"If Men Have not Changed, Women and Children Have":

GERTRUDE STEIN'S

LUCY CHURCH AMIABLY

by Kay Armatage

In 1927 Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas were established in their huge beautiful country home in Bilignin, near the village of Lucey. The house had lots of rooms with high ceilings and tall shuttered windows, a comfortable kitchen where Alice presided, deck chairs in the garden abundant with flowers and hedges, an enormous plot of vegetables regimentally tended by Alice, and a majestic view of the valley. Here Gertrude and Alice entertained streams of visitors from America and Paris, sympathetic village friends who protected the two American Jewish women during the occupation and billetted the Nazi army whose departure was celebrated by Alice's Liberation Fruit Cake. It was here that

Gertrude sat on the stone wall singing Trail of the Lonesome Pine, where she romped with the beloved Basket, reclined in the sun, read a new detective novel every day and wrote every night.

Gertrude and Alice had some of their happiest times in that house. By 1927 they had been together for twenty years: the days of competition and conflict with Gertrude's brother Leo were long past and Alice had successfully supplanted the more aggravating of Gertrude's friends. Gertrude was beginning to receive some literary recognition: The Making of Americans had been published two years earlier in a handsome edition that was complete, Tender Buttons was being quoted at smart parties in America and from the spring of 1927 to late June she had written Four Saints in Three Acts, the gratifyingly successful collaboration with Virgil Thomson which he had sought out. In the summer of 1927 she wrote Lucy Church Amiably, the lyrical record of her happy summer days.

Lucy Church Amiably is among the most difficult of Stein's novels and it has continued to be greeted by a marked absence of extended literary treatment by critics. It is an important novel to consider, not only because it has been scantily treated in literary criticism but because it represents a pivotal point in Stein's continuous quest/discovery of the nature of womanhood, and the related questions of creativity and sainthood--subjects which preoccupied her throughout her career.

Although not published in Alice Toklas' Plain Edition until 1931, the novel was composed just at the end of the great period of Stein's experimental writing--the period of Tender Buttons, Geography and Plays and many unpublished poems and portraits. It is closer in technique to the poems than to the earlier or later novels, as it is abstract, associational, syntactically extremely complex and has little of the long rolling repetitions and 'explanations' of The Making of Americans which, though convoluted, are discursive and always eventually comprehensible. As Richard Bridgman writes in Gertrude Stein in Pieces, the prose of Lucy Church Amiably occasionally "rises to sustained comprehensibility,"(1)but it has nothing of the clarity or accessibility of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, written only five years later.

As a work of this period, the novel is remarkably focussed and almost conventionally constructed. Compared to the structural leaps, repetitions of acts, puzzling characterizations and uncertain indications of speakers in Four Saints in Three Acts, for example, the structure seems simple indeed. As Bridgman says, "Lucy Church Amiably does possess the external characteristics of a novel. Its chapters are organized in units of fifteen to

twenty-five pages. The paragraphing and sentences are of modest and varied proportions, however puzzling their content. The chapters are even sequentially numbered."(2)

Lucy Church Amiably begins with a short introduction, evoking rural leisure and placing the novel historically and geographically. The effect is that of a wide-ranging tour, in short glimpses, through the conventional elements of a novel of country life, like the novels of Fielding and Smollett which Stein had read so obsessively in earlier years. Conventional scenes are alluded to and the reader is expected to recognize and fill them in. The phrase "and so forth"(3)appears frequently, suggesting that the reader understands and needs not be told the events, that they are typical and conventional. At other times we are given only a stage direction, as it were, summarizing what might occur in any novel of its type: i.e., "Conversation about character." (p. 28)

Reference to such conventions allows Lucy Church Amiably to be less particular and reminds us that its theme is large and general; rather than invent characters and events, it asserts that they are like or are replaceable by those from other known novels. We are told that this is a work of generalizations: "Everybody anybody." (p. 25) The characters are generalized and anonymous and perhaps interchangeable: "This is to be a history of the five as alive does it make any difference who said who said and suppose suppose and arose." (p. 14) But this is a conventional novel with a difference, for it describes the progress of a heroine; Lucy Church Amiably is a reworking of the traditional novel of rural life from a woman's point of view, and its subject is the definition of woman.

