



Gertrude Stein and the Reinvention of Rhetoric

Sharon J. Kirsch

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Gertrude Stein is recognized as an iconic and canonical literary modernist. In *Gertrude Stein and the Reinvention of Rhetoric*, Sharon J. Kirsch broadens our understanding of Stein's influence to include her impact on the field of rhetoric.

For humanities scholars as well as popular audiences, the relationship between rhetoric and literature remains vexed, in part due to rhetoric's contemporary affiliation with composition, which makes it separate from, if not subordinate to, the study of literature. Gertrude Stein recognized no such separation, and this disciplinary policing of the study of English has diminished our understanding of her work, Kirsch argues. Stein's career unfolded at the crossroads of literary composition and rhetorical theory, a site where she alternately challenged, satirized, and reinvented the five classical canons of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery—even as she invented new trajectories of literary experimentation.

Kirsch follows Stein from her days studying composition and philosophy at Harvard through her expatriate years in France, fame in the 1930s, and experience of the Second World War. She frames Stein's explorations of language as an inventive poetics that reconceived practices and theories of rhetorical invention during a period that saw the rise of literary studies and the decline of rhetorical studies. Through careful readings of canonical and lesser-known works, Kirsch offers a convincing critical portrait of Stein as a Sophistic provocateur who reinvented the canons by making a productive mess of canonical rhetoric and modernist categories of thought.

Readers will find much of interest in *Gertrude Stein and the Reinvention of Rhetoric*. Kirsch offers myriad insights to scholars of Stein, to those interested in the interdisciplinary intersections of literature, rhetoric, and philosophy, as well as to scholars and students in the field of rhetoric and communication studies. Positioning Stein as a major twentieth-century rhetorical theorist is particularly timely given increasing interest in historical and theoretical resonances between rhetoric and poetics and given the continued lack of recognition for women theorists in rhetorical studies.

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