

1 Introduction: 'Grammar Is in Our Power'¹

Samuel Beckett's letter to Axel Kaun, dated 9 July 1937, has become a key reference point in critical studies and accounts of Beckett 'The Esthetic Explorer', as Ruby Cohn classifies him in her introduction to *Disjecta* (2001, 11). While the critical importance of Beckett's expressed desire to tear at language has long been acknowledged as an indication of his evolving aesthetics of language, critics have tended to neglect the fact that Beckett specified he wished to do so in a manner akin to what Gertrude Stein had already achieved. I quote from the relevant passage in the letter to Kaun:

It is indeed getting more and more difficult, even pointless, for me to write in formal English. And more and more my language appears to me like a veil which one has to tear apart in order to get to those things (or the nothingness) lying behind it. Grammar and style! To me they seem to have become [...] irrelevant. [...] Since we cannot dismiss it all at once, at least we do not want to leave anything undone that may contribute to its disrepute. To drill one hole after another into it until that which lurks behind, be it something or nothing, starts seeping through – I cannot imagine a higher goal for today's writer. [...] At first, it can only be a matter of somehow inventing a method of verbally demonstrating this scornful attitude vis-a-vis the word. [...]

Perhaps Gertrude Stein's Logographs come closer to what I mean. The fabric of the language has at least become porous, if regrettably only quite by accident and as a consequence of a procedure somewhat akin to the technique of Feininger. The unhappy lady (is she still alive?) is undoubtedly still in love with her vehicle, if only, as a mathematician is with his numbers; for him the solution of the problem is of very secondary interest, yes, as the death of numbers, it must seem to him indeed dreadful. (Beckett, 2009c, 518–19)

This excerpt indicates that, by 1937, Beckett had encountered enough of Stein's writing to form a definite opinion of this specific aspect of her oeuvre. Beckett's interest in her 'logographs', a comment that not only suggests he had in mind a work such as *Tender Buttons* – published in its entirety in issue fourteen of Eugène Jolas's *transition* (1928) – but also indicates, by means of its very specificity, that Stein's work also contained non-logographic writing.² Stein's appearance in this letter suggests that, dissatisfied with the latest work by James Joyce, Beckett had begun to admire the work of an author not only removed from, but entirely at odds with, the Joyce circle. This is evinced in Beckett's choice of Stein as the artist whose aesthetics of writing (as he understood them) are close to his idea of the 'high[est] goal for today's writer' (Beckett, 2009c, 518) – a significant statement, coming as it

¹ Stein, 1975, 73.

² For a detailed analysis of why *Tender Buttons*, and specifically Stein's publications in *transition*, represent a likely source for Beckett's reading of Stein, see Nugent-Folan (2013).

does in July 1937, less than two years before the publication of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

To a degree this U-turn is understandable: this was, after all, a period in Beckett's development when he was attempting to, as Mark Nixon puts it, 'get away from Joyce' (2011, 2). An engagement with a figure as anathematic to Joyce as Stein makes sense, for within the confines of the Parisian Left Bank, the Joyce and Stein coterie were the veritable north and south poles of European English-language modernism as it stood throughout the 1920s and 1930s. To defect from one to the other (even in the gestural manner affected within this letter) was a significant act of defiance, both in terms of coterie allegiance and, more importantly, in terms of the major differences that existed between Joyce and Stein's aesthetics of language. And while this irreverence is wholly in line with the iconoclastic Beckett of the 1930s, at the same time Beckett's identification with Stein's work is, admittedly, a guarded one. He appears not to know if Stein is alive or dead – Stein died in 1946 – and refers to her as an 'unhappy lady' whose innovative use of language was developed 'regrettably only quite by accident' (Beckett, 2009c, 519).

