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An exercise in analysis as enjoyment

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ABSTRACT



Gertrude Stein and, consequently, Adam Frank's Radio Free Stein project underscore the potentiality of *enjoyment* as a mode of analysis and knowledge. This paper considers the complex nature of enjoyment – regarding it a generative form of struggle, appreciation and, in Stein's words, 'making a fuss' – and positions it as a radical challenge to the current data-driven mode of flattening aesthetic judgment to 'like' or 'dislike'. The Radio Free Stein project also functions as a case study for the value of artistic research and how artistic research either might align with or provide an alternative to the model of 'scientific research' in the university. Finally, this paper employs theoretical descriptions of *listening* from Roland Barthes, Pauline Oliveros and Charles Bernstein to propose varying methods of enjoying (and understanding) Radio Free Stein's two recordings of Stein's 1917 play 'An Exercise in Analysis', composed by Dan Warner.

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1. An epigraph to enjoyment

Upon embarking on her grand homecoming tour of the US in 1934, Gertrude Stein offered a remarkably succinct guideline for how her readers (which we presume includes future literary scholars) should understand her work. In a one-minute clip recorded in New York and currently available through the PennSound digital archive, a radio interviewer observes, 'You come to the United States to lecture, Miss Stein, which implies that there would be many people who could comprehend your ideas'. The voice is masculine with a humorous lilt, and what gets lost in transcription is the irony in the self-assured voice, the masking under banter of the demand placed on Stein: *Explain why you are here*.

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At this point Stein cuts in, her voice as self-assured as his. The words flow steadily and smoothly, interspersed with emphatic and well-timed pauses. In explaining why she is here, she tells her listener *who* she is; consider how much we learn about her personality through the unmistakable sense of presence in her voice:

Look here. Being intelligible is not what it seems. You mean by understanding that you can talk about it in the way that you have a habit of talking, putting it in other words. But I mean by understanding enjoyment. If you enjoy it, you understand it. And lots of people have enjoyed it, so lots of people have understood it.¹

Even in conversation, Stein delivers her words with a cadence that feels it just might be describable through established categories of poetic meter and rhyme while also deftly eluding them. The opening imperative, 'Look here', is Stein's Beowulfian 'Hwæt'; further, the combination of stressed syllables and elisions that can be heard in her delivery help underscore the most salient words (not, seems, you, talk, etc.); and the repetition of gerunds and the pronoun 'it' produce a *feeling* of rhyme, even if these words don't *technically* rhyme and don't align at the ends of clear syntactical or formal pauses. The prosody of Stein's speech is difficult to describe because it dances between convention and deviation; perhaps it is not designed to be described but to keep us listening. Her prosody is deliberate and compelling. It is convincing. 'If you enjoy it, you understand it'. Even if you only read this sentence on the page, it is an effective piece of rhetoric that turns into an earworm, akin to 'There's no there there' and 'A rose is a rose'. And if you hear it, you don't doubt it.

Taking into account how Stein delivers her words, what in fact can we understand her to mean? On one hand, Stein's rebuttal to the interviewer is simple. She indicates that she is here because a lot of people wanted her to come here. Why more does she have to explain? On the other hand, Stein's rebuttal to the interviewer is also a rebuttal to a broader, privileged mode of demonstrating and assessing our understanding of a literary work: 'putting it in other words', specifically to 'talk about it in the way you have a habit of talking'. Why should 'being intelligible' to this interviewer (and to the abstract authoritativeness such a generic male voice has been coded to stand in for) be the only way comprehension, understanding, or indeed knowledge of Stein's ideas be acknowledged? 'Lots of people', Stein argues, enjoy her work, and shouldn't their mode of engagement with her ideas also count as a form of knowledge? It is also worth noting that Stein leaves open to multiplicity what enjoyment involves and how it is experienced. Stein does not simply state, 'If you enjoy it, you understand it'; she repeats this formulation but with the difference that the singular, monolithic 'you' becomes plural: 'lots of people have enjoyed it, so lots of people have understood it'. Unlike 'being intelligible', enjoyment is not just what *you* mean', but what 'lots of people' mean by it. This emphasis on plurality, as

well as refusal to articulate a programmatic outcome for understanding, echoes Stein's earlier assertion in *The Making of Americans*: 'I am writing for myself and strangers. This is the only way I can do it. Everybody is a real one to me, everybody is like some one else too to me'.²

This approach to Stein's work proposed by Stein herself nonetheless poses a quandary for those of us in higher education – which, in the 2020s, is progressively globally defined by how it articulates and achieves programmatic outcomes – who believe in the work's necessity as something to be taught, something to be researched, something that should engage *scholarship*. Bob Perelman writes:

Stein's writing attacks the notion of literary quality is telling ways ... The expertise needed to read Joyce, Pound, and Zukofsky is readily subsumed under the category of 'higher learning'. One does not need such expertise to read Stein.

While she aspired to more than a simple fame as an iconoclast and wanted to succeed in the same arena with Joyce and Proust, it needs to be remembered how opposed to, or indifferent to, general ideas of exactitude, efficiency and 'good writing' her own writing is.³

In this sense, it's hard not to wonder if Stein's assertion on enjoyment and understanding would reverberate more radically within academic halls today than it would have when she sounded it nearly a century ago. But this might, in fact, get straight to the heart of Stein's necessity for literary scholarship. After all, although readers might 'not need expertise to read Stein', her writing is notably, exceptionally demanding. Even *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which is often called her most accessible and publicity-oriented work and whose success was what brought her to the US in 1934, can hardly be called an 'easy' read.⁴ It is certainly neither predictable nor familiar, given the book's high concept premise (an autobiography of someone written by someone else); long and twisty grammar; obsession with the trivial and mundane of gendered domestic life that pushes into tedium but ultimately reveals its radicality; and constant referencing of names, as many obscure as widely known, of those who shaped European high modernist culture.

Stein wrote for herself and strangers and consistently published strange, potentially estranging, writing. What is remarkable, as she notes in the radio interview, is that *still* 'lots of people' have met the demands of her work: they have read it, they have enjoyed it, they have come to an understanding of it. As Laura Frost writes, 'The nature of Steinian pleasure – how and whether she gives delight – remains an outstanding question. Even Stein's greatest admirers concede that much of her work is insurmountably obscure or unduly demanding – and the length is the least of the obstacles'.⁵ Frost goes on to cite Ulla Dydo's assessment, 'Her refusal of

the conventions of English defamiliarizes her writing and angers readers',⁶ yet what's interesting to Frost – and to me – is that 'the same formal features that were once deemed off-putting have increasingly been read as the source of delight and even accessibility'.⁷ The indeterminable, unlimitable quality that pushes readers to enjoy and to familiarise themselves to (rather than feel defamiliarised by) Stein's language not only 'attacks the notion of literary quality' but also the notion of popular taste. Her work is an enduring challenge to literary scholarship to express understanding, even share it, without forcing and distorting it into intelligibility in the habitual ways. To enjoy is to feel wonder, and to wonder is to truly want to know.

An epistemology centred on enjoyment should not seem so strange to us; after all, one of the West's foundational philosophical treatises, the *Symposium*, is premised on wine and clever company at a really good party. While I don't advocate this as a feasible pedagogical model, still there is something to be said for how this setting, engendering lusty polyvocal propositions on love that nonetheless will resonate for millennia, might be a more compelling vision of a philosopher-king's utopia than anything in the *Republic*. And, of course, more recently, in the post-Stein half of the twentieth century, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva developed a discourse around psychoanalysis and enjoyment (*jouissance* in the language of Stein's adopted home) so frequently referenced within academic halls that to cite any of them here feels predictable, even clichéd.

Yet it strikes me that despite how frequently the notion of enjoyment as an essential mode of experience and understanding has been cited, how infrequently it is put into practice. Still today if we were to posit enjoyment as a legitimate form of research – as a valuable mode of analysis in and of itself – what academic exam committee, administrator, or publisher would not recoil at our recklessness toward 'the discipline'? *But what is the research question? What are the established theoretical frameworks and methods employed in answering this question? What is the resulting data? Where are the citations that acknowledge one has accessed and found valuable the most recent scholarship on this topic, which was published because it also had to meet our demands, thereby quantifiably affirming that our demands are valid? What else is there to separate the 'profession' from the 'hobby' of reading literature?*⁸

What enjoyment? What understanding? Much already has been written on the foibles of the 'professionalized' field, as well as the misguided push for research in the humanities to be modelled wholesale after the sciences. Entire articles, journals and books necessarily are devoted to this topic, for as Barthes writes in *The Pleasures of the Text*, 'It can't be helped: boredom is not simple. We do not escape boredom (with a work, a text) with a gesture of impatience or rejection'.⁹ Still, I believe a better use of time and energy here, in a special issue of a journal on a topic I truly enjoy, might

not be to argue in the negative but rather to try to offer a positive *defense of enjoyment*.

