

During her New York days, Mabel Dodge had preached the gospel of Gertrude Stein and spread the fame of her new style.

Like Miss Stein, Mabel Dodge had long planned to "upset" America with fatal disaster to the old order of things, Gertrude Stein had no interest in anything that was not aggressively modern.

She had conceived it as a part of her mission to "kill" the nineteenth century "dead," and she was convinced that her work was "really the beginning of modern writing."

" Her story "Melanctha" in Three Lives, privately printed in 1907, was the "first definite step," as she wrote later, into the twentieth century".

There was at least a grain of truth in this.

Just then the movement of modern art, so called for many years, was also beginning in Paris with Matisse and Picasso, and Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo were friends of these protagonists.

The Steins had the means to buy their pictures.

Gertrude shared, moreover, the point of view of these avant-garde artists, and she endeavored to parallel in words their effects in paint.

Gertrude Stein wrote her "Melanctha" while posing for Picasso's portrait of herself.

Picasso had just discovered African sculpture, previously interesting only to curio hunters, and this may have set her mind running on the Black girl Melanctha, whose story was the longest and most moving of her Three Lives.

It was not difficult to find in these a trace of the influence of African art, with the influence alike of Matisse and Picasso.