respectively. In other words, while the sharp voice and strong attitude of Anna reflect a model of resistance which is ambiguously oppressive as well because of her scoldings to other young women, Lena is totally oppressed by conventional beliefs about women sustained by her family. However, it is important to highlight that Lena in this first state is described with the insistence of ‘pleasant’ both as her own description and as a ‘pleasant’ ambiance surrounded by women who she works with.

The second emotional state has to do with the resistance of homosexual relationships and a strong attraction to women, that challenge not only the institutionalized belief of marriage but motherhood as well. Indeed, homosexual relationships were banned by Freud’s psychoanalytic theories that consider them as symptoms of a pathology that results in the pejorative concept of sexual “inversion” that, as Butler explains, is also excluded from the heterosexual matrix imposed by the white-male genital norm. By transgressing the image of the New Woman, the character of Anna presents both a lesbian relationship with Mrs. Lenhtman but a sororal with Miss Mathilda, always showing affection and giving scoldings. In the case of Melanctha, she starts to feel blue as she became apart from an important lesbian relationship with Jane. Her avoidance of regular life is blurred by her relationship with Jeff, whose patriarchal conventional set of truths configure an oppressive and confused state of resistance in Melanctha. Finally, the character of Lena degrades in terms of her portrait (stupid,

silly, and poor) as she is introduced to Herman by Mrs. Haydon. Although Lena obeys her, she is constantly configured by the repetition of insistence structures in her thoughts about being in the company of the girls she used to work with. In other words, despite a lack of evident lesbian attraction in Lena, it is possible to draw and acknowledge her longing for a female companion, instead of being oppressed by ideals of the New Woman.

Concerning the third emotional state of degradation of the main female characters, they are on the wane of their illness, since the oppression about their sexuality and the institution of marriage. In the case of Anna, she is overwhelmed by her separation from Miss Mathilda and Mrs. Lenhtman. This plays an important part in her deterioration, which is evidenced in the tiredness of her health configured by the images of illness, pain, and operations. Then, Melanctha's resistance against oppressive regular life is defeated by her approach to the idea of marriage while having her last relationship with Jem. Interestingly, although Melanctha becomes foolish because of the ring Jem gives her, she is still looking for female affection in Rose; who represents the image of an unconscious oppressed woman by marriage. Similarly, Lena is finally degraded by her marriage with Herman as she becomes lifeless and physically deteriorated. Moreover, she not only challenges the New Woman's ideal of marriage but also motherhood, which is configured as a mortal burden to her. Interestingly, she is still looking for her former female companion as her thoughts imply.

All things considered, several insistences results in a macro portrait of the marginalized women, where we find interrelated features. Dunn cites Hoffman, who considers repetitions of words and phrases in *Three lives* as a "Motif," which creates a continuous quality through the work (55), and that relates different characters from the three stories. In fact, from the voice of the narrator Anna, Mrs. Drehten, Melanctha, and Lena are described with the insistence of "poor". This *motif* reflects on their image of women and their marginalized condition since their behavior is oppressed by the imposition of conventional cultural beliefs, involving the struggle of events in her life, such as marriage and sexuality. Thus, the purpose of this insistence regards the visualization of their oppression as they are related to both a physical and mental illness. Throughout the narratives, these characters became deteriorated, a fact that is evidenced by their resistance in front of the paradigm about women's behavior. At the end of each story, the resistance turns into an "individual sacrifice" (De Undurraga), which fictionally aims at establishing a criticism and, therefore, a basis for achieving social goals and

equality among all women, such as the inclusion of marginalized women and all their demands, concerning the topics of race, sexuality, marriage, financial independence, and so on. In this sense, it is important to highlight the image of death and the constant struggling of Melanctha, as she “was so blue” (38, 40, 83, 87, 97), and also “wondered often how it was she did not kill herself” (39), because of that emotional state she always had to endure; the oppression of Lena’s behavior in front of the New Women’s model portrayed by her aunt, Mrs. Haydon, which keeps her in a traumatic state that makes her always “dreamy and [as though she was] not there” (101, 108, 110); and finally, both Anna and Mrs. Drehten were involved in operations, carried out by Dr. Shonjen, as Anna had to ‘submit herself to operation’ despite her portrait as a model of resistance, because her “health was very bad, as indeed it always was ... until the end of her strong life” (14); and as Mrs. Drehten “had trouble with her tumor” (30), which is a consequence of the oppression enacted by the image of “her bad husband”, who was also “her chief trouble” (35). As he worked in a “brewery”, her trouble with him was that he “always drank too much”, depriving him of what was believed as “a thrifty, decent german man” (22).