After all, as Stein shows us, enjoyment is not simple. Enjoyment is also laborious, even if it is labour taken on willingly and voluntarily.¹⁰ Enjoyment is why we might take just a few seconds from a one-minute audio clip and spend several weeks and paragraphs trying to figure out just why it draws us in, why we keep thinking about it, and why it is so difficult to describe in the way that we have a habit of describing. Enjoyment is what lets us know that accounting for *how* Stein delivers her words is as important as relaying ('citing') the words themselves.

2. Expansions of enjoyment

Stein concludes her radio interview by observing that 'after all you must enjoy my writing, and if you enjoy it you understand it. If you do not enjoy it, why do you make a fuss about it? There is the real answer'. According to Stein's logic, *making a fuss* about her writing is indicative of *enjoying* it, with the phrase suggesting both effort and creation on the end of the reader. The reader actively generates additional interest, attention and excitement (a 'fuss'). Thus for Stein, we could argue that enjoyment does not begin and end with simply *liking* something; it is not instantaneous, superficial or uninformed.¹¹ And further for us today, we could argue that enjoyment cannot be assessed quantitatively through clicks, shares or sales. If we tend to associate enjoyment today with 'hobbies', frivolity, or dilettantism, rather than complex, multilayered analysis and the enriched understanding this might engender, it might be because of how impoverished our sense of enjoyment has become.

In a 2019 essay for *Harper's*, titled 'Like This or Die', Christian Lorentzen laments how the art of cultural criticism progressively has been pushed aside (or pushed into the shape of) an algorithm for consumer recommendations. He begins by describing a fictional couple, named Wendy and Alex, who stand in for the typical middle-brow, middle-class readers that *enjoy* literature but don't exert too much effort into *understanding* it: 'Alex and Wendy love culture. It's how they spend their free time. It's what they talk about at dinner parties ... Their feeds tell them about culture. Their feeds are a form of comfort. Their feeds explain things to them they already understand'.¹² Lorentzen is adamant that he doesn't believe they actually exist, but still 'as a cultural journalist, as a book critic, I've been put on notice that I work for them'. However, I would argue that it's not only editors, publishers and algorithmic affirmation-seeking critics of popular journals who buy into this conceptualisation of the common readership. This abstraction is bought into by those in the university who believe it is the audience academics must target through 'popularization', rather than having and acting upon the

conviction that academic research, in whatever format or platform, should interest, engage and challenge both specialists and non-specialists simultaneously.

But why relegate understanding only to the former and enjoyment only to the latter? Lorentzen concludes his essay by suggesting that we ‘think of Wendy and Alex in a different way, as the sort of people I know to exist’:

Wendy and Alex have never stopped reading since they were children. Reading books, watching films, looking at art – these are simply things they would never not do, whatever stage they are in their lives, however much money they do or don’t have ... They too never have enough time, but they’re not too concerned about wasting it. They like to figure things out for themselves.¹³

Wendy and Alex, as I know them as well, might be doctors, they might be housekeepers, they might be call centre workers, they might even be professors. Regardless of what jobs provide their income, they ‘have never stopped reading since they were children’, which is less indicative of the fact that they approach reading with a childlike naivete than that they have spent and will spend a lifetime thinking about how to understand what they read. Further, the nature of their understanding will vary not only from book to book but depending on the different moments in their lives when they encounter or recall the same book, what else they have read and when and how, and the possibilities they have at hand for how they express or manifest their understanding. They don’t just *like* a book; they *enjoy* it. This might mean they dislike it, they are perplexed by it, they savour each word, they skim through a long chapter, they read it aloud to their mother, they give it as a gift to a lover, they translate it to another language, they compose music inspired by it, they discuss it with others in a class, they write an 8000-word article about it, they read an 8000-word article about it, or they can’t find the right words to describe their reaction to it but they find themselves continuing to think about it.

However, unlike Lorentzen, I acknowledge that the previous versions of Wendy and Alex, as comfort-seeking consumerists, as *likers*, undoubtedly exist. They are not misconceived fictions but deliberately groomed, constructed facts, geared toward producing their ‘resulting data’ (their preferences) in a progressively predictable manner.¹⁴ Nonetheless – or, in fact, emphatically because of this – I, as a researcher, writer and, above all, teacher, have to have faith in and to work for the latter versions of Wendy and Alex, as those who ‘like to figure things out for themselves’. Afterall, what is both exciting and urgent today about Stein’s proclamation – as well as imagining the common readership (Wendy and Alex) as the multidimensional, intelligent and eager-to-be-engaged ‘sort of people [we] know to exist’ – is the expansive, complex, and, yes, inclusive definitions of both enjoyment and understanding that become available to us. And why

would we in the university ever want to impede this? Why would we ever aim to narrow or to restrict modes of attaining knowledge? I don't ask this naively. The more I think about Stein's assertion in contrast to expectations about what properly demonstrates *understanding* within our institutions of learning, the clearer it becomes that Stein's correlation between enjoyment and understanding is not what's most radical, but rather her emphatic affirmation (through repetition) of a 'you', the particular and ever-morphing reader, and an 'it', the particular and ever-morphing literary work. Shifting particularities can be terrifying to the institutions that have to provide the support, the resources, and the intellectual capacity to acknowledge and address them. As Bill Brown asks ironically, ventriloquising 'a relatively well-dressed dean ... in a well-appointed office': 'How exactly am I supposed to count that? Are we expected to count *that* the way we count *this*? Should you really count those?'¹⁵

Enjoyment's effectiveness in expanding our understanding of what can and may constitute knowledge certainly underlies a recent push by some in the university for 'a more pluralist concept of research', as Dieter Lesage puts it, umbrellaed under the term 'artistic research'.¹⁶ However, Lesage also warns of how such pushes for pluralism might be met by and subsumed under an administrative tendency toward uniformity:

The argument that artistic research is analogous to scientific research has already prompted some to the idea that, in this case, one should measure the artistic research output of an academy in a way analogous to the way in which the scientific research output of a university is measured ... Such a development would be as problematic for artistic research, as it is already for quite some time for the humanities in general and the cultural studies in particular.¹⁷

Similarly, Mieke Bal argues that regarding 'artistic research' as something analogous to but separate from 'scientific research' reinforces the idea that there are two (as opposed to many) competing (as opposed to complexly and dynamically intertwined) notions of research. In *Exhibition-ism: Temporal Togetherness*, Bal writes about 'artistic research':

The concept is not unproblematic, but the undertaking is worthwhile. It is problematic in the first place because it leaves the hierarchy between artists and academics in place. The former is supposed to be creative but inarticulate, the latter is supposed to be smart but dry and unimaginative. Both presuppositions are erroneous, and restrict what people involved in either domain think they can do. This limitation is left alive when 'artistic research' is used as a basis for the claim that artists, too, can make PhD-level work. It does nothing about the alleged dryness of the academic mind.¹⁸

Both Bal and Lesage are skeptical about employing the generic criteria for scientific research in the university as the validation or objective for a more pluralist concept of research. Should we ultimately, always, have to

prove our understanding of the object of study by *talking about it in the way that we have a habit of talking*, to borrow Stein's phrasing? Does the end of research have to be the *writing of a report*, a summary of resulting data? As Bal indicates, then still we are left with 'the alleged dryness of the academic mind'; we are left without a meaningful understanding of the role of enjoyment in the transfer and further generation of knowledge.¹⁹

At first glance, Radio Free Stein appears to be a by-the-book example of artistic research taken up within the university. On its website, we read that the project was initiated by Adam Frank, who describes Stein's plays as 'experiments in group psychology' and observes that:

It turns out that the best way to explore these plays and the tricky terrain of group psychology is to stage them, or to imagine their staging. I happened on this idea in a graduate seminar on Stein that I ran at the University of British Columbia in 2004. When the students found her plays particularly challenging, I suggested that imagining their staging might help us to approach them critically.²⁰

Thus, the staging of Stein's plays arose in a graduate (and we assume research-oriented) seminar as an effective mode of critical analysis, presumably geared toward developing scholarly interpretations of the literary work. Frank clarifies this latter point by describing a master's thesis that arose from this seminar, which 'combined interpretation and a theatrical staging' and ultimately 'demonstrated that staging Stein's lesser-known plays could help readers *to understand and enjoy them*'.²¹

In echoing Stein's earlier proclamation, Frank stages a seemingly small but vital insurrection against the idea that artistic research ultimately must be dressed up as and validated according to criteria analogous to scientific research. The staging of Stein's plays do not serve to *produce data* about her plays, then resulting in a *conclusive interpretation*. Rather, the staging of the plays is simultaneous and parallel to interpretation, and ultimately both will lead to a transmission of understanding and enjoyment. Enjoyment is not just a possible vehicle toward ultimately producing a scholarly interpretation; rather enjoyment is the objective in itself, and interpretation is a possible vehicle toward it. Further, the more we learn about the thinking and process behind Radio Free Stein, the more it becomes clear that enjoyment cannot be understood as the 'end product' of a linear, progressive project, but rather as emergent and multivalent throughout.