Depending on how you interpret Beckett's description of Stein as an 'unglückliche Dame' (Beckett, 2009c, 515) – Martin Esslin translates this as 'unfortunate lady' (Beckett, 2001, 53), whereas Viola Westbrook presents Stein as an 'unhappy lady' (Beckett, 2009c, 519) – Beckett's portrait testifies to the influence of the zealous anti-Stein sentiments propounded by the Joyce circle in Paris on his opinion of her character – Stein was very much *persona non grata* for anyone who wished to maintain a friendly association with Joyce. But beyond this, Beckett was careful to avoid making too strong a connection between his own aesthetic and the work of Stein for other, more personal reasons: for a writer who, in 1931, apologised to Charles Prentice for the 'stink' of Joyce in 'Sedendo et Quiescendo' and wrote of his desire to 'endow' his work with his 'own odours' (Beckett, 2009c, 81), such a connection risked merely replacing the 'stink' of Joyce (a scent he was actively working to deodorise) with that of Stein. Nevertheless, this excerpt indicates that Stein's capacity to underscore the grammars of the English language had caught Beckett's attention by 1937. Further still, Stein's work was closer to Beckett's proposed 'literature of the non-word' than 'the most recent work of Joyce' which has, Beckett notes, 'nothing at all to do with such a programme' (2009c, 519) – a major declaration for a writer on the cusp of realising the aesthetics of language he had been working towards for more than a decade.

To see Beckett distinguish his aesthetics from the work of Joyce, as he does in the Kaun letter, and instead situate his preferred aesthetics as closer to the work of Stein can and has been read through the lens of the conflicting coterie of the

Stein and Joyce circles on the Parisian Left Bank. This is a major factor as to why Beckett scholars have largely neglected the Stein connection. The connection with Joyce is just too easy, too well established and too well documented to ignore. Similarly, the assertion of a Stein connection is – given the extent of the animosity between the Joyce and Stein circles – a steadfastly off-limits prospect, one made all the more difficult by the distinct lack of reading traces in relation to Beckett’s encounters with Stein’s work. Remarking on the ‘relativity of the material traces of his reading’ that are discernible in Beckett’s library, Dirk Van Hulle and Nixon acknowledge the inherent limits and dangers of relying solely on extant material: ‘what is still present is evidently useful, as long as it does not blind us to the numerous intertexts that have left no trace’ (2013, 53). Tracing influence in the form of comparability of style or technical approaches towards the realisation of aesthetic aims – which is what this Element intends to do – is an approach that is distinct from studies that discern influence through intertext. Van Hulle and Nixon’s caution is therefore important to bear in mind when it comes to considering the role Stein played in Beckett’s developing aesthetics: this is not an influence that can be readily mapped through material traces.

Yet despite Beckett’s own reticence, and despite the relative sparsity of material traces of his engagement with Stein’s work, their names have cropped up in tandem in scholarly studies of the modernist period. As early as 1981 Marjorie Perloff acknowledges the stylistic comparability of their writings by situating them within the same strand of modernist poetics. Perloff identifies a thread of dissatisfaction with received language and linguistic representation running through the works of Beckett, Stein, Ezra Pound, Arthur Rimbaud and William Carlos Williams. In doing so, she situates Beckett in an alternative strand of modernist aesthetics to that of Joyce. Yet, while Perloff places Beckett and Stein within the same strand of modernist poetics, when she briefly examines their work together she settles on a somewhat tenuous point of stylistic dissimilarity, not stylistic proximity (1999, 206). In her introduction to *Disjecta*, Cohn also gestures towards a comparability between the two by referring to the Stein connection as one that *might have been* (Cohn, 2001, 11), and indeed it is this very *might*, its limits, its technical and stylistic manifestations, that is the focus of this Element. James Knowlson also comes close to claiming a definite connection between the two when, in *Images of Beckett*, he states that in transitioning to writing in French Beckett was *perhaps* hoping to achieve something along the lines of Stein’s logographs (2003, 37). Again, the purpose of this Element is to explore the limits of this *might have been*, this *perhaps* connection, to examine how it may have been realised pragmatically in their work.

More recently, the Beckett-Stein connection has begun to receive renewed attention and this Element builds on this emergent and increasingly dynamic field of interest within Beckett studies by exploring Stein's role in Beckett's evolving aesthetic praxis throughout the 1930s and the emergence of his bilingual oeuvre.³ It posits Stein as a figure both suitable for and deserving of consideration as one of Beckett's most prominently discernible contemporaneous literary influences, and situates Stein as a key figure not only in the evolution of Beckett's aesthetics as articulated in the Kaun letter of 1937 but also in his transition from a 'monolingual polyglot' whose work showed definite stylistic assonances with that of Joyce to a 'bilingual Anglophone' writer, a transition that ultimately facilitated his evolution into a 'bilingual Francophone' author and self-translator.⁴