Additionally, by the same literary voice, the characters of Mrs. Haydon, Anna, and The German cook are depicted by the insistence of “good” women. On the one hand, this *motif* implies an image among them that is associated with a protective behavior, as their advice towards other young women reflects the basis of sororal relationships. Accordingly, Anna was always willing to help other women, such as Mrs. Lenthman and Mrs. Drehten, because any of them “who needed help from [her] was one who was in trouble from being good to others” (29). In the case of Mrs. Haydon, she “was the only one of her family who took any interest in Lena” (102), in terms of her purpose to make her “go out to service”, so she “could get her a good husband” (101) in the meantime. Finally, the character of the German cook was strongly supportive of Lena, “had always to the last day tried to help her” and “was the only one who ever missed her” (115). However, this *motif* of goodness can be also developed as a form of imposition of their own beliefs towards other women through their scoldings, which is another *motif* related to their behavior. Interestingly, in terms of the New Women’s ideal, conceptions embedded in these scoldings oscillate between the images of the conventional and non-conventional system of truths. For instance, even though the German cook “always scolded” Lena (103, 105, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115), her imposition had to do with improving Lena’s

physical appearance, as she let “herself go so ... “untidy” (112), as a consequence of her marriage with Herman. Conversely, Mrs. Haydon’s scoldings were oppressive towards Lena, because she considered that Lena was “so foolish” (105), while she is “busy looking around the right man to be Lena’s husband” (103). Thus, the *motif* of her scoldings is associated with the conventional idea of women in front of the images of marriage and motherhood. Ultimately, Anna’s goodness is the reflection of her “power to control [and to scold that] “grew always weaker” (24), as it turns out to as an unconventional belief about women who were “careless” and behave in “bad ways”, as they were not aware of their financial independence away from marriage, which was a plight that made Anna grow “bitter with it all” (32). In light of these relationships, the issues of power and freedom oscillate among social mechanisms that, according to Foucault, articulate the individual identity, as in the case of Lena and Melanctha in front of Mrs. Haydon and Rose’s scoldings, respectively. However, the dynamic of effects, as these female characters interact, might either oppress or subvert social conventions about race, sex and class. Consequently, Miss Mathilda, Mrs. Lenthman, and Lena are depicted as "careless" through the voice of other characters, which aims to criticize their physical appearance and behavior. This *motif* shows the influence of The New Woman's model, becoming a kind of modern judgment toward who does not follow this movement. Indeed, these characters are highly criticized for not being interested in fashion nor saving money since it was not a priority in their hard lives. Thus, "careless" points out the superficiality of the demands of the New Woman and the prejudices it holds toward marginalized women.

Finally, the narrator describes Rose as "childish" and "sullen" and Melanctha as "stupid" when she wanted to marry Jem; moreover, Lena is depicted as "stupid" by other characters. The repeated words: stupid, sullen, foolish indicates the lack of intelligence of these characters in specific contexts. In general, not being intelligent in *Three lives* aims to the lack of critical mind. For instance, neither of these three characters criticize the institution of marriage: Lena "did not really know what it was" (105), "Melanctha’s joy [for being engaged with Jem] made her foolish" (90, 91), and Rose "thought it would be very nice and very good in her position to get really, regularly married" (87). Their position in front marriage is contrasted with the whole book that portrays it as a hindrance to women's autonomy; in fact, accepting blindly conventionalities aims to their intellectual limitation. As Emerson says in *the American Scholar* the 'Man thinking' has to renounce the *conventional* way of learning, ...



instead of that, the Man thinking should *develop his own mind* (23); in this case, the characters should think by themselves instead of imitating the customs of the white women of upper class or accepting everything with a submissive attitude (as Lena). As a whole, to be "stupid" is a *motif* that sharply criticizes the imposed conventionalities, including the New Woman, who does not really take a risk to achieve women's physical and intellectual independence of men. In *Three Lives*, the 'Woman Thinking' should question the institution of marriage and the implication that it would have on the development of their identity and autonomy.