In an interview with Sophie Barklamb and Tim Elfring included in the introduction to this issue, Frank elaborates on his understanding of enjoyment, to clarify that it goes beyond simple entertainment: 'I want audience and enjoyment to go together. A *complex enjoyment*, an enjoyment that might have its own challenges or frustrations, but nonetheless fundamentally an enjoyment'.²² Frank describes enjoyment as the guiding principle

throughout the various stages of adapting Stein's plays, an experience shared by both producer and audience, thus aligning creation and reception. He states,

What I'm mostly concerned with is trying to create as enjoyable a sense of audience as possible for her works. Enjoyment is very important for Stein, and it's very important for my understanding of Stein, and I would like our works to be as enjoyable as possible so that they can be heard.²³

In that Frank's primary objective is the alignment of audience and enjoyment, his role as initiator, producer and dramaturg of Radio Free Stein drives him to situate himself within the audience:

I'm the first listener to this work, and I'm working with others, so I often have to say to myself when I'm listening to something that's happening, 'Do I enjoy this? Is this working in ways that I want it to work?' And then if it isn't, that's definitely part of my reaction to the performers or to the composer or to whatever's happening.²⁴

Frank's earlier statement – that in order to be heard, his and Stein's works (he uses the phrase 'our works') need to be enjoyed – calls to mind Charles Bernstein's pronouncement in his introduction to *Close Listening*:

To be heard, poetry needs to be sounded – whether in a process of active, or interactive, reading of a work or by the poet in performance. Un-sounded poetry remains inert marks on a page, waiting to be called into use by saying, or hearing, the words aloud.²⁵

Radio Free Stein is, of course, a literal *sounding* of Stein's writing, but Bernstein's account of the social implications of why poetry must be sounded closely aligns with my sense of why we must take up Stein and Frank's prompts to experience a 'complex enjoyment'.²⁶ Bernstein writes:

A poem understood as a performative event and not merely as a textual entity refuses the originality of the written document in favor of 'the plural event' of the work, to use a phrase of Andrew Benjamin's. That is, the work is not identical to any one graphical or performative realization of it, nor can it be equated with a totalized unity of these versions or manifestations. The poem, viewed in terms of its multiple performances, or mutual intertranslatability, has a fundamentally plural existence. This is most dramatically enunciated when instances of the work are contradictory or incommensurable, but it is also the case when versions are commensurate. To speak of the poem in performance is, then, to overthrow the idea of the poem as a fixed, stable, finite linguistic object.²⁷

To *enjoy* a work, rather than to define or to solve it, is also to allow it to be a 'plural event'. It requires seeking and drawing from a vast, varied body of knowledge, in order to keep the work from congealing into a 'written document'. It is both to recognise and to make space for the possibility that 'lots of people have enjoyed it, so lots of people have understood it', and that lots of

people can and will enjoy it, so lots of people can and will understand it. It is to ensure the challenge, the expansiveness and the vitality of the work we scholars of literature do called *research*.

3. Analysis in the event of enjoyment

Frank has described Stein's plays on several occasions as 'compositional recreations of the affective dynamics of an aggregate of individuals, a recreation that is attempted without story'.²⁸ In other words, Frank reads Stein's plays as group portraits, where a number of individuals are placed into a common setting or situation without becoming instrumentalised for narrative progression. Or, rather, the putting of these individuals (or 'ones', in Stein's terms) together *is* the narrative.²⁹ This is an obvious reason why *being heard* is crucial to the Radio Free Stein project: being heard (the emission and reception of a *sounding*) ensures the formation of an aggregation, a group. Radio Free Stein, either as a seminar for close-reading Stein's writing; or as a collaboration between dramaturg and composer, director and performers; or as a transmission between artist(s) and audience; or as the abstract umbrella project for all of these different engagements, is the common setting or situation where there can be 'a number of them knowing each other', which is how Stein describes what happens in a play.³⁰

From my own minor – and mostly observational – participation in Radio Free Stein as a seminar participant for Stein's play *A List* in 2017; then as a symposium organiser, who invited Frank to speak at the Gertrude Stein European Network's meeting in Amsterdam, 2019; and most recently, I suppose, as a contributor to this special issue for *Textual Practice*, I have come to see Frank's work not exactly as that of a project coordinator or performance producer/director; rather, Frank is perhaps best described as a creator of situations, a composer of collective happenings. Thus I find myself wondering what, ultimately, my own contribution to the Radio Free Stein project turns out to be: my attempted reading of the parenthesised numbers in *A List* during the seminar, despite the fact that *A List*, due to budget reasons, never became a recorded performance? Or the awkward fight I had just before the seminar with another participant, the composer of *What Happened*, which was performed and recorded later that year, about conceptual writing and 'mansplaining'? I also have to wonder if, every time I have had to ask for an extension on this paper and received an impossibly patient response, this is all being noted somewhere as indications of how a group stays together or falls apart. I also delight in wondering about this and in recognising that any of these seemingly minor personal incidents would have had consequences for the direction of our shared research; after all, the composer may have decided after our fight that he would tacitly dismiss any suggestions I made (and that would be entirely

in his right) for his final composition, or I may have decided to push obviously absurd readings onto him, as a passive-aggressive way of taking up his time (which I do not recall doing, but I would not put it past myself). Or the fact that this essay took so long to write means I am finishing it two years into the Covid-19 pandemic, where the question of what and how we enjoy the objects, relationships and experiences we have at hand feels even more pressing. To think of Radio Free Stein more nebulously and inclusively as an aggregate of situations, as a series of prompts for thickening our understanding of enjoyment, gives us the opportunity to acknowledge and interrogate openly the effects of such social and personal factors on how we research, analyse and *know*.

At the symposium in Amsterdam, Frank spoke at length about how Wilfrid Bion's work in group therapy influenced his conceptualisation of Radio Free Stein, and in his earlier article, 'The Expansion of Setting in Gertrude Stein's Landscape Theater', Frank describes Bion's theory of thinking as analogous to Stein's strategy for composing plays. For Bion, 'Thinking, then, involves a constant to-and-fro of projective and introjective identification or a transference of emotional elements ... it involves a modification rather than evasion of fear and frustration.' Similarly, Frank observes,

Stein comes to model her plays on landscapes because they afford 'a movement in and out with which anybody looking on can keep in time,' a loose transferential coordination that she sees as necessary for thinking ('Plays', p. 131). The play-as-landscape becomes an opportunity for participants to experience new knowledge rather than simply to hear another story ('Everybody knows so many stories and what is the use of telling another story' [p. 118]).³¹

We can assume that the constant 'to-and-fro' that both Bion and Stein posit as necessary for thinking must be motivated by enjoyment, but Frank also makes clear the epistemological (and emotional) significance for thinking about thinking in this way: fear and frustration eventually, through transferential modification, can become enjoyment. In infant perceptual development, according to Frank (following the thinking of Silvan Tomkins), enjoyment clearly plays a crucial role:

by providing some 'containment' for the infant's distractibility, it lets the perception of an object remain in awareness longer. The enjoyment of recognition then motivates the return to what is emerging, in perception, as a bounded object. As in infancy, so in adult life.³²

Enjoyment, in other words, is our form of managing fear and frustration, as well as our mode for doing this. Instead of evasion, we 'experience new knowledge'; instead of turning to our various feeds (whether the internet, the academic conference, or the mother's breast) as a form of comfort, we learn to like figuring things out for ourselves.³³

4. Another exercise in enjoyment

Frank notes that for Bion, 'A group may contain an individual, but so may an individual contain a group'.³⁴ While this might allude to Bion's research into schizophrenic disorders, I also understand Frank to mean more generally that the group and the individual come to be defined, even identified, dialectically ('to-and-fro'). We could also, of course, extrapolate this relationship between groups and individuals to interpretations (adaptations, performances) and texts. As Bernstein asserts above,

The poem, viewed in terms of its multiple performances, or mutual intertranslatability, has a fundamentally plural existence. This is most dramatically enunciated when instances of the work are contradictory or incommensurable, but it is also the case when versions are commensurate.

The poetic text, as a written document, does not inherently contain multitudes; it only acquires the impressive, seemingly impossible, capacity to have multiple, contradictory, even incommensurable instances of itself when it is *sounded* and *heard* – or in other words, put into a situation of transmission and exchange.