The only voice that we come to know intimately is that of the narrator and the reference to the 'voice' of the narrator is no mere critical convention. The overwhelming effect of the novel is that it is spoken (or sung, or chanted); the human voice is all-pervasive and this is crucial to the sense of the novel.(4)

The narrative voice has the urbanity and sophistication of the narrator of Q.E.D. but there is more warmth, less objectivity, more engagement both with the other elements of the novel and with the reader. The narrator can be as ecstatic as the story she tells, and often bursts into song: "They marry. . . . When this you see you can marry me. When this you see you can marry me marry marry undeniably marry and see see that orchids are brown and withal withal withal intent." (p. 27) But the analytical turn of mind that was unrelenting in Q.E.D. is present here also at times, in the dryness of the allusions to novelistic convention and in the almost pedagogical tone of

the occasional dissection of the composition: "Hinting at climax. . . . Let us go slowly. To commence then . . . . Make it be a wife slowly. . . . These things are interesting and peculiar. . . . Please listen to this it is very interesting." (pp. 36-37)

Sometimes she explains what she is doing: "they are rich and richer every day in the ordinary meaning of the words;" (p. 24) "this is not an invention as all the rest is all the rest is this is not an invention as all the rest is as all the rest is." (p. 39) She even reviews what we have learned in the story so far: "Coming back. Who lived here. What are the persons who have had a house. Was it be the time that it was an advantage that they planted poplars." (p. 25) And sometimes reminds us of material already established: "Having settled that every one is rich and richer how many have they in it." (p. 27)

Ordinarily, the voice is accompanied by gestures, spatial arrangements, activities and personages that must be provided imaginatively by the reader. The narrative suggests this with: "Imagine she says. Imagine what I say." (p. 49) What is needed is obvious in a simple sentence like "How very beautifully the air makes its passage from here to there." (p. 30) Where the "from here to there" could be accompanied by pointing or a similar gesture.

At times the voice is more ambiguously directed. Whether the reader or a character is being addressed by the narrator or whether one character addresses another can be mysterious in the many passages of direct discourse. Probably it does not matter. Whether in dialogue, indirect discourse, private monologue or addresses to the reader, the important element at all times is that there is a voice, for this is the essence of the form and is absolutely integral to the meaning of the work. The relationship between the human and natural is clearly drawn, as Donald Sutherland(5)and others have pointed out, through the interconnectedness of the characters and the landscape. The same relationship exists between the novel, its composition and its matter; between the voice and what it speaks. This has become traditional in modern literature by women and Gertrude Stein in this novel makes an important and influential contribution to that tradition.

After the Introduction, the main interest of the narrative becomes the characters and it soon plunges into their activities and interests. True to their subject, these early chapters have a colloquial, almost gossipy, tone. Indirect discourse is often indicated by a phrase like "so she says" or "so they said." Like most gossip, and like the earlier novels, the subject is the characters' intertwined emotional and sexual lives, pregnan-

cies and quarrels.

In the first chapter there are some rather murky goings-on which involve a number of women, help for someone in an emergency, a terminated pregnancy, a search for the identity of the father, an investigation of signatures, the disappearance of some people and more gossip about pregnancies. We are involved in the atmosphere that surrounds Mrs. Lehntman in "The Good Anna," and Lucy Church plays a role not unlike hers. She is helpful and moral and throughout "amiable" except for a brief flare-up with John Mary over the identity of the father. She investigates, administers and somehow mysteriously profits from all the women's troubles. And apparently there are many women and couples who contact her, for she seems to be midwife, friend, matchmaker and possibly abortionist all combined.

Lucy Church's identity and role are complex. She is in the world and a woman but in this early chapter we come to realize her multiple identity. She is a woman, and also the village church in Lucey, the picturesque pagoda with eastern domes near Stein's summer home. Rosalind S. Miller discussed the novel as a religious allegory,(6)and Bridgman notes that "both church and woman represent the spirit of the place."(7) At times Lucy Church takes on such general characteristics as to become a force something like Mother Nature. She seems to know everything, to affect everything and to create everything. She becomes intermingled with the universe. She makes mountains, counts leaves, arranges the landscape and the skies, pervades everything.

