

Born in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1941, Lyn Hejinian graduated from Harvard University in 1963. It's true that there are times when it is embarrassing to have come from California. The degree to which you're sucked in, you soak it up. I do not want to drop any California ideas. I am your friend, accountable for my loyalty and my love. I want to say that at the outset, and most emphatically, in order to prevent any misunderstanding. Now that this has happened. Between circumspect and retrospect there is only the time of an idea. Hers has been the more difficult devotion. It's true to experience. Its question is looking backwards. In my opinion... no... well, of course it's natural to look back longingly at the brink of experience. You see? It's a purely rhetorical question. Myopia is psychosomatic. Such is your irony — seen at a distance. "My darling, your beauty is replacing irony." Imagine, please: morbid myopia. Thus myopia may serve to dispel the pains of chronophobia. Every syllogism assumes a certain empathy. We have come a long way from what we actually felt. Writing maybe held it, separated, there to see. An instant magnificent with claustrophobia. A moment yellow. The wall I noticed was papered. Against this significant backdrop my life is just a speck. Myopia. *My Life*. But what's the difference — every text aims at the complete realization of one's self-unimportance. Yet in this lies the true. Life lies alone. It flies in the night. [Blake]. It requires a high level of consciousness along with a loss of self. A loss of self with a high level of content. An emotion being a part. The mere mood of our words was producing content. Apart. A pause, a rose, something on paper implicit in the fragmentary text. p, o, c. Is a rose [Stein]. One grows restless. After all romantic love is an inquiry. Of course this is a poem, that model of inquiry. That love is emotional restlessness. Each metaphor is either psychological or linguistic. Language itself is never in a state of rest. *The Language of Inquiry*. The impossibility of satisfying oneself is part of language. The obvious analogy is with sex. It's a sex of inquiry. The genitals themselves are instruments of inspection. Of course I am exaggerating. The obvious analogy is with music. Music is an exaggeration. In 1983 Hejinian joined her husband, the jazz saxophonist Larry Ochs, on a tour with ROVA Saxophone Quartet to Leningrad and Moscow. The musician has a spouse and it attends. *A Thought is the Bride of What Thinking*. And the act of listening... like Faust!... the itch... it's erotic to say everything. It's in the nature of language to encourage, and in part to justify, such Faustian longings. But to be honest, I *do* understand a few things about music. One tries to give the reader benefit of what one knows. Poetry anticipates

a love of thinking. Your pleasure waits thought. Or that was the anticipation. But pleasure is a mental process too as well as the producer of an aesthetic object. A rose, a camera. Memory in repetition presents a self-sufficient object. Repetition in copying seems to mean to say, "I, too." It's a way of saying I, too, want you to have this experience. But words must have the experience of it. Form subjugates every experience. Repetition is a form of friction. Repetition in its form from a freedom barely intimate. Eventually everything turns back and it's voluptuous to repeat. The complex sex alternative, with complex repetition and simple combination. A sex static and tingling of oblivion and description. I thought I had said too much about discontinuity and the sex act. Sex is the excess of objectivity. There's no exit to objectivity. There is no static language. The work should be twitching with destiny or with necessity. Won't art fit with any opportunity. Convulsive beauty [Breton]. Very abstract. Beauty is meticulous but profuse. Necessity isn't any more abstract than beauty. A beauty of the indescribable. So beautiful and accurate. If we keep on abstracting, indeed. No continuation but a spasm. But quivering is an example of permeable intonations. Because they tremble, as it were, on the brink of one or another commitment. One thing I think about melody is the ordinary coincidence. That kind of intentionality. Monotony, autonomy, melody, coincidence — I want to indicate both blind chance and clear destiny (but really this is about introspection). Introspection is not a choppy narcissism nor a paraphrase. This is the difference between language and "paradise." The apologies on paradox and dice. This is not an accident. A person decomposing the unity of the subjective mind by dint of its own introspection. The coincidence is an estimate but also an instance of seduction. All our desires are synonymous. But don't say "desire" — we should look rather for verification. The urge to tell the truth is strong. Reality follows the mind as shadows the body. That strange matter in which I'm bound. But reality is the matter mediated. Everything else is real. The poem is protracted in evidence. There, just with a few simple words it is possible to say the truth. I want to say something about hypocrisy. When, by the way, I say say I mean write. I mean, "to write." And so forth. I cannot write for aid. *Writing Is An Aid To Memory*. Which is a kind of literacy. How to write. [Stein]. Her autobiography is ninety percent picaresque. Can't you make it eighty? [Stein]. The long shot got the nod [Ellison]. Apple is shot nod. Left shoe on right foot. Shod in high heels. "She imitates the generous woman: Here, sweetie, eat *my* apple! Then women