Radio Free Stein provides an invaluable illustration of how 'instances of the work are contradictory or incommensurable' in its two versions of Stein's 1917 play, fittingly titled, *An Exercise in Analysis*. We might say that the pleasure and pain of Stein's text arises from how it perplexes our conventional expectation that plays have a delineated cast of characters. In *An Exercise in Analysis*, we find lines referring to 'I', 'we', 'she', 'he', and so forth, yet there is no explicit indication of who is speaking which lines. Instead, the lines occur directly underneath numbered 'Acts' ('Act III', 'Act IV') and occasionally 'Parts' ('Part II'), but predictably for Stein these Acts and Parts do not occur according to conventional numerical order and often are repeated. For example, Act II happens at least 60 times, although the lines under it change each time. Those accustomed to reading and interpreting plays might go through Stein's text and come to the conclusion that functions as its opening line: 'I have given up analysis'.³⁵

But for those who enjoy this perplexity and persevere, there can be a second act that yields '[s]plendid profit'.³⁶ In taking up the challenge of adapting Stein's play for performance – in other words, working through how the text might become a feasible, inhabitable situation through which voices can be embodied, sounded and heard – Frank and the composer Dan Warner developed two seemingly contradictory interpretations. In what they call their 'naturalistic rendering of the play', each Act or Part that appears in Stein's text comes to signify a different character, rather than a different segment of the story. As they explain on the *Radio Free Stein* website:

We have set the play as a car ride through the countryside. Part x, the driver, sets the topic of conversation; Act II, the front passenger, corrects or one-ups; Act III either comments ironically or initiates a new topic; and Act IV concludes these short, circular exchanges with something practical, petulant, or ditzzy.³⁷

This performance includes the sound of a car engine starting up at the beginning, the sound of closing doors, and four distinct voices that become characterised not only through *what* they say but *how* they say it – both through how we as audience might associate certain personalities or character types with certain qualities of voices, as well as how these voices gesture through the speed and inflection of speech that they are in dialogue with each other or when they are making a private observation to themselves, even if Stein's text might not make any clear indication of either at all. I asked my eight-year-old daughter, who obviously has not read nor tried to analyse the text before, to listen to this recording and to tell me what was happening in it. She identified that there was a group of people riding and talking in a car together, perhaps a family on their way to a picnic. She added that they seemed to be worried about a war, a detail I missed entirely in my own reading of Stein's text and in listening to *Radio Free Stein's* recording. Remarkably, Stein's occupation with war while beginning to write her plays is noted by Frank in his interview with Barklamb and Elfring:

There's the question of the context of World War 1 for her writing: she wrote her first plays after she left Paris during the air raids in 1915 or so. She went to Mallorca in Spain, and she ended up writing a whole lot of plays while she was there . . . I think Stein's trying to understand something about how non-combatants are nonetheless asked to participate or acknowledge or witness or somehow be in relation to intense war time experience. Sometimes it comes into the plays of that moment in pretty interesting ways.³⁸

When I asked my daughter how she knew there was a war going on in the background of *An Exercise in Analysis*, she said, 'Obviously because they keep talking about it'!

In many ways this rendering by *Radio Free Stein* of Stein's writing makes the text a lot more legible; a vivid scene, plausible in our lived world, unfolds with identifiable characters and familiar dynamics and topics of conversation. The problem is that through making the text so accessibly legible – so *immediately* enjoyable, compared to the more complex and durational enjoyment that Frank, Warner and their collaborators must have undergone to realise it – this interpretation can appear convincing enough on the surface to become the *definitive* interpretation, thereby turning Stein's perplexing, convention-breaking work into a 'fixed, stable, finite linguistic object'. As Barklamb and Elfring observe to Frank, 'After we heard [this interpretation], I could not go back to the text and read it any other way than how you adapted it'. However, Frank and Warner themselves provide

an 'other way' to read Stein's play. The second version, which they call the 'electronic setting', pushes further into the potential illegibility of Stein's text. Sentences from *An Exercise in Analysis* get cut off or obscured under a throbbing, hypnotic and sometimes tedious layer of synthetic sound. As someone not accustomed to listening to such experimental sound work, I am not even sure whether to call it 'music' or 'noise'. I have to admit that while I enjoy listening to *Radio Free Stein's* 'naturalistic rendering' of *An Exercise in Analysis*, in spite of my skepticism of its legibility, and can continue to listen to it many times, I do not inherently enjoy the 'electronic setting' of the play. Perhaps because I do not know what to listen for in such work, akin to when I try to listen to early polyphonic music, I find it difficult to get through, and I found myself failing various attempts to listen to the whole recording, even though it is only 13 min long, while researching for this paper. Initially, I wanted to provide a detailed analysis of *Radio Free Stein's* two adaptations in relation to each other, to honour the 'plural existence' of *An Exercise in Analysis*, and because such an analysis is the kind of thing I obviously am expected to do as an academic researcher. After all, isn't literary scholarship a discipline, not a hobby?

The only way to continue, it seemed to me, was to revise my 'research question'. It became: *What conditions would lead me to enjoy this version of An Exercise in Analysis enough so that I can hear it?* This returned me to the last time I had been of a group with Frank and *Radio Free Stein*. While putting together the 2019 symposium on Stein in Amsterdam, my co-organisers and I decided that we wanted devote Stein specialists, other literary scholars (faculty, students, hobbyists), and anyone who might wander in out of general but perhaps undefinable interest alike to be able to enjoy the day-long, academic event. We came upon the idea to propose Stein's body of writings as an 'open text', as the symposium's keynote speaker Lyn Hejinian defines it in her 1983 essay, 'The Rejection of Closure'. Although she is not referring specifically to Stein here, according to Hejinian, in the 'open text', 'all the elements of the work are maximally excited; here it is because ideas and things exceed (without deserting) argument that they have taken into the dimension of the work'. Further, she adds,

The 'open text', by definition, is open to the world and particularly to the reader. It invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies. It speaks for writing that is generative rather than directive ... The 'open text' often emphasizes or foregrounds process, either the process of the original composition or of subsequent compositions by readers, and thus resists the cultural tendencies that seek to identify and fix material and turn it into a product; that is, it resists reduction and commodification.³⁹

The 'open text' is 'open' in the sense of being welcoming, hospitable. It produces (indeed it becomes) a situation that fosters intimacy between those who participate in it, such as the writer and the reader, but also between readers. Further, the 'open text' is collaborative, it clearly gives space for self-determination and autonomy on the part of those who engage it (it rejects authority), and it is generative, allowing for ongoing or future compositions. I came to learn from the Amsterdam symposium – which was titled 'Beyond the Sentence – Stein as Open Text' and included presentations and performances from choreographers, composers, translators, poets, artists and academics (often with individuals inhabiting a number of these definitions) – that these qualities of the 'open text' are precisely the conditions I need to enjoy and to understand the labour of academic research: intimacy, collaboration, autonomy, and the objective to be generative rather than directive.⁴⁰

During the winter term, I usually teach a writing seminar for the Critical Studies programme at the Sandberg Institute (a two-year MA-level programme in artistic research and critical inquiry). Last year, given the safety guidelines regarding pandemic, we had to hold all of our sessions over Zoom. Rather than asking students to produce a piece of creative writing that we would polish through workshopping, I asked them to compose writing exercises and prompts based on their own research interests for us to do together. The students then had the opportunity to share their writing exercises with a wider public through the Rotterdam art space Shimmer's 'Sunday Mornings' programme; across four Sundays in April, we led virtual writing workshops that 'aim to transform research and critique into an invitation for participation, collaboration and generative detraction' and that 'posit our current state of physical, locational containment as a prompt for deepening our capacity for world-building and enriching our modes of connection via memory, sensory attunement, and defamiliarization'.⁴¹ On 4 April 2021, Easter Sunday, I asked if I could lead the 36 workshop participants in a collective listening session of Radio Free Stein's 'electronic setting' to *An Exercise in Analysis*. This happened over Zoom, and I invited everyone to write down whatever they notice themselves hearing throughout the recording in chat function of our Zoom meeting.

This particular Sunday session was guided by Pauline Oliveros' notion of 'deep listening', which we might see as not identical to but nonetheless having a familial relation with Bernstein's 'close listening'. As Oliveros writes in 'Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)', 'From childhood I have practiced listening ... Deep Listening is listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the daily sounds of life, of nature, or one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds'.⁴² Oliveros indicates here that such listening began in her childhood, which again is not a romanticisation of the naïve or uninformed assessment, but rather an assertion that this

capacity is the result of a lifelong, dedicated, self-determined practice – the result of a devotion to understanding that is neither discipline nor hobby. She adds that ‘quantum listening’ follows from ‘deep listening’ in that ‘Quantum Listening is listening to more than one reality simultaneously ... Quantum Listening is listening in as many ways as possible simultaneously – changing and being changed by listening’.⁴³

Thus, I was curious about what each of the 36 of us would hear in this recording of *An Exercise in Analysis*, how we might hear it differently within 36 different locations ranging from the Netherlands to Singapore joined together through the portals that are our computer screens into one virtual meeting, and how each of us would take up the challenge to transcribe what we hear into writing. I offered a few suggestions: *write down the words you hear; describe your physical reaction to the music; note what in your environment interrupts or cuts into or overlaps your listening of the recording; translate what you hear into another language; don’t write anything at all, if you don’t feel like it.*

This, of course, is another instance of transferential coordination. These were also suggestions for myself, and this group exercise would also make me listen, in its entirety, this version of *An Exercise in Analysis*, as well as function as my analysis of it.