Repetition is one of the most obvious points of convergence between Beckett and Stein, and one that has received some critical attention, notably in the form of Bruce Kawin's chapter-length comparative study of Beckett and Stein's engagement with repetition (1972, 131–45). Steven Connor cites Kawin extensively in his study *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory, Text* (1988), which itself can be considered the most prominent study of repetition in relation to Beckett. According to Connor the 'proliferation of minima' (1988, 14) in Beckettian repetition resembles the superabundance of Joyce or Proust. The third, unmentioned and more suitable figure here is Stein; indeed, to appropriate Connor's term, Stein's prose style in *The Making of Americans* could be classified as a *superabundance* of minima. Beckett's adoption of the minimal in the form of simple word forms of the kind absent from his verbose early writings – what Banfield refers to as the 'nonproductive modifiers' (2003, 15) and what Porter Abbott (borrowing heavily from Banfield) classifies as 'nonproductive words' (2010, 213) – marks a turning point in his aesthetic development. Rather than declaring Beckett's proliferation of minima as resembling the work of Proust or Joyce then, instead, it distinguishes him from them.

This 'proliferation of minima' (Connor, 1988, 14) emerges as a major point of stylistic divergence between Beckett and Joyce. Carrying the analogy further, it also distinguishes the stylistic and aesthetic praxes of Stein and Joyce, with

³ See, for example, Abbott (2010), Carville (2018), Nguyen (2013), Nugent-Folan (2013, 2015, 2022), Powell (2018).

⁴ These three terms are direct translations of Chiara Montini's typology for Beckett's career as a bilingual writer in her study *'La bataille du soliloque': Genèse de la poésie bilingue de Samuel Beckett (1929–1946)* (2007). Montini outlines three major phases in the evolution of Beckett bilingualism: 'Le monolinguisme polyglotte', 'Le bilinguisme anglophone' and 'Le bilinguisme francophone' (2007, 20, 95, 177). I translate these as 'monolingual polyglot', 'bilingual Anglophone' and 'bilingual Francophone', respectively, and will make use of Montini's typology throughout this Element.

Stein's superabundantly minimal language standing in diametric opposition to the Joycean 'apotheosis of the word' (Beckett, 2009c, 519). The proximate nature of these assessments of Beckett and Stein's interest in minima and repetition is a further indication of the potential for a lucrative aesthetic connection to be made between their respective stylistic praxes, particularly when it comes to word form repetitions. With a view to teasing out Stein's role in Beckett's transition towards a bilingual writing praxis, this Element focusses on the lexical and syntactic aspects of the so-called bilingual turn that occurred in Beckett's writings from roughly 1937 on, with a specific interest in how this was first effected in the English language and in prioritising a language-focussed methodology that exposes Stein's writings to direct and pragmatic comparatives with Beckett's own. After all, if we are to conduct a study of what it was about Stein's writing that gave Beckett the impression that the fabric of language was being rendered porous, it is important to avoid, wherever possible, recourse to the very metaphors Beckett employs to articulate his vision of a 'literature of the non-word' (2009c, 520).⁵ In tracing and comparing the trajectory of both authors' engagements with linguistic representation in English, I propose that Beckett and Stein adopted an identical stylistic technique combining repetition and a grammar-led adaptation of the repetitious act that I define as renarration.⁶

Renarration is a development of the technique of denarration introduced by Brian Richardson in his essay 'Denarration in Fiction: Erasing the Story in Beckett and Others' (2001), later developed by Van Hulle (2014) and Juliet Taylor-Batty, who employs a slightly different term, '*décomposition*' ['decomposition'] (2013, 146–79; emphasis in original), that nevertheless signifies the same technique. Both terms – denarration and *décomposition* – ultimately refer to the same technical praxis of 'narrative negation' (Richardson, 2001, 168) wherein an initial statement is redacted, with Van Hulle noting that this negation may occur on a varying scale or 'continuum rang[ing] from denarration "light" to substantial narrative negations as forms of "extreme narrations"' (2014, 26).

⁵ Specifically 'Literatur des Unworts' (Beckett, 2009c, 515). A precise translation of this German neologism is difficult. Viola Westbrook translates this phrase as 'literature of the non-word' (520), whereas Martin Esslin translates it as 'literature of the unword' (Beckett, 2001, 173). For convenience, I adopt Westbrook's translation, as in her rendering of 'des Unworts' as 'non-word' she arguably allows for the coining of neologisms that, technically speaking, are complete word units but nevertheless make little semantic sense. Thus, a word does not effectively function as a word because it inhibits the relaying of semantic certitude (Beckett, 2009c, 515, 520).