But she always immediately returns to the earth, to the woman, to the daily lives of the characters. The third chapter returns us to domestic affairs and the inevitable question of children and motherhood. Lucy Church's own maternal status is rather mysterious. She is described as not having a mother, as never being a mother, as having two daughters and as being a grandmother. One could explain the conundrum by seeing the Lucy Church who had no mother and was never a mother herself as the building, and the Lucy Church who was a mother and grandmother as the woman. But there is no need to be so definitive: the novel is rife with hesitations, speculations, reversals, denials and affirmations of motherhood. We must remember that Gertrude Stein was 53 years old at the time and in the second decade of a satisfying lesbian relationship; whatever notions she may have entertained about herself in relation to motherhood--and she never expressed any--must have been resolved. But she always recognized that family relationships were crucial to all aspects of identity and that the question of motherhood was integral with

that of womanhood. In the novel and in the character of Lucy Church, marriage and motherhood are approached from all angles, and all of them are complicated by Lucy Church's multiple identity as woman, church and natural force.

The question of marital and familial status is a constant preoccupation throughout the novel with the peripheral characters as well. We know little about the other characters except this. We know that they cultivate the land, have helpers and are intimate with Lucy Church. But we see them most, and bewilderingly, as getting married, having affairs, planning to get married, becoming betrothed and being related to each other through blood and marriage. Fathers, mothers, children, cousins and siblings are mentioned repeatedly. The sexes and their differences are constant questions.

Sexual imagery abounds. In a novel set in a rural landscape full of cows, ploughs, bees, flowers and ripening fruit, it is difficult to avoid construing all references as sexual images, especially in a novel that takes a healthy interest in the sexual lives of the characters. But these are not the striking images, as they seem to be there primarily and literally as part of the landscape.

The incessantly recurring water images, however, have a force in the novel that is much more than that of 'setting.' Water in many forms appears regularly, often with fishes, and remarkably regularly in conjunction with Lucy Church or with dialogue concerning female sexuality. In an early instance, amidst some sentences about mothers, the phrase "fishes in a lake" is suddenly and starkly inserted. (p. 48) A river occurs in the midst of the speculation about the scandalous couple who ran away. (p. 53)

When John Mary is considering becoming betrothed and is hesitating over the woman, water again comes to mind: "John Mary is in hope that the weather will change and make lakes as well as rivers more as they were." (p. 84) Lucy becomes involved in the discussion of the girl, and after graciously --if a bit prissily--saying that "they were very much pleased. . . with the unexpected addition to their society," she begins, unaccountably, a discussion of her preference in water forms: "Lucy Church was inclined to prefer water falls or rather the pouring out of a small but violently running stream over a small amount of obstruction and so running into the main current as so many mouths in effect of which it is continually opposite." (p. 85)

After this frank admission, written with unusual clarity and making explicit the connection between the water and human forms, the narrator

seems to waffle in a mixture of emotions. For the next ten lines, the first and only spate of discontinuous prose in the chapter, we flounder amongst determination to continue ("going to go on" repeated twice), and some wild attempts to change the subject, all of which veer towards sexual double entendres: "Did she ever see a bear climb a greased pole. . . . Did she ever see two take two. . . . he had a very decided liking for watching." (p. 86) Somehow the sticky situation is passed, and the chapter ends on hope born out of a rather empty tranquillity: "here where the evening is tranquil tranquil that is to say if there is neither rain nor sun. . . . A rainbow promises." (p. 86)

As a new chapter begins, we are greeted immediately with Lucy Church and trout and inundation and later Lucy is literally flooded. The urgency of the writing mounts as the river asserts itself:

> If there is a river and it is known that it is filled with water and that the water is flowing faster when there is more water it is very easy to see that more water flows into the river and that the water in the river is running along faster very much faster as there is very much more water in the river. (p. 93)

At this point, as the narrator says, "It is best for Lucy Church to go to church" (p. 93)--to take up her role as a building which stands beside a river. Safely there, the chapter ends with Lucy Church quite casually juxtaposed to a short and passionately repetitive poem of the river. (p. 94)

Throughout the novel, water or river imagery appears quite consistently with Lucy in her dual role as building and woman, and always it is juxtaposed with births, marriages, family. (p. 166) When she finally tells the significance of the image, the passage is tantalizing, hinting, backing away and finally made clear. The river is a symbol for Lucy Church and shares her qualities, particularly that of progressing towards the transcendental state of 'being' ("Come to be" repeated) through time ("Left and right"). (p. 171)

Besides the constantly recurring water imagery, there is another image which becomes important after its introduction, which consciously draws attention to the image: "Books in porcelain mentioned the first time as an incident." (p. 83) Though clearly significant from its introduction, the import of this image is at first a mystery. Perhaps there is an anecdote about Stein and books in porcelain to explain it, but in Lucy Church Amiably, at least, the image is never explicated. It is introduced peremptorily and self-consciously, and then it pops up from time to time, each instance as

bald and abrupt as the first.

