

Language Poetry



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Gertrude Stein || selections from *Tender Buttons*

Overview

Stein's innovative style predicts the development of later "language poets" of the sixties. Such writing places an emphasis on individual sounds and rhythms rather than the rational, logical sense of words. Her phrases carry heavy surreal imagery and notions of musical fragments; the full work, which reads as a litany of impressions or a catalog of broken memories, captures a notion of a fractured moment in one's subconscious. Stein is the creator of the phrase:

"Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."

It appears in her 1913 poem, "Emily." In later work, she creates variations off this line; the most commonly known version reads:

"A rose is a rose is a rose."

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Mildred's Umbrella.

A cause and no curve, a cause and loud enough, a cause and extra a loud clash and an extra wagon, a sign of extra, a sac a small sac and an established color and cunning, a slender grey and no ribbon, this means a loss a great loss a restitution.

A Method of a Cloak.

A single climb to a line, a straight exchange to a cane, a desperate adventure and courage and a clock, all this which is a system, which has feeling, which has resignation and success, all makes an attractive black silver.

A Red Stamp.

If lilies are lily white if they exhaust noise and distance and even dust, if they dusty will dirt a surface that has no extreme grace, if they do this and it is not necessary it is not at all necessary if they do this they need a catalogue.

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Book.

Book was there, it was there. Book was there. Stop it, stop it, it was a cleaner, a wet cleaner and it was not where it was wet, it was not high, it was directly placed back, not back again, back it was returned, it was needless, it put a bank, a bank when, a bank care.

Suppose a man a realistic expression of resolute reliability suggests pleasing itself white all white and no head does that mean soap. It does not so. It means kind wavers and little chance to beside beside rest. A plain.

Suppose ear rings, that is one way to breed, breed that. Oh chance to say, oh nice old pole. Next best and nearest a pillar. Chest not valuable, be papered.

Cover up cover up the two with a little piece of string and hope rose and green, green.

Please a plate, put a match to the seam and really then really then, really then it is a remark that joins many many lead games. It is a sister and sister and a flower and a flower and a dog and a colored sky a sky colored grey and nearly that nearly that let.

Stein, Gertrude. *Tender Buttons: Objects, Food, Rooms*.
Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Classics, 1914. Print.