⁶ This term has seen previous use in the area of contemporary performance theory, specifically in relation to what David Shirley and Jane Turner classify as 'themes related to a sense of *loss* or *trauma* as well as notions of *blankness*, *presence*, *embodiment*, and *fracture*' (2013, ii–iii; emphasis in original). This Element deviates from this interpretation and instead defines renarration in a strictly literal sense as repeated passages of text that are accompanied by grammatical modifications.

Such an epanorthotically tinged narrative procedure, as Taylor-Batty notes, results in passages that are ‘stylistically [...] orderly, rhythmical and grammatically correct; [yet,] semantically [...] confusing’ (2013, 173). But the vast majority of Beckett’s repeated passages do not abide by this twofold strategy of assertion/negation of assertion. Nor is the narrative strategy in these repetitions solely confined to that of negation.

Situating denarration within a wider context of revisionary narratological techniques, one that is not tied to a two-step process of action and redaction and instead consists of something more along the lines of (i) assertion, reassertion and *re*-reassertion, or (ii) assertion, redaction and reassertion, brings us to the field of reference encompassed by the technique of renarration. Its scope is significantly wider, often extending far beyond the twofold strategy of denarration, and can take the following formats:

- (i) Using a term’s semantic content against itself through immediate and recurrent single-word repetitions that serve to undo or undermine the term’s heretofore definitive meaning.
- (ii) Manipulating the syntax of the sentence through the use of other grammatical modifiers in tandem with repetitions so as to enforce oppositional or incompatible semantics and incite a term to suggest its own asymptote, or to sabotage its capacity to securely signify anything at all.

With these points in mind, consider the following examples – they intimate a variant strategy to the examples of denarration as defined by Richardson, one that is revisionary in its intent as opposed to being explicitly concerned with denarration:

Mrs. Edwards who is Mrs. Taylor but Mr. Taylor is not Mr. Taylor. Literalness is not deceptive it destroys similarity (Stein, 1975, 70)

Walter a grammar repeat a name and call it Danny that is if he was called Sarah Amelia and there was callousness. Start again (56)

the same shining very colored [*sic*] rid of no round color (Stein, 2014, 22)

In these examples Stein deviates from the straightforward assertion and redaction of denarration to a more complex retreat involving a successive series of revisions and re-revisions to her initial statement. Stein’s statement from *How To Write*, just quoted, that ‘Literalness is not deceptive it destroys similarity’ (1975, 70) is particularly pertinent to the technique of renarration in that literal renarration serves to ‘destroy’ the terms’ capacity to signify the otherwise usually semantically nuanced items they signify.

Both Stein and Beckett engender a systematic praxis of renarration throughout their writings, and this Element will focus on how these renarrative

techniques facilitated the strategic manipulation of the syntax of the English language, enabling them to induce what Beckett metaphorically refers to in his letter to Kaun as a ‘tearing’ at ‘the fabric of the language’ (Beckett, 2009c, 519). Both authors employed renarration as a strategy of semantic and syntactic tearing that enabled them to pragmatically interfere with the meaning-making capacity of language through the manipulation of the sinews of language itself. In short, renarration facilitates the torn, membranous vision of language as a ‘literature of the non-word’ Beckett calls for in the letter to Kaun (520).

This Element argues that renarration was a conscious strategy adopted and developed by both authors, and that it was a particular feature of Stein’s writing of which Beckett took note. This again is crucial if we are to consider Stein as a valid and viable influence on the development of Beckett’s aesthetics as they stood in the 1930s, with Stein’s writing, from the perspective of technic and style, enriching his understanding of how to undermine the ‘Grammar and style!’ of the English language (Beckett, 2009c, 519). Again, Stein’s reputation as an esoteric writer, together of course with the somewhat disparaging context within which Beckett mentions her in the context of the letter, has hampered a pragmatic assessment of how Steinian ‘word-storming’ (520) may have fed Beckett’s understanding of the technical machinations through which one can undermine the English language.