are always sorry and they wish they could say, Hey, eat your own fucking apple! That one's mine!" "[laughter]." Women do have sense of humor. Goats do have wet noses. The old woman never tethered her goat. Still does the redness of an apple make it pretty. Pomes. My French was useless. In view of the potato. A cat is in time. Without knowing French and don't pronounce. Green verities. Apple. Names. Leave the names of apple cut. I do like to compare apples and oranges. To be lucky a mediation. That the definition of happiness wants to append. Hap. Pends, draping what thought to be, hung [Coolidge]. What was the meaning hung from that depend? O.k., I don't know. A continuation of quotations. So much depends upon [Williams]. Gradually the wheelbarrow is locked with gravel. Where it rested in the weather there it rusted. Red weather. The destruction of the postulates in poetry on which that notorious reference depends. In red weather [Stevens]. So much restlessness because one is hungry. No ideas but in potatoes. Hunger and thirst very different. It's like nothing without restlessness. There are no words but in thinking. No ideas but in things [Williams]. But the work is probably a good deal wiser than the horny old doctor he was. Sweet William. One kind of hunger is generosity. Hard to distinguish hunger from wanting to eat. Confusing volume (bulk) with the romantic... but that's generosity's ambition. You have always known we wanted us. We have always known you wanted us [H. D.]. Quoting was something everyone needed. It's afloat in imitations. Sometimes the simplest identifications may be a cruel innocence. One's attention intersects with recognition. It is not the unknown but the imminence of the known that is mysterious, poetic, producing a state of heightened syntax. But he remains aloof, saying only that things *seem* familiar. Seeming is believing. I cannot quote, I cannot get context. That's not description, but testimony. It's devoid of interpretation. Writing is this unsystematized accumulation of statements and findings. It is in rereading one's journals, especially the old ones, that one discovers the repetition of certain concerns, the recurrence of certain issues, certain chronic themes that are one's own. Ideas remain fundamentally the same but the details change radically. The chronic ideas turn up. The time comes when each individual poem reveals not only its own internal connections but also spreads them out externally, anticipating the integrity each poem requires in order to explain obscure points, arbitrary elements, etc., which, if they were kept within the limits of the given text, would seem otherwise to be mere example so the freedom of expression. Our experiences achieve pathos when they force

us to acknowledge that the significances and meanings of things — things we've known, it would seem, forever, and certainly since early childhood — have changed — or rather, when we are forced to absorb the memory of being utterly unable to catch or trace or name the moment of transition when one meaning changed to another — the moment of interruption in the course of our knowing such things. If there were continuity some of it could absorb this. The transition is natural. I decided to add the following line. Systems betray. Break them up into uncounted discontinuous and voluminous digressions. Each alteration produces communication. Discontinuity (reference) is the survival of our expectation. Such hopes are set, aroused against interruption. Prediction and its collage. Lines interplay as we pass and form distracting patterns which encourage us to return, to alter purpose, wander back and forth, delaying our arrival elsewhere. One's concentration jumps around. I have written from almost every quarter imaginable, secular and persuasive, broken and improbable, proven and ambiguous. Pleasures through and with form. It's delightful, restricted, but inevitable yet in its unavoidable abridged impression harsh — if harshness and inexpressibility can be joined. The emotional intent is divergent and highly diverse. It is a variety, and it was made without the knowledge or permission, should probably be taken seriously, the desire being ardent and the willingness ready. I was beginning to look for some meaning when I should have been satisfied with events. It's something entirely meaningless and unexpected. Nothing in sequence, nothing in consequence. I simply couldn't manage the incorporation of what I know — or was in the process of knowing. I didn't change it. I am keeping quiet now. I behave with improvisation and intention. And the logical category called concatenation (on occasion betrayed). An example of parascription. In wide erasures with morphic resonance. Not fragments, but metonymy. There is no marginality in metonymy. There are so many metonyms. The poem is a correct metonym. This word in a flow is the metonym. Sleeplessness is a hazard of metonymy. Insomnia. Solicitude had for several days now developed a theory, a polemic. Aesthetic discoveries are themselves a theory made with belligerence. A drive of remarks and short rejoinders. They offer an apology more greeting than critique. An experiment in sequence and a greeting. This style has both a rational and an irrational ambiguity. I can't help but be interested in how things sit — before I intervene. With an instinct for interference. For the precision and detail of their intersection. Such displacements alter illusions, which is all-to-the-