5. Enjoyment as explanation

10:49:25 From Critical Studies: AN EXERCISE IN ANALYSIS BY GERTRUDE STEIN⁴⁴

10:50:05 From Toby: tingles, and jumps

10:50:16 From Critical Studies: I’m curious about how many voices we’ll hear here.

10:50:21 From Kris (they/them): Kraftwerk has nothing on this

10:50:25 From Maria: Bells, humanity

10:50:26 From djuna: Play play play

10:50:28 From Toby: technological voices

10:50:28 From lou (they/them): Submarine

10:50:30 From Nicole (she/her): Suspended in the air

10:50:31 From Simone: Τι τι τι τι τι τις τητητητη

10:50:34 From Sarafina (they/them): [music playing in the background]

10:50:38 From lou (they/them): That is the meaning

10:50:40 From Ingrid: I have paid my debt to humanity

10:50:40 From Lama: the phone is ringing, where is it coming from

10:50:44 From Alix (she/her): these sounds are kind of unpleasant

10:50:45 From Maaïke: correspondence from virtual space

10:50:47 From Simone: μαμπολλλ

10:50:50 From Critical Studies: Places resemble their mother

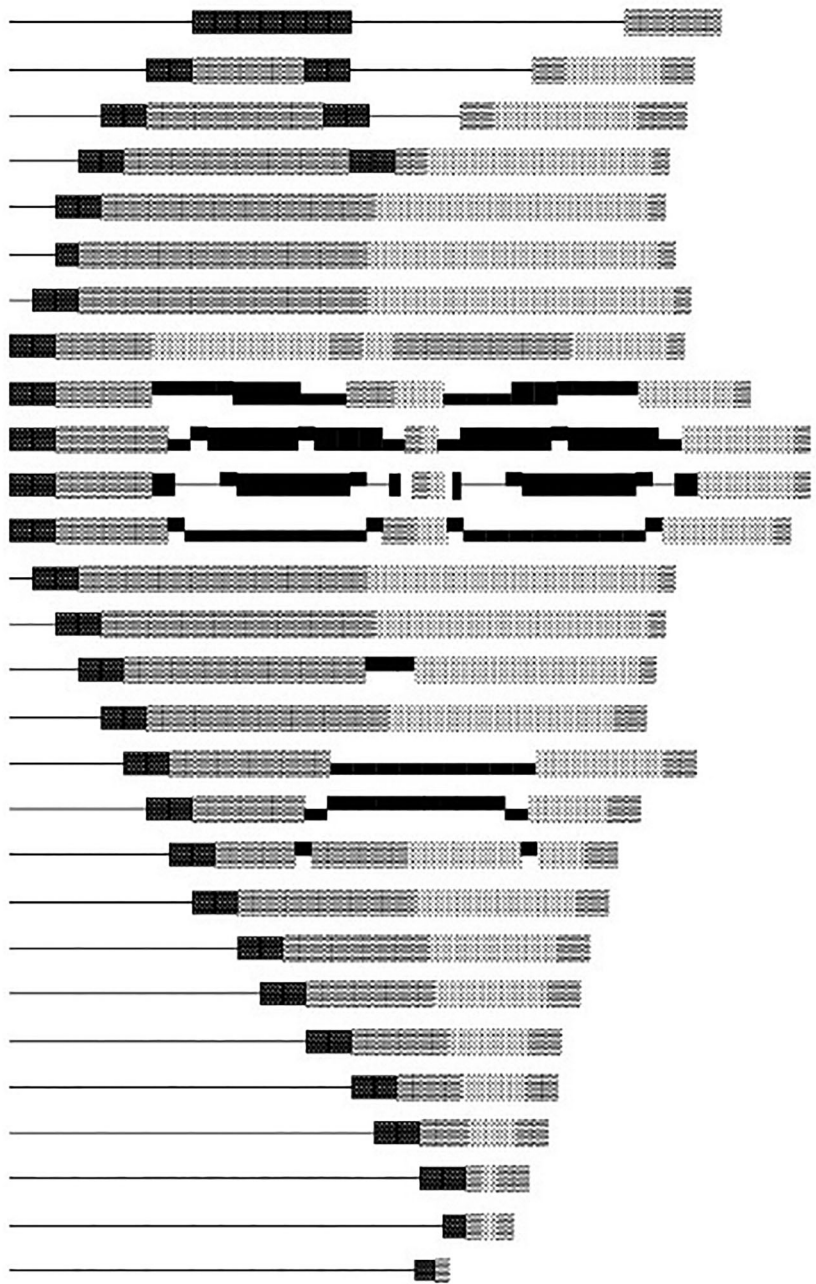
- 10:50:55 From Eve: Throat
- 10:50:56 From Nicole (she/her): Ms. Morton comes first
- 10:50:57 From Hannah: the intelligence of their mother
- 10:50:57 From Toby: high pitch – low pitch – extra pitch
- 10:51:00 From Ingrid: exercise
- 10:51:01 From jihye: electronic narration
- 10:51:01 From Liam (they/them): who is miss morgan
- 10:51:01 From Maria: resemble their mothers, extra signs play
- 10:51:01 From lou (they/them): Blade runner whoooooosh
- 10:51:01 From marjolein: my zoom bugged and sent me out, so I do not have the link to hear the audio piece. I'm in my friend's house and I hear them talking in the kitchen
- 10:51:03 From Ingrid: play
- 10:51:04 From Kris (they/them): Are we in a 70's future idea of 2021
- 10:51:06 From jihye: mother
- 10:51:08 From Sarafina (they/them): [high pitch voice]
- 10:51:10 From Lama: Ear is beeping from the left, someone must be talking bad about me
- 10:51:10 From Eve: Mrs Turner
- 10:51:10 From jihye: typing
- 10:51:11 From eva iPhone: hidden
- 10:51:11 From Violeta: Is divided between the mother
- 10:51:12 From Sina: comical
- 10:51:12 From Simone: Mrs Turner? (Who is that?)
- 10:51:15 From Maria: High pitch – water
- 10:51:17 From Nikki: The text is divided and the sounds are divided
- 10:51:17 From lou (they/them): How do you wish?
- 10:51:19 From Liam (they/them): the voice reminds me of glados
- 10:51:21 From Rojda: ms turner ve annem ayrilmis?
- 10:51:22 From Maria: i wish you water
- 10:51:22 From Gregor: cosmic sinus
- 10:51:22 From Shimmer: talkbox
- 10:51:23 From Critical Studies: Work is not pleasant to me!
- 10:51:24 From Sarafina (they/them): is the camera on?
- 10:51:28 From eva iPhone: covering up
- 10:51:34 From Anna: in barcelona they do not like the poor?
- 10:51:37 From Simone: μπζζζζζ
- 10:51:38 From Critical Studies: In the Netherlands they do not like the poor
- 10:51:38 From Freya: Leg!!
- 10:51:43 From Hannah: Swimming swimming swimming
- 10:51:44 From Sarafina (they/them): [a closed opens]
- 10:51:44 From Kris (they/them): tingles up and down my spine create tension around the vibrations that reach my ears