In line with this analysis, it is possible to discuss it from the perspective of other authors and their interpretation of female characters in *Three Lives*, such as Melanctha. She has been exhaustively studied from the sphere of race, due to her unconventional configuration as a black woman in terms of thought and behavior. Accordingly, Rabin considers that Melanctha, throughout the story, is not a victim of a "prescriptive heterosexual culture" (67), otherwise, she would be part of the Victorian woman-as-victim category in fiction. In this sense, *Three Lives* definitely subverts this nineteenth-century vision, where all female characters are subdued to domesticity and submission. Therefore, we agree with her claim, since female characters in the text are not static. Beyond Melanctha, Mrs. Lenhtman, Jane, The Good Anna, and the German cook, despite their cultural background, can be also considered as what Rabin proposes, only for the case of Melanctha, the "True Woman of the twentieth century" (67). Basically, not only their thoughts but also behavior constitute this new image of women in fiction, that aims at unifying their segregation in terms of racial stereotypes, as well as of social class. Moreover, Rabin discusses how Stein did not devote any extensive use of adjectives to present the story of "Melanctha: Or Each One As She may". In opposition to the rest of the narratives, Melanctha's lack of categorization responds to the expression of "moral hands-off: to each his own" (67), in which she is simply presented as Melanctha and not as "gentle" or "good", as the narratives of Lena and Anna did. From the point of view of the analysis of insinuations, we disagree with Rabin since from a different close reading there is a complexity of adjectivization in female characters, that provides an emotional degradation, as it was discussed above. In fact, this degradation of women in *Three Lives* is evidently carried by main female characters, which on the one hand proves the complex categorization of characters beyond connotations of titles of each narrative, and on the other, supports our vision on the non-static configuration of female characters. Authors, such as Blackmer, have discussed the



duality of Melanctha, in terms of her color skin (“half-white”) or her behavior, according to her particular descriptions. In light of this, we agree with Rabin as she believes Melanctha is not “much suspended” between the duality of her race and sexuality (68). Therefore, we claim that she portrays the image of a marginalized black woman whose unconventional behavior both subverts and cannot fit in the social order of Bridgepoint about the oppressed system of truths about race and marriage. In fact, this position mirrors what Rabin considers about Melanctha’s necessity of wandering, as this movement is done by Melanctha “in order to live” and to resist the oppression of a “unitary identity position” (69) that the adoption of a regular life implies. Likely, the current study sees the *motif* of wandering in Melanctha, as an image of her impetus for keeping herself moving in order to gain knowledge and social freedom through unconventional but real human experiences.

Following the line of racial stereotypes in *Three Lives*, Smethurst claims that Stein’s racism can be seen in “Melanctha”, through “dubious generalizations” that configures a “complicated and contradictory treatment of racial/ethnic identity” (170). In this sense, we disagree with this, since Stein’s style of writing implies an unconventional way of portraying reality. Thus, Stein provides “generalizations” of realistic stereotypes through the use of insistence structures, including the voices of people she had the experience to share with, as a criticism against the white-male dominant paradigm in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Then, from the same narrative, Smethurst claims that “racist visions of black women” are displayed in the “promiscuity and lack of maternal instincts” (178) of Rose Johnson, and the “insatiable desire” of Melanctha attributed to both “black women and ... to lesbians from all races ...” (181). However, if we think of the issue of motherhood in *Three Lives*, it has to do with the problem of social structures rather than racial ones since women, who are not necessarily black such as ‘Mis’ Herbert or Lena, endure same struggles of childbirth due to the gap of marginalization that class distinction implies beyond race.

Ruddick studies "Melanctha" based on William James' psychological theories focusing on habits of attention and research about consciousness. Accordingly, she observes that "habits of attention are reflexes of the complete character of the individual" (16). She applies this theory to Melanctha's mind-wandering to describe such receptiveness to sensations in contrast to Jeff that only focuses his attention on categorizing specific issues concerning moral values and beliefs, which is closely related to conservative thinking that resists renovating ideas (20).