In Chapter XI, after some chatter about matching up couples, the image appears unexpectedly: "They were very silent when intend intend to send send Albert Bigelow to Lilian Stanhope and ask her to be sure to have it as it is what is meant by very pleasantly and very quietly and very confusedly and very much as it was with it books in porcelain and birds in butter." (p. 126)

Later, Lucy stands apart from all the budding friendships, and the image appears again:

> Lucy Church is not insistent Lucy Church does not resemble Lucy Church does not desire to cultivate the acquaintance that has been begun between Elizabeth and Edith between Helen and Lilian between William and Sweet between Paul and John and between one at a a time carefully. Lucy Church has made it not at all inordinate and has made it not at all that all the world in a colour between should be in books in porcelain and with very well interested desire to participate in it on that account. (p. 140)

The image appears only once more in the novel, and the fourth time is just as mysterious as the others. There is no particular reason to notice this one image used only four times, except that it is striking in itself, and is introduced so deliberately. There are other similar images used throughout; the birds in butter appears above, and there are also birds in potatoes, ostrich eggs and statues of both marble and wood. The traditional connotations of such images would be the coldness, stillness, perpetual life/death, immutability and static beauty of these objects.

The counterpoint formed by the images of flowing water and chilly sculpture is the perfect embodiment of the central tension of the novel, between Lucy Church the woman and Lucy Pagoda the unique old building. This is the emotional tension as well, between the constant coupling that goes on around her, and the lone state of the reliable, religious, tranquil Lucy Church. She is a woman always surrounded by men and women, but never associated intimately with any; although she becomes a mother, the father gets no attention in the novel, and Lucy is never seen in intimate relation with him. Relationships form and dissolve and bear progeny but Lucy Church remains on the periphery, in cool amiability. Yet she is the spirit of the place and its people, the creative force of all the human, natural and spiritual abundance.

Lucy Church is the sum of all the traditional archetypes of women, fecund mother of earth and tranquil saint. The emphasis on transformation and disguise that Bridgman notices as the

central preoccupation of Lucy Church Amiably is a manifestation of the constant duality of the nature of the sexes and particularly of the nature of woman as embodied in Lucy Church. She is also a saint, and saint and woman are interchangeable in this novel.

There is little emphasis on Lucy's status as saint, and in fact there are no claims that she is a 'real' saint, like Saint Therese of Four Saints in Three Acts. Lucy simply defines the quality of saintliness and this pervades the novel. It is built into Lucy's dual role as woman and church, for she combines at once the sanctity of the building and the natural goodness of the human. Her spiritual connections are indicated almost casually, as in "Lucy Church made heaven a hand," (p. 106) or "Lucy Church and with her unanimously as could and did did and could with it in in ineffable for instance would be be very pleased with saintly." (p. 141)

The notion of sainthood in Lucy Church Amiably is a continuation of Stein's concerns in her early work and not simply a postscript to her exercises in Four Saints in Three Acts. A direct line of descent can be seen through Stein's work on the nature of consciousness in the psychology experiments, the minute analysis of human interaction and the growth of self-awareness that occupied the early novels, her search for the roots of being in history in The Making of Americans, her struggles to create a language which could define states of being and the progress towards enlightenment in the Portraits. Stein had come to a definition of sainthood which presupposed that one exists in a state of constant being and that one is aware of the totality of one's relationship with the universe. This notion had become increasingly important throughout Stein's life and work, and it is manifested in Lucy Church Amiably in the character of Lucy and in the images which surround her.

Lucy Church Amiably is the product of prolonged meditations on such questions. Stein had treated the nature of being in a variety of ways, including the saints of the Roman Catholic religion in Four Saints in Three Acts. In Lucy Church Amiably, she treats it naturally, casually and intuitively, combining a rather primitive idea of religion as a church and as a force in the lives of the townspeople, with a definition of being which is close to that of the mystic Eastern religions. This is not merely the fashionable orientalism that Sutherland suggests, (8)which was popular in the twenties just as it was in the sixties of this century. It is a consistent development of Stein's concerns from the days when she first went to college and was rudely awakened from her life of complacent spiritual slumber (documented in the early novels, and especially in Q.E.D.).

