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Barbara Will, *Unlikely Collaboration: Gertrude Stein, Bernard Faÿ, and the Vichy Dilemma*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. xviii + 274 pp. \$35.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0231-152624; \$26.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN: 978-0-231-15263-1.

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Barbara Will's *Unlikely Collaboration: Gertrude Stein, Bernard Faÿ, and the Vichy Dilemma* is a meticulous, in-depth analysis of Gertrude Stein's friendship with Bernard Faÿ, the well-known French writer and scholar of American culture who was imprisoned for collaborating with the Nazis during World War II. Will explores two surprising connections between the writers that have not been given adequate attention by Stein scholars. She looks at the claim, repeated by biographers many times, that Faÿ protected Stein and Alice B. Toklas (both Jewish and lesbian) from Nazi persecution during the war. More importantly, Will examines a little-known translation project that absorbed Stein during the occupation: she translated 180 pages of Maréchal Pétain's speeches and hoped to publish them in the United States during the war.

Stein's friendship with Faÿ is not unknown to the general public. Janet Malcolm's discussion of their relationship in the *New Yorker* and in her subsequent book, *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice*, exposes Faÿ's collaboration with Nazis in persecuting Freemasons, which resulted in the arrest and death of hundreds of French citizens, and offers evidence of his anti-Semitism.^[1] Malcolm suggests, however, that Stein was most likely unaware of Faÿ's repulsive actions and prejudices. The speeches are not a focus of Malcolm's book, although they were known to Stein scholars; biographers including Richard Bridgman and Janet Hobbhouse mention them, and in 1996 Wanda Van Dusen published Stein's introduction to the speeches in *Modernism/Modernity*, bringing greater attention to the manuscript.^[2]

The friendship between Faÿ and Stein has long been recognized. Stein and Faÿ supported and promoted the work of each other, a reciprocal arrangement that was also maintained in many of Stein's other friendships (Carl Van Vechten, Thornton Wilder, and so on); and like Stein and many of Stein's friends, Faÿ was gay. In addition to these connections, Will argues that a political interest linked the two. Faÿ's career was first defined by his interest in American culture. He earned an M.A. from Harvard in Modern Languages in 1920 and a doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1925 and went on to promote an ideal of French and American friendship at a time when anti-American sentiment was high among intellectuals. In addition to translating Stein's work, he published many books that established his reputation as an impressive scholar of American culture, such as a best-selling biography of George Washington in 1931, and was honored with the inaugural chair in American civilization at the Collège de France in 1932, which Will calls "the achievement of a lifetime" (p. 62). But after about 1935, Faÿ's interests shifted; his scholarship was overwhelmed by his obsession with Freemasons. He was, as Will puts it, on an "anti-Masonic crusade" (p. 27).

For Faÿ, contemporary France was in crisis as a result of the secular, democratic and revolutionary ideals that had been promoted since the French Revolution. He saw Freemasons as the defining enemy: a secret brotherhood that had created a powerful political network that was systematically destroying his beloved Catholic, monarchical, traditionalist France. Will argues that Stein was sympathetic to Faÿ's

dismay at the destructive forces of modern “progress” which had driven traditional France spiralling into what he saw as social decay. As Faÿ lamented the French Revolution, liberal democracy, and secularism, Stein expressed her disappointment with American politics generally and Franklin D. Roosevelt in particular, who she thought had brought about a similar decline in American culture. Both expressed a nostalgic view of eighteenth-century America that emphasized an elitist, anti-democratic ideal. As Faÿ explained, “the framers of America’s revolution and constitution were themselves an elite and hence committed to a system that would reflect and support their interests” (p. 43). He hoped that modern France would use this vision as a model and abandon the horrifying mass rule that he argued was the result of the French Revolution.

Stein’s conservative political views and opposition to Roosevelt in the 1930s can be clearly seen in a series of articles about “Money” that she published in the *Saturday Evening Post* shortly after her 1934–1935 American lecture tour (the only time Stein visited America after 1903). As Will points out, Stein shows her disdain for the New Deal and suggests that giving financial assistance to the unemployed results in laziness. Although these articles were offensive to some Americans who called her reactionary, Will seeks to determine whether Stein’s political views were even more offensive than that.

The book eventually comes to a central question: “Was Stein a committed propagandist for Vichy—or a shrewd survivor?” (p. 117). In the introduction, Will describes Stein’s translations of Pétain’s speeches as “a propaganda project in support of Vichy France began in 1941, one she hoped somehow to sell to a skeptical American public” (p. xiii). Thus Will’s answer is clear: she believes that Stein was a committed propagandist. The evidence for this claim is partly based on an article, “The Winner Loses,” which Stein published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in November 1940. In it, Stein expresses relief and gratitude to Pétain. Will sternly observes that “[i]t is important not that Stein published these words in the *Atlantic Monthly* in November 1940, well into Pétain’s regime and well past the point, during the mid-summer of that year, of initial relief at the signing of the armistice” (p. 119). How much relief did French people feel during the summer?

Will reports that “it is believed that close to forty million French people—the entire population of France...supported Philippe Pétain and his Vichy regime in the summer of 1940” (p. 109).

Unlikely Collaboration is not an angry, hysterical book. Will presents information, suggesting that readers draw their own conclusions. In this discussion, she goes on to explain that Pétain had distanced himself from the French public in many ways that autumn, and in October had “instituted the first ‘Statut des Juifs’: a decree that for the first time in modern French history defined ‘the Jew’ as a discrete legal entity who could be barred from occupying public and professional posts” (p. 119). Although she does not overtly express her shock and dismay at Stein’s continued support for Pétain, Will’s horror is easy to read between the lines. The evidence she has presented here, however, could be stronger. “The Winner Loses” appeared in November, but Will does not reveal when the essay was actually written. In fact, it is possible that Stein did write it in the summer, when support for Pétain was universal in France, if we allow for the time it would take to send the manuscript overseas and prepare it for publication.