- 10:51:46 From Maria: What did you see when you saw me?
- 10:51:46 From Lama: Just let goooo
- 10:51:46 From Alix (she/her): 'he doesn't like the poor'
- 10:51:49 From Eve: Sample pot
- 10:51:50 From Shimmer: children
- 10:51:51 From Toby Upson: electronic whispers – a chorus
- 10:51:53 From Liam (they/them): i cannot understand a word the voice says
but it sounds mildly threatening
- 10:51:55 From Lama: but before communicate your feelings
- 10:51:55 From Eleni: example ... children
- 10:51:56 From Nicole (she/her): Examples, examples, all examples of
children
- 10:51:57 From Maria: examples – all examples of children
- 10:51:58 From lou (they/them): Les enfants
- 10:52:01 From Ingrid: examples and examples robot says
- 10:52:01 From Toby: static
- 10:52:03 From Sina: enjoyable sales channel background music
- 10:52:05 From djuna: Voorbeeld voorbeeldige kinderen
- 10:52:09 From Lama: Hold your feelings, try not to cry
- 10:52:10 From Rojda: examples
- 10:52:13 From Simone: Something with children? Meee? Korimou inta mopp
lalis
- 10:52:14 From Eve: I began loose readings
- 10:52:15 From Maria: Expectations
- 10:52:17 From Simone: Pigeons?
- 10:52:18 From Shimmer: port sounds
- 10:52:20 From Nikki: Painfully high pitch
- 10:52:23 From Eve: I began all the ways of pigeons
- 10:52:23 From Kris (they/them): deception what even is deception when it is
taken away by fear of vibration
- 10:52:24 From Lama: you can argue well, just try not to cry
- 10:52:24 From Shimmer: in one ear
- 10:52:25 From Ingrid: deception
- 10:52:25 From lou (they/them): Do not deceive me
- 10:52:28 From Rojda: feel strong
- 10:52:28 From Anna: tres dies com jesus
- 10:52:29 From Simone: Can you answer me?
- 10:52:30 From Eve: Mic power
- 10:52:31 From Toby: wowowwww
- 10:52:35 From Maaiké: reminds me of the weirder laurie anderson stuff
- 10:52:35 From Eleni: I wanna know something
- 10:52:38 From Sina: d e c e p t i o n
- 10:52:38 From Liam (they/them): sounds like electricity crackling

10:52:38 From Eve: Yes
10:52:40 From Simone: I feel strong?
10:52:42 From Eleni: strong
10:52:42 From Freya: Svar mig, jeg vil vide noget
10:52:43 From lou (they/them): Light at dawn
10:52:46 From Simone: Do you believe in memory?
10:52:46 From Anna: uuuuu when i write a memory i feel strong
10:52:47 From Rojda: no memory can you believe it memory
10:52:47 From Lama: Why do you take so long to reply, you are so distant
10:52:48 From Ingrid: memory
10:52:49 From Eleni: can you believe in memory?
10:52:51 From Kris (they/them): we feel alone enough to begin with
10:52:51 From Nicole (she/her): Bo ta kere den memoria?
10:52:51 From Sarafina (they/them): [a memory]
10:52:52 From Simone: What's the whether like?
10:52:53 From Alix (she/her): do you believe in memory?
10:52:55 From Eve: Mood change
10:52:55 From Freya: yes
10:52:55 From Ingrid: do you believe in
10:52:56 From Toby: do you believe in memory
10:52:56 From Anna: sorry mr douglas
10:52:57 From Maria: my shoulder are relaxing – it's like meditation
10:52:58 From Adira: We are not alone
10:53:00 From Eve: Yes
10:53:01 From natsumi: contradicted
10:53:04 From Sarafina (they/them): [music changes]
10:53:04 From Nikki: Winter weather here
10:53:06 From Shimmer: trepidation
10:53:07 From Lama: the spirits are guarding us
10:53:08 From jihye: say so
10:53:09 From Anna: its so hectic actually, not relaxing at all
10:53:10 From djuna: Als je schrijft vanuit je geheugen
10:53:12 From Nicole (she/her): Mi no ta di akuerdo ku tur lo kula e ta bisa
10:53:13 From Critical Studies: I often get migraines after long Zooms, some-
times I wonder if it's not the light of the screen but of the tinniness
of the sound
10:53:16 From Lama: They fly and protect upon us
10:53:16 From Eve: Sosossayso
10:53:18 From Freya: ja
10:53:20 From Eleni: do you believe in power? do you like democracy?
10:53:22 From Lama: do you like democracy?
10:53:22 From Nicole (she/her): D e m o c r a c y

- 10:53:22 From Kris (they/them): the ongoing spitting of music and faces, so many faces all watching and listening and typing
- 10:53:22 From Ingrid: —————
- 10:53:23 From Maaïke: doesn't really sound like a conversation, more like several simultaneous monologues
- 10:53:23 From Toby: twinkle – do you like democracy
- 10:53:24 From Liam (they/them): some sounds remind me of my tinnitus
- 10:53:26 From Rojda: democracy
- 10:53:29 From lou (they/them): Deep rumbling jet roar
- 10:53:30 From Sarafina (they/them): i have to sneeze
- 10:53:31 From Critical Studies: This piece makes me think that, although I also find it interesting in that way
- 10:53:34 From Simone: Invasion o god not again
- 10:53:39 From Maria: Metallic voices only
- 10:53:39 From Shimmer: *****
- 10:53:40 From Simone:?
- 10:53:40 From Lama: We are still going
- 10:53:40 From Nicole (she/her): Canyouforgiveme?
- 10:53:46 From Critical Studies: How many voices?
- 10:53:48 From Lama: keep talking, keep expressing
- 10:53:48 From Toby: extravagance
- 10:53:50 From Shimmer: stranger things?
- 10:53:50 From Ingrid: again
- 10:53:54 From Sarafina (they/them): [doing that again]
- 10:53:55 From Anna: can u see that i am hurt?
- 10:53:56 From Ingrid: doing that again
- 10:53:57 From Kris (they/them): Ominous
- 10:54:00 From Rojda: America
- 10:54:02 From Eve: Is extravagance in doing that again my partner said author
- 10:54:03 From Simone: Εξανακαμεν την ... παλε
- 10:54:07 From Rojda: Mexico
- 10:54:11 From Eve: The books
- 10:54:14 From Lama: Communication is key, just don't pure all your feelings into the conversation
- 10:54:15 From Sarafina (they/them): in the middle of the river
- 10:54:19 From lou (they/them): In the middle of the river there is not always water
- 10:54:19 From natsumi: water
- 10:54:20 From Kris (they/them): Holiday to
- 10:54:21 From Nicole (she/her): In the middle of the river there is not always water
- 10:54:22 From Lama: europe is so eurocentric
- 10:54:22 From Eleni: in the middle of the river there is not always water

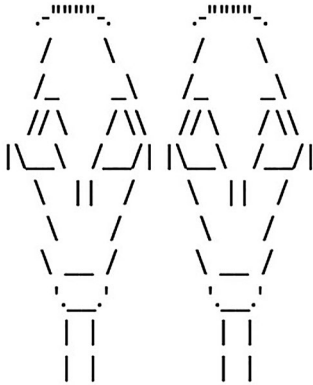
- 10:55:29 From Lama: Is this what a conversation between humans sound like now?
- 10:55:29 From Rojda: Shame!
- 10:55:31 From Simone: Εν τον θέλουν
- 10:55:33 From Kris (they/them): Are we even necessary?
- 10:55:33 From lou (they/them): Suis moi rapidement
- 10:55:35 From jihye: ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 0
- 10:55:38 From Toby: needed in the business
- 10:55:39 From Lama: through digital sounds?
- 10:55:39 From Simone: Θκιοξε τον
- 10:55:39 From Ingrid:-D
- 10:55:39 From Anna: quina vergonya
- 10:55:44 From djuna: Je bent nooit nodig
- 10:55:46 From Nikki: He is ashamed of his message she is ashamed of her system
- 10:55:48 From Critical Studies: (a sinister laugh)
- 10:55:51 From Maaïke: gossip and scandal
- 10:55:53 From Lama: Gratitude is good
- 10:55:55 From Kris (they/them): The shame it gives me makes me paralyzed with a fear to keep sending in text but oh god I have an assignment to fulfill
- 10:55:55 From Toby: optic hum
- 10:55:55 From Simone: Εν τζινον που θέλουν
- 10:55:56 From Anna: espere que em pugues perdonar
- 10:55:57 From lou (they/them): Has anyone mentioned daft punk
- 10:56:00 From Alix (she/her): the geese across the canal are fighting loudly, they are upset
- 10:56:04 From Lama: remember why you came here
- 10:56:05 From Sarafina (they/them): remember the weather?
- 10:56:07 From Anna: rmmbr th weather
- 10:56:07 From Simone: Ήταν τζερους εφτασαμεν
- 10:56:10 From Lama: Remember who you are
- 10:56:13 From Sarafina (they/them): So am I
- 10:56:13 From Rojda: Numaralari goruyor musun?
- 10:56:14 From Ingrid: remember the weather / in search of flavour
- 10:56:14 From Nicole (she/her): This is how too many humans interact. Always speaking, but are they listening to each other?
- 10:56:17 From Critical Studies: SoundCloud always makes me countdown how long the piece is.
- 10:56:18 From Eve Boontje: Baaaaaaaabaaaaabaaaa [up]
- 10:56:25 From lou (they/them): eeeeeeee
- 10:56:28 From Simone: Mrs turner?
- 10:56:30 From Shimmer, Rotterdam:



10:56:30 From Critical Studies: 6:39
10:56:30 From Lama: stop crying
10:56:31 From Sarafina (they/them): #####