Allegra Stewart did the spade work on the question of Stein's 'search for self' in Gertrude Stein and the Present. Stewart writes of Stein's habit of meditation which resulted in deep experiences of "ingatheredness,"(9)or the moment of dissociation which led to states of enlarged consciousness.(10)Although Stein did not expound her philosophy in any systematic way, Stewart asserts that it is clear that she had genuine philosophic insights of her own,(11) clear perceptions of certain aspects of experience and cosmic reality. Stein is concerned with "the moment [that] is not a moment," the act which "does nothing,"(12)prayer or meditation which leads to enlightenment. She is concerned with the nature of being and comes to the conclusion that there is a difference between being and existence. She calls this deeper state "being existing," emphasizing the interplay of self-activity and life-history. This ultimately means fullness of being, clarity of perception, detachment from egocentric claims; it is practically synonymous with her conception of the "human mind" as expounded in The Geographical History of America.(13)

Stein's meditations on the nature of being inevitably lead her to questions of time. The moment of discontinuity between being and existence--the state of "being existing"--unites the past and the future,(14)overcoming the restrictions of causal relations of things in time.(15)Stewart emphasizes Stein's concern with the miracle of creativity, which is connected with a belief in novelty as a genuine element in the cosmos.(16)But to believe in real novelty is to believe in absolute beginnings, dissolutions, discontinuities, says Stewart, and Stein was also haunted by thoughts of identity, memory and eternity.(17)Stein resolves this by a belief in the everlastingness and indestructibility of the cosmos in time: time is of infinite duration.(18)At the moment of authentic creation, the disconnection between being and existence, there is a transient integration of the whole being, so that another self seems to emerge momentarily, and time, place, memory and identity disappear.(19) This state is transient, "being existing" is intermittent, because human nature, identity and relation are so preoccupying that the moment of dissociation (being "with a thing in itself and not in relation") seldom occurs.

We can find evidence of Stein's philosophic concerns in the matter, as well as the method, of the works. The subject of sainthood, the faith state of religious votaries, was central to Stein's work for twenty years, and as Stewart points out, reaches its peak in 1927 with Four Saints in Three Acts and Lucy Church Amiably.

Now the images of Lucy Church Amiably reverberate with greater significance. The archetypes of transformation that Bridgman notices are not simply questions of disguise and identity at the autobiographical and narrative levels, but are part of the structural and symbolic patterns of Lucy Church's spiritual existence. The fish often associated with Lucy are traditional Christian symbols, and while the water and river images which accompany the fish are primordially sexual, they are also archetypes of unconscious renewal and intuitive power. The river is traditionally connected with time and eternity, and Stewart comments on the image of the fountain: it is the "One, which Berkeley called the Fons Deitatis, the fountainhead or spring out of which creation comes, the punctum stans without either temporal or spatial extension, and the realm of ideas, percepts and the non-self. Individuated in a human consciousness, it is . . . being instead of existence."(20)

Likewise, the 'books in porcelain' are not merely an image of static beauty or spiritual tranquility in counterpoint with the inundating female sexuality of the water imagery. They may be the masterpieces which Stein saw as the products of the moment of dissociation or ingatheredness from which comes authentic creativity. Stewart explains that Stein believed that some things go on all the time (the universe) and some only from time to time (history and biography), but there are also things that appear only once and "come to stay." They become free from time, though they appear in and endure through time. Stewart goes on to make the connection between these timeless creations and the nature of sainthood: "Such are the masterpieces of art, Gertrude Stein said; and she might have added, as she does by implication, such are the lives of saints, which are really masterpieces of experience."(21)

The books in porcelain also, at one point in the novel, led by association to the image of birds in butter, and there is in that image something of the captured stillness of the "magpie in the sky," which for Stein evoked the Holy Ghost in Four Saints in Three Acts. As a metaphysical image, birds in butter seems only marginally more grotesque and trivial than magpies in the sky, but such was Stein's habitual expression. Stewart once again comments illuminatingly: she said that Stein's spiritual exercises focussed on trivial or evanescent objects, for her cosmic vision was of temporal flux. She had no goal beyond the present moment. What she tried to express was the shifting scenes and objects arbitrarily selected for attention, the construction of a composition out of the chance concatenation of objects around her.(22)Earlier Stewart remarked on this meditative process as psychologically close to

what the Christian mystics called "contemplation of the creators."(23) And we cannot help but see the relationship between Stein's contemplation of the cosmos in the moment, expressed often by a simple image from the natural universe, and the "Eternal Now" of Eastern philosophy.

