On "Susie Asado" (Renate Stendhal)

Reportedly the portrait had been inspired by the flamenco dancer La Argentina, whom Stein and Toklas had admired when they were in Spain in 1913. How then could the first evocation of the dancer be dominated by the highly un-Spanish association of tea on a tray? I did not find poetic peace that night? The next morning, however, [...] I suddenly heard it. "Sweet tea": sweetie. It was a revelation that changed the entire portrait for me. Stein's sound play suddenly pulled the rapid dance of "Sweet sweet sweet sweet sweet?" over the end of the line ? and over the edge of proper British manners ? into a rapturous calling of "sweetie Susie Asado." Now the whole beginning sounded like a lover's plea, with "tray sure" melting into "treasure," another tenderness [...] Movements of desire may have run into obstacles (broken-off lines) because of different languages ? English and Spanish, perhaps even French ("tray sure" can be read as "tres sure," the French feminine version of "very sure") [...] The dancer's mysterious English name, Susie, may point to the French word for worry, "souci." Any too passionate leanings ("lean on the shoe") might have caused slippings, a loss of balance, especially if the dancer's movements ("slips slips hers") had conveyed too bold a message (with her slippers, her lips, or revealing her slip) as the sound seems to suggest.

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