This author explains that both characters are personifications of warring principles that exist in every mind (20). We agree with Ruddick in her proposal. In fact, we open it up to other female characters with a fixed conservative mind as Rose and Mrs. Haydon has been evidenced in our previous analysis of insistences. Ruddick proposes that Stein defies James' theory about wandering mind; according to this, Melanctha's mind should represent "the meanest possible use of the mind, [thus] Melanctha's mind is deficient because it does nothing but drift" (38). We agree in considering it Stein's new modern technique that plays with James' theories. However, we differ with Ruddick in labeling Melanctha as a sexual wanderer as a consequence of her indiscriminate attention (38); by the contrary, Melanctha's receptive wandering-mind is an unconventional means to acquire a real knowledge through experiences, beyond morality. Indeed, insistences describes her as "intelligent" and having "a good mind" as the narrator says, "Melanctha *really* was a good woman, and she had a good mind, and she had a *real* strong sweetness, and she could *surely really* teach him" (Stein 56). In this quote, at the beginning of the relationship between Melanctha and Jeff, the narrator uses adverbs to emphasize Melanctha's intellect and her ability to share her knowledge with Jeff. As a result of their endless conversations, "he [Jeff] never can forget the things she taught him, so he could be really understanding" (85). Hence, the configuration of her thoughts is, in fact, complex and dynamic, transgressing the habits of conventional minds as Jeff's one. In fact, Melanctha learns and thinks unconventionally, which is similar to the oriental idea of wisdom portrayed in Taoism, which searches for new perceptions of reality through a receptive attitude (Soubllette, VI). Thus, wandering-mind is not limited just to Melanctha's sexual behavior, but it is an ability to learn actively.

Similarly, Dekoven adds that wandering "is just as much associated with lower-class status as it is with blackness" (74), which is a hindrance to move to the middle class. We partially agree. Indeed, society considers immoral the empowered attitude Melanctha and Jane have over their body, sexuality, and mind considered women with bad habits. Nevertheless, we do not find any hint concerning Melanctha's desire for class mobility, in contrast to characters as Rose that desires a good position getting marriage with a working man or Anna who is focused on saving money to overcome her marginalized condition. Interestingly, Dekoven analyses the word "wander" from a racial perspective considering it the "simple promiscuous unmorality (sic) of the black people" (73). However, since this word is linked mainly to

Melanctha, it could be wrong to generalize this statement to all Afro-American characters. In fact, Melanctha and Jane, who "wander" are not considered immoral, as opposed to Rose, who is described with pejorative adjectives although she does not wander. Thus, it could be wrong to relate "wander" with race issues, since it points up a mental state instead of racial stereotypes.

## Conclusion

From a feminist point of view, the fictional image of sexually and racially marginalized women in *Three Lives* is configured, by the Steinian use of insistence in her style, as a literary criticism against the fluctuating cultural movement of the New Woman during the early twentieth century, subjected to a white-male oppressive system of truths. Within the analysis of insistences, we have aimed at configuring images of marginalization of all female characters within Stein's narratives, caused by the cultural paradigm of The New Woman's movement, to both illustrate and prove our claim. Fortunately, our thesis is valid as it conveys holistically the issues of racial stereotypes, sexuality, and marriage. Unexpectedly, one of the limitations of this study was the selection of female characters in accordance with insistence structures associated with them. In this sense, only the characters of Anna, Mrs. Lenhtman, Mrs. Mathilda, Mrs. Drehten, Rose, Melanctha, Jane, Lena, Mrs. Haydon, and The German cook were analyzed. According to results, the image of marginalized women constitute a countercultural movement against The New Woman since a rejection of immigrants, single women, widows, and lesbians are not taken into account within this movement. Throughout the narratives, insistence structures displayed the stereotyping of black and German women. Even though these images can be considered part of racial issues, we have explored their configuration as a form of oppressive conventional behaviors subjected to The New Woman movement, because of the difference of social strata involved. Moreover, Stein developed a diversity of colors for physical descriptions that subvert the duality between white and black. As the structure of the cultural paradigm is oppressive at all levels of its multiple categories on women, from the analysis of insistence structures the idea of homosexuality is oppressed as its "inversion" transgresses the heterosexual matrix of sexuality and marriage.