In Lucy Church Amiably is also expressed the notion of inclusiveness, which again reverberates with the Eastern concept "All is One." There is great emphasis in the novel on Lucy's constant state of oneness, of coming to be, of commingling with the universe, of expansion, of adding. This is expressed in phrases such as "Lucy Church was as was one and one." (p. 110) "Lucy Church and adding, there is adding in there being in there being and leaving leaving it to them. . . . Lucy Church in after in adding in adding in after in after in adding in after in adding in after in adding in adding in after in after in adding." (pp. 151-52) A capsule of this theme is the following passage, which combines the notions of continuing inclusion and a state of total being:

> If with and add.
> Never have a half a half to be a half to be a half to be to be to be a half a half a half a half to be.
> Thanks to be.
> Lucy Church may be left to be thanks to be.
> Lucy Church thanks to be.
> Lucy Church thanks to be. (p. 129)

Now we can begin to see the importance of the voice in the prose style and its connection with the important concerns of the novel. Sainthood, being and enlightenment are in Stein's work a naturally human affair, planted firmly in the earth and in the body, in the physical universe and our perceptions of it. Stein's work with anatomy, physiology and her important early work on the nervous system and the brain play a part in the development of her notions of being, which amount to a pragmatic mysticism. The stream-of-consciousness technique, which is in Stein more literal than in, say, Woolf or Joyce, is the formal embodiment of her ideas. We are allowed to be privy to a sampling of the thoughts (the workings of the nervous system, brain and senses) of the narrator; we experience her consciousness, as she tells us a parable of the nature of being. No disembodied spiritual exercise, the novel insists on the presence of the physical and human by its firm grounding in the human voice, and the narrative tone is indicative of the state of being of Lucy Church.

From about the fourth chapter the narrator settles into a steadily lyrical but quietly serious tone. The colloquialisms of the early chapters disappear, and the gay little songs that

burst forth particularly in the first two chapters are missing from most of the novel. Occasionally there are hymns, particularly at the magical ceremony of naming. But for a good half of the novel the prose is steady, rhythmical and quiet.

The process of the novel is that of "gradually adding"--characters, seasons, elements, landscape and incidents. The chapters pile up on one another, each adding new details of the daily lives of the characters, small scenes of rural life or conversations about everyday subjects. For a while the chapters follow chronologically and make their transitions plain, usually by indicating in the first sentence the event and characters involved. By Chapter XI the continuity begins to disappear and the chapters become almost arbitrary divisions between groups of vignettes and moments of consciousness. The narrator's grasp of the world becomes random, as Lucy Church is 'added to' more and more, as she becomes increasingly all-encompassing.

The narrative voice becomes less distinct, that is less distinguishable as a separate voice or 'personality.' There are a few sly jokes and personal references, such as the mention of Alice Babette and an allusion to the buying of the house in Bilignin, plus a few comments on the progression of the narrative. But the eccentricities that Bridgman sees as the winding down of the novel seem to be expressions of naked consciousness (or at least a literary facsimile), and by the end of the novel this is perfectly in keeping with the meaning of the work. The chapters get progressively shorter and more random, occasionally returning to the 'matter' of the narrative to add a new detail of the daily life, constantly keeping before us the names of the characters almost for their own sake and the whole subsumed in a more random, less specific form.

By the very end of the novel, this situation is reversed. During the dénouement, it seemed for a while that the novel would totally disintegrate to become a long poem in the style of the many stream-of-consciousness meditations that Stein was writing at the time. But we are brought back sharply at the end to what may finally be the thematic core of the novel. The second last chapter consists of one sentence: "Lucy Church was obstinate." (p. 237) We seem to be facing the woman again, and we are reminded that the state of insight or sainthood is intermittent, evanescent. The nature of woman surfaces again as a theme in the last fifty pages, now including all the archetypes, the spiritual and religious elements, the worlds of nature and humanity. In the novel's realization of the nature of consciousness, there is an awareness that there is something new in the world, and it is embodied here by women.

