

PARODY



Ronald Knox

(1888-1957)

Battology: Parody of Gertrude Stein

“There is oddly not nearly so much difficulty about reading the beginning of a book by Gertrude Stein like this book of hers called *Composition and Explanation* (Hogarth Essays) as there is in reading it later on when it gets nearer the end. It is all written like this with no punctuation of course but it does sound as if it meant something. Every now and then a word or two is written twice over twice over but of course that may be the printer. It is a little confusing to be told that people are the composing of the composition that at the time they are living is the composition of the time in which they are living, but probably it all works out somehow. She goes on like this for about thirty pages and then she says now that is all. But it isn't it isn't. It's only about half. She starts putting in headlines after that to symbolically no doubt make her meaning clearer, but it isn't clearer. It is ever so much not clearer. SITWELL. EDITH SITWELL.

She says that quite suddenly in capitals as if it were a line of 'Onward Christian Soldiers.' And in this part of the book all the parts of speech get mixed up anyhow as if she had been taking a lesson in typewriting. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog lazy dog lazy fox the quick jumps brown. There is only one sentence in this part which is English, it says toasted susie is my ice-cream, and that is not sense, is it? So awfully not sense. I suppose she must either think it looks pretty or think it sounds pretty when you read it but it doesn't it doesn't either it really doesn't.

Then every now and then she gives you a series of sentences which look like a spelling lesson or testing a new nib. Or sometimes it might be a French exercise. I make fun of him of her. I make fun of them. They make fun of them of this. They make fun of him of her. That sort of thing. I don't make fun of her. She makes fun of herself.

I don't understand why she says it is not usually her habit to mention anything. She is always mentioning things and leaving it at that. Weeks and weeks able and weeks. I can see she is mentioning something. But why does she mention it so often? They make them they make them they make them they make them they make them they make them they make them at once. It is very easy to type-write that sentence. But it would be easier still to write they make them repeat seven times at once. And it would save paper. She wastes paper. Baskets and paper, paper and baskets.

Now and then she seems to be telephoning. Eight eight and eight, eight eight and eight. Eight eight and eight and eight. She ought to have said eight double eight. They must address with tenderness. Yes but the girl at the exchange wouldn't address with tenderness. I think she must do it by taking hashish. Has she has his hashish? Hashish and haberdashers. Dash her hashish."

Ronald Knox
Review of *Composition as Explanation* (1927)