However, it is important to highlight, on the one hand, the resistance of characters, such as Anna, Rose, and Mrs. Haydon, who through sororal relationships enact the image of oppressive as well, as their scoldings portray their imposed beliefs. In fact, their ambiguous configuration of mind in front of marriage and motherhood marginalizes not only themselves but other female characters, since they are both consciously and unconsciously oppressive in their movements. On the other hand, there is an explicit individual sacrifice of the main female

characters, Anna, Melanctha, and Lena, which is illustrated by insistence structures, showing the movement of the degradation of their emotional state. Accordingly, they are not static characters, but dynamic in terms of their thoughts and behavior, as their experiences undergo changes and struggles, because of a cultural paradigm that Stein fictionally in *Three Lives* keeps in construction. Finally, from the analysis of insistences, significant *motifs* support our thesis as they illustrate an interrelation of multiple categories of oppression within the analyzed female characters.

On the whole, insistences as a modern literary technique connect theories of mind with social context resulting in the visualization of marginalized women in front of the configuration of beliefs that characterized modern society. Besides, all the female characters that we analyzed are oppressed by a global system of truths that determines how they should behave, which jobs are accessible for them, what to do with their money and sexuality, even how they should dress. If they follow such rules, insistences will depict them as "decent," "patient," or "good" women. Conversely, if they reject conventionalities, the insistences will be "careless" or women with "bad habits." Insistences also develop portraits of a new configuration of women. For instance, Melanctha represents the physical movement connected to the mental movement through the insistence "wander," which evokes the dynamism of mind that changes and therefore transgresses the fixed habits of the conventional society. In fact, the lives of these fictional female characters contextualized in their domestic environment show the struggle of a large number of women that were excluded by their race, sexuality, and social class from the movement of the New Woman at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the New Woman cares about fashion, still acknowledges the institution of marriage and motherhood, and focuses on living in the public sphere; the characters of *Three Lives* suffer for the oppression imposed by their husbands, see motherhood as a charge, have to deal with little money, and search for female company. As a matter of fact, the New Woman conception resulted in an exclusive ideal of white women from the upper-social class rather than an inclusive movement. On the contrary, several studies that we mentioned demonstrate that discrimination toward lesbians, immigrants, and Afro-American people was a reality in modern times that remained hidden as taboo subjects. Stein has brought to shed a light on this marginalization to impact both culture and the conception of female identity configuration.

Concerning the content and position of insistence structures, they are clearly related to philosophical and psychological theories. James and Taoism highlighted the importance of introspection to look into consciousness to understand human behaviors, feelings, and memories that configures social identity. Likewise, insistences show the movement of female

characters' emotional states that change along with the narration. To illustrate, Lena firstly was pleasant and patient then, stupid, finally, poor and careless. Similarly, Melanctha has breakneck courage but also was a coward; she enjoys of exciting experiences but searches for peace a quiet, she was intelligent and sometimes foolish, she had a good mind, but she felt so blue. Therefore, the configuration of female characters of *Three lives* demonstrates the dynamism of consciousness that cannot be fixed. Moreover, the three emotional states of the main characters of *Three Lives* show how the past influences in the present and the present in the future, such phenomenon implies a retroactive verification, in Jamesian terms, or the *durée*, according to Bergson. Stein could have applied this theory to emphasize the imminent fate of the characters, which is death. Although the three characters struggle to survive in a male-dominated system of truths, it was impossible because of their unconventional configuration reflected on their thought and behavior.

The implications of this dissertation are concerned with the literary area and the actual society. Concerning literature, it is crucial to pay attention to the three stories of *Three Lives* and not only focusing on Melanctha, since the structure of the book interconnects the characters of the three stories through insistences. Hence, studying the novel as a whole would be convenient to get a deep analysis. Additionally, it may be a mistake to make hasty generalizations about the characters of "The Good Anna" and "The Gentle Lena" or only study them as a complement of "Melanctha," since our work demonstrates that all female characters are carefully designed to represent the variety of marginalized women. The main implication concerning society is that Stein's composition tells us about the relevance of writing about controversial issues to visualize communities that live oppressed and hidden through transgressive and innovative use of language, to really have an impact on the readers' minds and culture. It is important to highlight that in this day and age, there are still women marginalized because of their race, sexuality, and social class. Therefore, the themes in *Three Lives* are still relevant to explore and criticize the current system that tries to determine how women should live and behave under the power of conservative institutions that promote a conventional lifestyle.

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