Chapter XXIV is devoted to the emphatic repetition of this conviction: "If men have not changed women and children have. If men have not changed women and children have. If men have not changed women and children have." (p. 176)

The concerns with family, marriage, sexuality and relation now come together with the theme of the nature of being and existence, and they find their focal point in Lucy Church the woman. Family connections, sexual relationships and especially the concept and implications of union through marriage have been explored again and again in Stein's work, predominantly through the characters of women. In The Geographical History of America, she investigated the differences between human nature and the human mind, delineating the connections between human nature and relation, identity, memory, causality and temporality. To exist in the human mind, she asserted, is to partake of the deeper experience which overcomes time and relation, resulting in authentic creativity or sainthood. Stein suggests that women are particularly adept at this sort of attainment.

The cultural archetypes clustered around the notions of female creativity and female passivity are instrumental here. Stein had always depicted her women characters as essentially passive but from "The Gentle Lena," in which the archetype was explored to its tragic extreme, such passivity has gained immense strength, and has found a place in her philosophy as the waiting, the act which "does nothing" but which is effective in creation. This is the 'miracle' of creation that arises from the discontinuity between being and existence, the transient integration of the whole being in a passive, recollected state. This resonates with the second sentence of "The Novel" portion of Lucy Church Amiably: "They will say it is beautiful but will they sit in it," (p. 47) where to loosen the grasp on perceptual activity, to simply "sit in it" is to transcend the conscious activity of appreciation of beauty.

But this passivity must not be confused with the automatism which Stein denied, nor with Surrealism's irrational surrender to the unconscious, which she opposed. It is an 'activity' of the human mind, which momentarily dissolves the barriers between, thereby uniting, the conscious and unconscious mind. A letter from Kat Buss indicated that Stein had claimed this state as her own: "I should like to know how you know there is no demarcation between your thinking and unthinking mind. I don't see how you can know that."(24) Buss's question is to the point, but we do not have Stein's reply. At any rate, Stein claimed to have experienced this state, and she more than once asserted

that women are peculiarly suited to this activity.

Transcendent passivity had been affirmed in Stein's own life. In her relationship with Alice Toklas she had rejected the confrontation, struggle, conquest, moral and spiritual effort--the personal power politics investigated in the earlier novels--which are omnipresent in heterosexual relationships. And in the writings of her happiest times, she had come to see virtue and strength in passivity, acceptance, integration, circularity, union with self, oneness. Lucy Church Amiably affirms passivity as transcendence, and concludes that women have reached a new plane of existence. Chapter XXV begins with the line from the previous chapter, but then replaces the conditional with certainty: "Men have not changed women and children have." (p. 177) "Being existing," integration, union with self and with the cosmos, is not only possible for women, but in Lucy Church Amiably and in the figure of Lucy Church, is seen as essential to their nature.

By the last chapter of the novel, Lucy Church is again the woman: "Lucy Church was gradually coming in back again." (p. 239) She has learned wisdom, in a way that Melanctha never did; she can exist in the world, for she has "made a way." (p. 238) In her the sex and power games are resolved, for she is both teacher and pupil: "Lucy Church is all of that she has been taught and she taught taught that taught to be taught taught ought taught ought to teach teach taught bought how to buy and why." (pp. 238-39) She is assured of her place in the natural and human order:

> . . . it has been part of the time theirs to know that a mountain is that Mont Blanc and that it is adequate and preliminary how many sisters has Lucy Church and how many mothers. She has one mother one father and two sisters. She is married and her husband is ascertained in respect to a rose cap upon a distant hillside. . . . (p. 239)

The last page of the novel is a meditation on the serenity of Lucy Church's existence. The spiritual and human transformations are accepted: "It is very well to be known to be changing Lucy Church and everything Lucy Pagoda and everything Lucy Church and everything." (p. 240) The questions of sexual identity have been resolved as well.

Lucy Church Amiably ends with the narrator's conviction that the story is ended: "and not any more to make more of it."(p. 240) And then a final reiteration of the peaceful amiability of Lucy and her people: "They like them and with it there and with beside . . . . They like it they say how do you do. Very well I thank you." (p. 240)

These are the final words of the novel, and they mark a pinnacle in Stein's long search for a depiction of the peaceful equilibrium of union with self. The questions that had persistently recurred throughout many of Stein's writings are in Lucy Church Amiably commingled and resolved with joyful assurance.