The following five sections work to conclusively demonstrate Stein’s relevance as an aesthetic model to Beckett throughout the mid-to-late 1930s and thereafter.⁷ Section 2 examines Beckett and Stein’s respective non-fiction writings on language in order to establish the grounds for making an assured connection between Beckett’s attitude towards language as expressed in 1937

⁷ Given the confines of the Element form, this Element’s generic scope and textual corpus is necessarily limited. With respect to genre, I focus on Beckett and Stein’s fictional and non-fictional output, to the exclusion of their respective engagements with the genres of theatre and poetry: this is a topic for a further study. Although Stein’s work had been translated in periodicals as early as 1928’s *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie américaine* (ed. Eugène Jolas), and in book form with the publication of *Morceaux choisis de la fabrication des américains* in 1929, Stein’s first published book-length composition in French did not appear until *Picasso* (1938). Stein wrote and published almost exclusively in English (Wilson, 1974, 39, 146, 148), with the exception of *Picasso* (translated into English by Stein’s partner Alice Toklas). Because of this, a comparative study of their writings in or between French is inappropriate within the particular confines of this Element. The corpus of Stein texts is confined to a selection of her writings in English that were published in book or serial form during her lifetime, specifically in the years that preceded Beckett’s reference to her work in the Kaun letter of 1937 – that is, texts Beckett may himself have had the opportunity to read. In the case of Beckett, the focus is confined to Beckett’s non-fiction writings and his nascent bilingual anglophone works written in the aftermath of the letter (specifically, the text of *Watt*), together with the English versions of a number of his later bilingual francophone writings (namely *Texts for Nothing*, *How It Is* and the *Nohow On* texts). The absence of references to other texts from Beckett’s oeuvre should thus not be considered an indication of an absence of comparable material.

and Stein's own mature, and – by the 1930s – well-deliberated aesthetics of language. The texts covered represent Beckett and Stein's most pointed attempts at articulating their frustrations with received language, their respective aesthetics of language and their efforts at realising these aesthetics. Section 3 compares Beckett and Stein's respective renarrative praxes by reading Beckett's *Watt*, a text Shane Weller classifies as 'a decidedly transitional work' (2021, 22), alongside Stein's magnum opus, *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress*. These two texts are both unique in each author's oeuvre and yet they will be shown to have remarkable similarities. Both display examples of unique English-language idiolects and enact deliberate violations against the English language in the form of repetitions and permutations that defy and defer the capacity to derive normative semantic or syntactic sense from language or narrative. Section 4 focusses on the role of grammatical modifiers in iterations that, in line with Beckett's pronouncement in the Kaun letter, are significantly more 'efficient' (Beckett, 2009c, 518), in the form of renarrations involving verbs, nouns or pronouns. While grammatical modifiers, by definition, delimit and make specific the semantic remit of the term against which they are attached, both Beckett and Stein frequently tend to do the opposite, making language and these delimited terms appear less certain, less specific and less distinct. These smaller-scale repetitions employ grammar modifiers to interrogate the subjects of their individual sentences on a more discrete, stylistically nuanced and – arguably – more effective level than the lumbering repetitious meanderings found throughout *Watt* and *The Making of Americans*.

Just as Beckett himself developed a method of writing bilingually in English, Stein similarly constructed a versatile, syntactically complex and semantically esoteric oeuvre while writing in an exclusively anglophone dialect, a mode of writing that may be termed 'multi-dialectical writing'. The development of Beckett's bilingual English throughout *Watt* is therefore directly analogous with aspects of Stein's own writings in, through and against the English language, as will be explored throughout Section 5. Section 6 delineates the comparability between Beckett's aesthetics of failure and what we might term Stein's aesthetics of de-creation so as to make explicit the remarkable proximity between Beckett's so-called fidelity to failure (2001, 145) and Stein's similar pursuit of error and the inexact throughout her writings. Taken together, this Element works to both introduce and make clear the significance of Stein's role in Beckett's aesthetic development: her writings facilitated the development of Beckett's bilingual English writing style, ultimately allowing him to not only transition away from the monolingual polyglottism that permeated his early writings, but to successfully evolve his aesthetic praxis so that it was no longer

as inhibited by the English ‘Grammar and style!’ (Beckett, 2009c, 518) that was posing him such difficulty at the time of his letter to Kaun in 1937, when he would cite Stein as a reference point or waymark on his journey.