10:57:34 From Kris (they/them): Answer and question and answer

- 10:57:34 From Anna: podem parlar?
- 10:57:35 From Maria: dream, David Lynch mode on
- 10:57:36 From Nikki: Ik weet alles van wensen
- 10:57:37 From Lama: Do you know about witches?
- 10:57:41 From Sina: someone is on the phone
- 10:57:41 From Eve: Yes
- 10:57:42 From Rojda: Why are you so certain
- 10:57:47 From Ingrid: simple
- 10:57:50 From Simone: YES INDEED
- 10:57:54 From Critical Studies: Is there a rhythm to this that arises from language rather than vibrating beat?
- 10:57:55 From Freya: Nej
- 10:57:57 From Eve: Someone is on the phone
- 10:57:58 From Sarafina (they/them): miauw
- 10:57:58 From Amy: Stuck in a vortex
- 10:58:02 From Toby: waves
- 10:58:04 From Kris (they/them): Three or two or one voice? Are they voices? Are we even real
- 10:58:04 From Nicole (she/her): Bo por kompronde mi?
- 10:58:04 From Simone: NO I don't AGreee with Mrs Cretwil
- 10:58:05 From Lama: the sun is rising, we have been talking since the night
- 10:58:07 From Sarafina (they/them): she wants love
- 10:58:08 From Critical Studies: I don't know the musical terms to describe such rhythms
- 10:58:09 From Sina: – complex simplicity-
- 10:58:12 From Anna:
- 10:58:12 From lou (they/them): Tu me comprends?
- 10:58:13 From Sarafina (they/them): the sound is too high for her
- 10:58:19 From Anna: no tinc temps avui
- 10:58:19 From Lama: No
- 10:58:20 From Freya: Croissant crackling
- 10:58:21 From natsumi: 大義
- 10:58:21 From Eleni: time
- 10:58:23 From Lama: so mane nos
- 10:58:29 From lou (they/them): System malfunction
- 10:58:30 From Nikki: I'm looking for the start of the end of the music within the music
- 10:58:33 From Shimmer:



- 10:58:38 From Toby: rough sea
- 10:58:39 From Kris (they/them): At least no more gender definitions with these voices
- 10:58:40 From Lama: So many No's not noses
- 10:58:42 From Nikki: Waterfowl!
- 10:58:43 From Simone: What is a bird? -.- —.—
- 10:58:44 From Maria: Waterfalls
- 10:58:46 From Alix (she/her): waterfowl
- 10:58:46 From Ingrid: my fridge is exploding
- 10:58:48 From Lama: But also noses yes
- 10:58:49 From Amy: floating
- 10:58:49 From Anna: jdr
- 10:58:51 From Nicole (she/her): vanish
- 10:58:58 From Kris (they/them): please be my prisoner
- 10:58:58 From Maria: lease do
- 10:59:01 From Critical Studies: Now I hear different voices, but as I do there is a high pitch incision that tells me maybe it should be painful to find these voices discrete and differentiated
- 10:59:08 From Anna: i just put up the volume
- 10:59:08 From Alix (she/her): please do be a sailor
- 10:59:10 From Toby: hahahaha – evil laugh
- 10:59:10 From Lama: lets take a break and continue later
- 10:59:11 From Anna: is screaming in my ears
- 10:59:15 From Maaiké: starting to make me anxious now it's too long
- 10:59:16 From Freya: (Huhuhu)
- 10:59:16 From lou (they/them): Spawn of apex twin underwater beneath
- 10:59:21 From Amy: The mood has changed. Before I felt very tense now a bit calmer
- 10:59:23 From Sarafina (they/them): have a pleasant time

10:59:23 From Lama: Do not make a mistake
 10:59:28 From Nicole Romer (she/her): Turned down the volume slightly
 10:59:30 From Maria Giovanna Drago: Have a pleasant time remaining there
 10:59:34 From Lama: Expresssss
 10:59:34 From Kris (they/them): Is this what my head feels like
 10:59:37 From Anna: it's MY OPINIOOOOOOOOOOON
 10:59:39 From Critical Studies: Can you say anything about it?
 10:59:41 From Simone:????
 10:59:43 From Kris (they/them): No thought finished
 10:59:45 From Eve: Ooooooo
 10:59:48 From Anna: no thoughts head empty
 10:59:48 From Sarafina (they/them): turned it down as well my cat doesn't
 like it so loud
 10:59:48 From Simone:??
 10:59:49 From Critical Studies: 10:00
 10:59:51 From lou (they/them): Melodic neither is she mine
 10:59:52 From Lama: Who does she belong to now?
 10:59:53 From Freya: We do not mind you
 10:59:58 From Nicole(she/her): She doesn't mind (But did you ask her? Or
 are you making an assumption?)
 10:59:58 From Shimmer: cars driving by
 10:59:59 From Maria: i'd want to see a guitar
 11:00:01 From Eve: Can I smoke on here?
 11:00:04 From Hannah: Don't be here
 11:00:04 From Alix (she/her): I don't really get what they are saying, this is
 distracting
 11:00:05 From Eve: Yeah
 11:00:09 From Critical Studies: This has made my very anxious dog fall
 asleep.
 11:00:09 From Ingrid: sssssshhh
 hhhh
 11:00:14 From Anna: oh it's a real voice now
 11:00:14 From Sarafina (they/them): Yes I can
 11:00:15 From lou (they/them): Lol
 11:00:15 From Eve: Shhhhhhshsh
 11:00:15 From Toby: repeat – lost
 11:00:18 From Rojda: Hata yapma
 11:00:20 From Shimmer: seagulls crying
 11:00:21 From marjolein: still only reading
 11:00:21 From Lama: if she not yours or mine then who does she belong to?
 11:00:21 From Anna: was that somebody on the Zoom?
 11:00:23 From Freya: Do do
 11:00:23 From Maria: His voice is more real

- 11:00:25 From Eve: Video game
- 11:00:30 From Sina: treasure
- 11:00:32 From Anna: un tresor <3
- 11:00:34 From Eve: Do do
- 11:00:46 From Shimmer: undoing
- 11:00:47 From jihye: □]
- 11:00:47 From Simone: *Kettle sounds + boiling egg sounds*
- 11:00:47 From eva iPhone: inbetween family and this unknown group of people. inbetween (UN)known. inbetween a start and ending. in between politeness and expectations. inbetween a conversation and randomness. inbetween boredom and wanting some new input. inbetween a better answer in the future and now. in between joining a sessions and guiding.
- 11:00:48 From lou (they/them): Can you trust me
- 11:00:49 From Anna: em creus? confies en mi?
- 11:00:50 From Maria: Ungrateful,
- 11:00:53 From Toby: bing bong – do not be ungrateful to me
- 11:00:54 From Lama: I want to have a wife
- 11:00:57 From Ingrid: wife life dive
- 11:00:58 From Rojda: Hunger
- 11:00:59 From Eve: To me
- 11:00:59 From lou (they/them): Door creaking in the wind
- 11:01:00 From Toby: address me
- 11:01:07 From Lama: another break,
- 11:01:11 From Kris (they/them): I need my own thoughts back
- 11:01:17 From Lama: This sounds like a coffee break
- 11:01:18 From Nicole (she/her): No keremi ora mi bisabo ku algu ta berdat
- 11:01:19 From Toby: cut, sawing
- 11:01:29 From Lama: makes you more stressed than normal
- 11:01:33 From lou (they/them): We go we will go together please me pleasantly yes I ill
- 11:01:34 From Toby Upson: anticipation
- 11:01:35 From eva iPhone: I know where you can get your thoughts back
- 11:01:35 From Anna: la proxima vegada anem juntes
- 11:01:35 From Sarafina (they/them): Yes I will
- 11:01:41 From Lama: Ask again
- 11:01:43 From Ingrid: Kalter Kaffee macht schön
- 11:01:45 From Toby: ask me again
- 11:01:46 From Critical Studies: Please me pleasantly. I wonder why experiment often means being unpleasant.
- 11:01:46 From Alix (she/her): But can you ask me again thought?
- 11:01:50 From Amy: Definitely not what I'd usually listen to on a Sunday morning