The concern with marriage, families, sexual relationships, individual consciousness, states of being, saint-hood and the nature of women all meet happily in the character of Lucy Church. The exuberant lyricism, which struck Sutherland so pleasingly that he called it "the purest and best pastoral romance we have had in this century,"(25)is finally the most significant indication of the resolution which pervades the work. The answer is found in affirmation, acceptance: "They like it they say how do you do. Very well I thank you." (p. 240)

Such a positive frame of mind, as it were, is not inconsistent with the resolutions to the thirty-year-old questions which occupy this novel. For Gertrude Stein was a woman after all. And in Lucy Church Amiably personal power politics in relationships, sexuality and its forms and consequences, dualities of self and the spirit are all resolved in the character of a woman. In fact it is found that women in general define the most transcendent state of being for humanity, the 'change' which merits a chapter to itself at the traditional climactic point, about two-thirds through the novel: "If men have not changed women and children have." (p. 176)

However, the change claimed here for women need not be permanent, and indeed Stein's philosophy allowed for the transcience of the state of enlightenment. The state of "being existing" or total integration of self is beyond time, but the individual inevitably returns to time, identity and relation, just as Lucy is affirmed as a woman in the midst of her family in the last pages of the novel. Yet in Lucy Church Amiably the life of a woman, amidst the claims of family and community, has none of the bleak or even tragic ramifications of the lives of other women characters in novels such as Three Lives, Q.E.D. and Fernhurst. The present is accepted as complete and joyful, and acceptance itself--passive, tranquil, creative--is affirmed as central to a transcendent state of being and as integral to the nature of woman.

The vision of woman in Lucy Church Amiably is a radical change from the picture of the deluded, pathetic New Woman of Fernhurst, written nearly twenty-five years before. Nearly twenty years later, Stein's vision of women in The Mother of Us All was tempered by a greater cynicism towards men and the world. But in 1927 in sunny rural France at least, woman is simultaneously the centre and on top of the world.

GERTRUDE STEIN

NOTES

1. Richard Bridgman, Gertrude Stein in Pieces (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 190.

2. Bridgman, p. 189.

3. Gertrude Stein, Lucy Church Amiably (New York: Something Else Press, 1969), p. 22. The same edition is used throughout. For purposes of convenience, page references will be included in the text, immediately following a quotation, in brackets.

4. The overwhelming effect of Stein's works is that they are spoken. It is impossible to read them without at least sub-vocalizing dramatically, and they are best read aloud.

   Critics have often spoken of the musical quality of Stein's prose. Sutherland, for example, writes of the "addiction to sheer melodiousness" in Lucy Church Amiably: A Biography of Her Work (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 139. Stein's prose has been described in traditional musical terms: melody, rhythm, theme, variations, movements, overtures, etc. Sutherland refers to the motto of Lucy Church Amiably as the "metronome sentence," and writes of the novel's "adagio tempo." (p. 141)

   But the quality of the prose is frequently more complex than the reference to music alone suggests; it must include the drama of the human voice simply speaking as well. It reminds me of the work of the modern American composer Steve Reich, or of other composers who use tape recorders in composition, repeating and varying the combined sounds of song and speech through tape loops and electronic effects. Al Carmines and Larry Cornfield recognized this quality in their successful New York productions of What Happened and In Circles; they set some speeches to music and used others merely spoken as background for dance.

5. Sutherland, p. 142.

6. Rosalind S. Miller, Gertrude Stein: Form and Intelligibility (New York: The Exposition Press, 1949), pp. 41-42.

7. Bridgman, p. 191.

8. Sutherland, p. 142.

9. Allegra Stewart, Gertrude Stein and the Present (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. vii.

10. Stewart, p. viii.

11. Stewart, p. 29.

12. Stewart, p. 29.

13. Stewart, p. 30.

14. Stewart, p. 30.

15. Stewart, p. 31.

16. Stewart, p. 31.

17. Stewart, p. 32.

18. Stewart, p. 32.

19. Stewart, p. 36.

20. Stewart, p. 130.

21. Stewart, p. 40.

22. Stewart, p. 201.

23. Stewart, p. 194.

24. Donald Gallup (ed.), The Flowers of Friendship (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 150.

25. Sutherland, pp. 142-43.