2 Grammar Bound: Writings on Language

This is a sentence. [. . .] It is a sentence (Stein, 1975, 197)

Prior to 1937 both Beckett and Stein’s attentions were largely confined to the English language.⁸ Beckett’s expressions of dissatisfaction with English in 1937 occurred during a period of creative stasis; a period spent, by his own summation, ‘doing nothing’ (Beckett, 2009c, 520). In the late 1930s, with few publications to his name and what Nixon describes as a ‘desperate need to be published’ (2007, 217), Beckett was accompanied by hard-to-lose social and aesthetic connections with Joyce, and a corresponding urge to establish stylistic difference between himself and his mentor. His non-fiction writing from this period seems largely to consist of complaints against established or fellow emerging authors, without really articulating in these diatribes how he would go about doing things differently. Seán Kennedy nicely captures this contradictory situation with the phrase ‘iconoclasts need their icons’ (2011, 59). Kennedy is speaking here of Beckett’s engagement with the Irish literary scene between the years 1929 and 1956, but this willingness to ‘usefully complicat[e] any reading of Beckett as merely aloof from Irish affairs’ (59) can be extended to Beckett’s engagement with authors on mainland Europe too, and indeed more generally to the mammoth hold English ‘Grammar and style!’ (Beckett, 2009c, 518) was exerting on his capacity to write in the latter half of the 1930s.

Stein declares herself similarly ‘miserable’ (1975, 30) in 1931 and includes words that indicate personal disillusionment, frustration, difference and self-doubt over whether a written item is ‘correct’. ‘Is that a possible tense’ (106), Stein writes, some twenty-two years after her first book-length publication in English – 1909’s *Three Lives*. In contrast to Beckett, these expressions of dissatisfaction occur during a particularly active and financially rewarding period in her writing life, a time when she was on the cusp of achieving mass recognition and a certain renown in the public sphere, albeit for *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, as opposed to her more difficult writings. Beyond the *Lectures in America* (1935), which were composed to be delivered orally and to a largely non-specialist crowd, Stein’s

⁸ Although Stein’s work had been translated into French on her behalf in periodicals as early as 1928, Stein’s first written and published book-length composition in French did not appear until 1938’s *Picasso* (Wilson, 1974, 148, 146, 39). In the case of Beckett, as Stephen Stacey notes, prior to his permanent relocation to Paris in 1937, ‘English – albeit an increasingly idiosyncratic form of English – had up to that point been his preferred language for literary prose’ (2013).

How to Write, published three years earlier in 1931, contains perhaps her most engaged analysis of language. In *How to Write*, Stein's focus is on the grammatical components of language – nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verb, adverbs and punctuation. As the title suggests, Stein is largely concerned with how to engage in the act of writing, but the text has broader concerns, being in fact an almost forensic analysis of how language operates. Using the voice of a fictional Alice B. Toklas in 1933's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein refers to it as her 'treatises on grammar, sentences, paragraphs, vocabulary etcetera' (2001, 226).

Stein promotes herself throughout these publications and lectures from the early 1930s as a theorist of language and of atypical grammars in particular, a topic Beckett never broached as publicly or in as much detail. Stein's role as a theoretician of grammar – as a 'grammarian' (Stein, 1975, 109) – is important, as her theories were largely self-reflexive, referring back to and elucidating her own writings. Throughout these lectures and essays Stein is relentless in her interrogations of the English language, and specifically whether the words she has used – correct or incorrect – really capture what she is trying to communicate. All can be considered indicative of Stein's innate suspiciousness regarding the filaments of language.

How to Write contains a multitude of direct engagements with the materiality of the English language in the form of direct references to grammar. This comes in the form of straightforward statements such as 'This is a sentence. [. . .] It is a sentence' (1975, 197), a meta-commentary on the restrictive and thus sentence-like structure of a sentence. Stein includes sentences that list the constituent parts of sentences – 'A sentence is made of an article a verb and a noun' (155) – and even creates sentences out of lists of grammatical terms alone, following these lists with simple interrogatives of the terms she has just listed:

Adverb adjective and noun.
 Verb adjective and noun.
 Participle adverb and noun.
 Participle adverb verb adverb and noun.
 What is a participle verb adverb and noun. (1975, 118)

Such a listing of 'sentences', composed of the nominal terms for the grammatical particulars of sentences, is a conscious attempt at making her reader hyper-aware of the grammars at work within any given sentence. Stein exposes the fundamental conflict between the names of the terms and the items these terms themselves signify when taken for their lexical value alone. The 'Grammar and style!' of the sentence, the very 'fabric of the language' (Beckett, 2009c, 519), is always on show in this exposed, almost brutalist approach to demonstrating how materially dependant – or, as Beckett puts it, how 'arbitrary' (518) – these terms are unless invested with a certain meaning.