11:01:53 From Rojda: Dat is juist
 11:01:57 From lou (they/them): I mean what I say
 11:01:57 From Simone: Sure I'll ask you again
 11:02:00 From Anna: yes.
 11:02:01 From Sarafina (they/them): Yes it is true
 11:02:01 From Freya: Jeg mener hvad jeg siger
 11:02:04 From Nicole (she/her): Si, ta berdat
 11:02:06 From Critical Studies: We can come together.
 11:02:06 From Lama: I mean what I say, but do you really?
 11:02:07 From Simone: Do you want to go out? For a walk?
 11:02:11 From eva iPhone: what you normally listen to on Sunday?
 11:02:13 From Nicole (she/her): Nos por bini huntu?
 11:02:16 From Sarafina (they/them): can we come together?
 11:02:17 From Ingrid: + and +
 11:02:20 From Toby: questions lost in the void
 11:02:21 From Nicole(she/her): Boso por bini huntu?
 11:02:22 From lou (they/them): Ankle joints cracking
 11:02:23 From Kris (they/them): D d different
 11:02:24 From Lama: Coming together, is that what you wish for?
 11:02:26 From Eve: At the same time?
 11:02:28 From Rojda: Beraber gelebilir miyiz?
 11:02:29 From Toby: difference
 11:02:33 From Sarafina (they/them): Of course it is different
 11:02:36 From Ingrid: oooooooooooooooooolish
 11:02:41 From Freya: Recommend me
 11:02:41 From Anna: i can come together, depending on the conditions. my
 life itself is a condition. my knee hurts quite a bit?
 11:02:42 From Lama: novels, books and recommendationssss
 11:02:42 From Nikki: Get all the books that you can
 11:02:43 From lou (they/them): Industrial woosh
 11:02:46 From Sarafina (they/them): Call me
 11:02:47 From Nikki Dekker: A blender
 11:02:47 From Critical Studies: Call me Ellen?
 11:02:50 From Alix (she/her): call me villain?
 11:02:52 From Toby: silence
 11:02:53 From Eve: Industrial wooosh
 11:02:54 From Anna: XAO
 11:02:54 From Lama: Call me when you find me but lets take a break first
 11:02:57 From Nicole (she/her): Yamami
 11:03:03 From Sarafina (they/them): [music stopt]
 11:03:12 From Alix (she/her): the vibration of my phone
 11:03:13 From Lama: weilyyy ya weilyyy
 11:03:34 From Anna: same what an amazing transition

6. And lots of people have enjoyed it

So lots of people have understood it.

Notes

1. https://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Stein/Stein-Gertrude_Interview_1934.mp3.
2. Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), p. 289.
3. Bob Perelman, *The Trouble with Genius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 130–31.
4. Sharon Kirsch outlines the general reception of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in Stein scholarship: ‘Not only did the *Autobiography*’s success mend and extend Stein’s relationship with the public, its “easefully written,” “plain style” moved her “out of the marginality of a distant French avant-garde into American letters” (Schmitz, p. 752). It also moved her firmly into the realm of celebrity, practically making “Gertrude Stein” a household name’ (‘Stein Delivers’, *Rhetoric Review*, 31.3 (2012), p. 255). Kirsch valuably focuses on Stein’s performance as an ‘information specialist’ and the publicity campaign that accompanied the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, but I do think Stein scholarship in general has overlooked how remarkable and radical Stein’s performance of voice (or delivery) and mediation between fact and fiction are within the written text itself. The book’s style and subject matter did not make it a conventional bestseller. In 1934, the *New York Times Bestseller List* was topped by writers such as Dashiell Hammett (*The Thin Man*), Sinclair Lewis (*Work of Art*), Caroline Miller (*Lamb in His Bosom*) and Hervey Allen (*Anthony Adverse*).
5. Laura Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and its Discontents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 64.
6. Ulla Dydo and William Rice, *Gertrude Stein: The Language that Rises, 1923–1934* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), p. 63.
7. Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure*, p. 65.
8. These are in fact, with minor but obvious adjustments, questions that have been posed to me recently about my research and that I have been instructed to ask my students and to use to assess their work.
9. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 25.
10. I wouldn’t go as far as to say it has to involve suffering, which is the last I will say about Lacan here.
11. In his account of Tomkins-led affect theory, Adam Frank describes how affects, in which we could include enjoyment, ‘participate in complex feedback loops that move rapidly both inward and outward, to the self and to others, and sometimes to the self as other, serving as a hinge mechanism between individual and group’ (*Transferrential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2015], p. 12). I would argue that we can read ‘making a fuss’ as participation in these complex feedback loops, thus revealing the larger stakes of interrogating and giving an appropriately complex account of a seemingly subjective response such as enjoyment.

12. Christian Lorentzen, 'Like This or Die', *Harper's*, April 2019. <https://harpers.org/archive/2019/04/like-this-or-die/>.
13. Ibid.
14. Of course, as various commentators on 'surveillance capitalism' and 'communicative capitalism' have noted, such data is collected not to *assess* our preferences but to find ways to *determine* them. In addition to writing by Jodi Dean and Shoshana Zuboff, I recommend reading Byung Chul Han's *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power* (New York: Verso, 2017) and *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018). Akin to the potential political dimensions of Radio Free Stein and the re-tuning what and how we hear, Aimée Theriot Ramos's thesis for the Sandberg Institute's Critical Studies program, titled 'The Big Ears of Big Data: Listening in the Digital Control Society', involved several sound pieces, as part of her research on revolutionary strategies for listening.
15. Bill Brown, 'Counting (Art and Discipline)', *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (Summer 2009), p. 1032. Here I should mention my unquantifiable gratitude to Natalia Cecire for recommending this article and for her invaluable feedback on this essay in general.
16. Dieter Lesage, 'Who's Afraid of Artistic Research? On measuring artistic research output', *Art & Research, a Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, 2.2 (Spring 2009). <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/lesage.html>.
17. Ibid.
18. Mieke Bal, *Exhibition-ism: Temporal Togetherness* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2020), p. 28, emphasis mine.
19. I am grateful to Benjamin Schoonenberg for drawing my attention to Lesage and Bal's writings on artistic research through his Master's thesis, 'Making/thinking, Thinking/making, (re) considering artistic research: towards a post-disciplinary approach?' completed through the Critical Studies program at the Sandberg Institute, 2020.
20. Adam Frank, 'Background and Lead-Up to the Project', *Radio Free Stein*. <https://radiofreestein.com/info/>.
21. Ibid., emphasis mine.
22. Adam Frank, Sophie Barklamb and Tim Elfring, 'Introduction: Gertrude Stein's Theatre and the Radio Free Stein Project', *Textual Practice*, 36.12 (December, 2022).
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Charles Bernstein, *Close Listening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 7.
26. Bernstein takes an expansive approach to 'sounding' in *Close Listening*, turning the word (and its literal association with hearing) into a rhetorical device signifying any transmedia adaptation or performance of a written text. Thinking through the potential for Radio Free Stein in terms of further accessibility and creative engagement, an exciting challenge might be to consider how the recordings could now be transcribed for experience (and enjoyment) through the other senses. The transcript at the end of this essay was not produced with this in mind, but it certainly arises from my sense that Radio Free Stein's project is both a 'sounding' of Stein's work and can itself be 'sounded' through various iterations and various media.

27. Bernstein, *Close Listening*, p. 9.
28. Adam Frank, 'The Expansion of Setting in Gertrude Stein's Landscape Theater', *Modernism/Modernity Print Plus*, 3.1 (March 9, 2018). <https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/expansion-setting>.
29. Implicit here but fundamental to Frank's account of Steinian theater is the wordplay on 'play' – specifically the important developmental function of play (make-believe, games, recreation) according to psychoanalytic theory. Frank elaborates upon this in the chapter 'Loose Coordinations: Theater and Thinking in Gertrude Stein' in *Transferral Poetics*.
30. As quoted in Frank, 'The Expansion of Setting in Gertrude Stein's Landscape Theater'.
31. Ibid.
32. Frank, *Transferral Poetics*, pp. 37–8.
33. Or, as Adam Frank wrote to me in an email (dated 23 April 2021): 'in addition we can think about the sources of our various feeds and the kinds of comfort they provide'.
34. Frank, 'The Expansion of Setting in Gertrude Stein's Landscape Theater'.
35. Gertrude Stein, 'An Exercise in Analysis', *Radio Free Stein*. <https://radiofreestein.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/exercise-in-analysis-rotated.pdf>.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Barklamb and Elfring, 'An Interview with Adam Frank'.
39. Lyn Hejinian, 'The Rejection of Closure', in *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 43.
40. The program of the symposium can be found the Gertrude Stein European Network website: <https://europeanstein.wordpress.com/symposium-2019/>.
41. 'Sunday Morning with the Critical Studies Department', *Shimmer*. <http://shimmershimmer.org/sunday-morning-with-the-critical-studies-department/>.
42. Pauline Oliveros, 'Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (to Practice Practice)', *SoundArtArchive*, December 1999, p. 1. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena-attachments/736945/19af465bc3fcf3c8d5249713cd586b28.pdf>.
43. Oliveros, *Quantum Listening*, p. 2.
44. If possible, listen to Warner's 'electronic setting' of *An Exercise in Analysis* while reading the group's analysis. As mentioned earlier, the recording is 13 minutes long. It can be found on *Radio Free Stein's* SoundCloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-934067047/an-exercise-in-analysis/s-xOfqM>. The last names of the participants have been removed from this transcript.

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