Stein’s support for Pétain continued, however. Wanda Van Dusen explains that Stein sent the introduction to the speeches to her editor at Random House, Bennett Cerf, who wrote at the top of the manuscript: “For the records. This disgusting piece was mailed from Belley on Jan. 19, 1942” (p. 93). That is, a year after the *Atlantic* piece appeared, Cerf was responding to these words: “We have not all of us, and I too have been of that number, over here in France always had faith in the Maréchal but in the end we have all come to have faith, and now I will tell a little more what he has done and how he has done it and why I want everybody in America to realise it” (p. 94). Will’s characterization of Stein’s translations as a “propaganda project” seems accurate, but a close look at the translations themselves subverts this clear interpretation.

According to Will, Stein systematically translates each individual word of the speeches, literally, so that the result is not only awkward to read, but difficult to understand at all. Will does not offer a satisfying explanation, and seems to conclude that the very odd translations are something of a mystery. But Stein's decision to obscure Pétain's language by literally translating each word could easily be understood as a deliberate subversion of Pétain's authority. Did Stein intend to publish these strange speeches, in order to discredit or somehow parody them? If she did write them as propaganda for the Vichy government, why didn't she produce an accessible translation? Perhaps she wished to be engaged in this project as a defense in case she was arrested or investigated during the war. Will believes that Stein's motivations were pure, arguing that she was motivated by "loyalty to a cause" (p. 143). But because this puzzle is unresolved, I was unable to reach a final verdict about Stein's political views and ultimate culpability.

Unlikely Collaboration joins many other studies that examine what Will calls "the intersection of modernism and fascism." Her resistance to hysterical, angry prose is refreshing, even if the reader still can detect her shock and dismay. Some of the more emotional studies that have criticized American modernists for their political and anti-Semitic views include Robert Casillo's *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism and the Myths of Ezra Pound* and Anthony Julius's *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form*, two books in which the very pages seem to tremble with the authors' rage.[4] It is to Will's credit that she does not descend into a fury when discussing Stein's politics. Of course, since Stein and Toklas were Jewish lesbians, they were at great risk during the war, which may explain why critics have been less interested in scrutinizing the ways that survival was possible for the two women. Faÿ claimed that he was responsible for the safety of Stein and Toklas during the war, and that he directly contacted the subprefect of Belley to ensure their protection. In addition, Will speculates that he may have advised them to move from Bilignin to Culoz in 1942, where Stein's neighbors helped to keep their identities hidden as the danger to Jews intensified.

The fact of Stein's Jewishness, however, may not excuse the support she expressed for Pétain. As Will points out, in Stein's best-selling post-war memoir, *Wars I Have Seen* (1945), she reiterates her position, when nothing more was at stake. "Pétain was right to stay in France and he was right to make the armistice," Stein writes (p. 144). Still, the postwar fear that Stein describes in this text may also elicit the reader's sympathy: "I began to have what you might call a posthumous fear. I was quite frightened. All the time the Germans were here we were so busy trying to live through each day ... but now somehow with the American soldiers questions and hearing what had been happening to others, of course one knew it but now one had time to feel it and I was quite frightened" (Quoted in Will, pp. 144-145).

Stein died in 1946, before Faÿ was sentenced to prison for his wartime collaboration with the Nazis. Rather incredibly, he escaped from prison, apparently aided by the Catholic Church in a rescue mission that, according to Will, was financially supported by Alice B. Toklas. It is not clear whether Toklas was aware of Faÿ's wartime activities, believed that he was innocent of the charges against him, or was simply loyal to him no matter what his actions had been. Indeed, *Unlikely Collaboration* raises many vexing questions about intent, loyalty, and duty. Stein may have supported Pétain, but her wartime views were unlike many other overtly fascist writers of the period. As Will observes, "Unlike some of her modernist contemporaries, Gertrude Stein never attended a fascist rally, was never an official functionary of any fascist organization, and was almost never celebrated in the fascist or profascist press. Of course, not many Jews were" (p. 19).

It is rather a surprise when Will then concludes: "And this, above all else, seems to make Stein's Pétainism even more troubling than the more rabid support for fascist regimes of her contemporaries such as Pound, Céline, and Heidegger" (p. 19). *Unlikely Collaboration* is a fascinating and thorough study, but it would have been useful for Will to explain the reasons that the evidence she has revealed in this book is "more troubling" to her than the fascist views of Ezra Pound and others. Will seems to suggest that, because Stein was Jewish, Pétain's regime should have been repulsive, and it is Stein's failing that

she did not find it so. Did Stein's support for Pétain suggest that Stein was indifferent to or complicit with the treatment of other Jews in France during the war? A reflective conclusion that explained Will's position more clearly would have been welcome, but her detailed book is certainly a welcome achievement as it is.

NOTES

[1] Janet Malcolm, *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007).

[2] Wanda Van Dusen, "Portrait of a National Fetish: Gertrude Stein's 'Introduction to the Speeches of Marichal Pétain,'" *Modernism/modernity* 3/3(1996): 93-96.

[3] Gertrude Stein, "Money," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 13, 1936; "More About Money," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 11, 1936; "All About Money," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 22, 1936; "My Last About Money," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 10, 1936. They are reprinted in Robert Haas, ed., *How Writing Is Written: Previously Uncollected Writings of Gertrude Stein* (Boston, Mass.: Black Sparrow Press, 1974).

[4] Robert Casillo, *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism and the Myths of Ezra Pound* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988) and Anthony Julius, *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

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