good. It's not displacement but relocation. And so entwined. Not without transitions. For example saying so is really only a transition. I'll always explain myself. Dialectics, as I understand the term, is a style of inquiry. It's strange to what extent we sometimes try to defend our work. Any work dealing with questions of possibility must lead to new work. Let me explain —. What are the objects in this poem on selection. The old fragmentary texts. Organizing a lot of material into a general view. An accumulation of detail making its own mass. A process whose pace doesn't coincide with comprehension's pace. One of the results of this compositional technique, building a work out of discrete units, is the creation of sizable gaps between the units. So between phrases it's essential that other phrases be inserted, and that they intercede logically, so the world will gain stability and the writer won't seem like an idiot. Exploration takes extra words. We cannot reduce it. Of anything that is, there might be more. There are many symmetries yet to be distributed. The asymmetries are immeasurable, intricate, endless. Life has no end, and they are complete. The end is temporary. But there's always some teacher lecturing endlessly from his collapsing podium with an infinite text. Cannot be taught and therefore cannot be. The second edition is now in its third printing and is taught in high schools, colleges, and universities throughout the United States and Canada. Sustained pedagogy. So it's a theory of duration. A pleasure, and learning thus obtained. For the duration is enduring as has occurred in great desire its companion passion, as it is traditionally tendered. Buttons. Isn't the avant garde always pedagogical. I feel it's disappointing when it's not understood. (I have said, and meant, that I want people to "get" this, and yet, with expansive sensations, I hate to "lighten up"). They used to be the leaders of the avant garde, but now they just want to be understood, and so farewell to them. Rejection of closure, refusal to end. So where should we stop. Nowhere to end. The rejection of transparency. "The Rejection of Closure." Can I wait for a gradual resolution? One longs to be understood. A fascination for closure. But with an incomplete gesture, an unfinished phrase. Zoo... coffee... sky. It's the principle of connection not that of causality which saves us from a bad infinity. [Mac Wellman]. But that infinity is interrupted by clouds. Each droplet with the accurate details of its description. Accidents condense — a fabulous tedium. We are subject to the attractive force of surface tension. And one begins to examine the construction of small resonating forms (this occurs most often in spring), to investigate their behavior, and to extract from that a set of — I couldn't say images — principles

which seem to be the only ones adequate to the attempt *to say something*. The horizon line is a spring. Zontal. Cutting off the horizontals — language put us there. A description is a question put to land by language. A word is a panorama. The perpetual field of paranoia. *The Cold of Poetry*. In the porous snow of eyes. Ice. I'm looking, prematurely, for a particular point of view — that of one who has already achieved objectivity. But I was a mere observer at my vanishing point. The vanishing point on every word. Objectivity modified by the desire not to communicate — but it's impossible not to communicate. Words, for example, simply can't help but give onto ideas. And a name at the vanishing point in a person's description. A maiden name. Ran into the hall to hang it up. If I hadn't found it, someone else would have — corridors are sad. It is good to know so. There is very little melancholy between a thing and a word that presents it. I'm not opinionated, except with aphorisms. A cell of graffiti is aphoristic. Something as nebulous as an epigram. An epigram is for timing and typing. Well — perhaps so. It is at this point that we again pick up our history, widely protracted. She began writing poetry as early as grammar school, and began publishing her first works in magazines in 1963 and 1964. She had made a sentimental beginning — it was very boring to me. It's beginning another pleasure in the middle of its message. That is to say, one steps *in medias res* with fanatic redundancy. Hejinian's other books include. By turns they are philosophical, anecdotal, and intimate. A little prose, a collection of anecdotes. There's no need to distinguish a poem from prose. Rushing chapters. *A Short Russian Novel*. It is hers to be methodical — genuinely methodical. It's as if she had been waiting for the chance to tell an anecdote. The greatest thrill was to be the one to tell. Thus was refused some affection for her own speculation. She binds herself to observation. She longs for something whole, complete, entire, but when she encounters disintegration she greets it like her lover. She's in an exchange system of irreversible flow. She follows word to word in words' design. Side by side and counterbalanced will strike now one and now another and have always been somewhat elusive, fanciful, and sometimes tortured, a number of highly, an ideal of perfection, and only she demanded, of an art. She means nothing. Nothing muffled in memory. The very memory of motion. *A Mask Of Motion*. A word is not a point but a spot and prosody is a study of its motion. Every word is a process permitting flight. It is a prolonged, ruthless, unguarded kinesis. The muffle could take forever. But generally this requires money (that kind of memory). Memory is the

money of my class. Memory meaning physically, expository, generous with substitution. My memory equals a narrative replacement. When I get nervous I'm narrative. Even words maintain this insecurity. *The Guard. The Cell.* Words are guards. Anxiety is vigilant. Maybe constructedness could take forever. We must learn to endure the insecurity as we read. But these distinctions can't safeguard my privacy. On which side of the guard is the word. *One Side, Around.* We will never know a true confession. To omit mention of giggling, of moving water, of the intensely disagreeable shock when any sensations are interrupted, and the delight of mere distinctness would be a fault. But why change subject matter. "Smatter." For that matter, it ever has been and ever will be, repeated, one hopes. "Humans repeat themselves." *Redo.* Repeating, dispersed, tired. A considerable amount of talk is tiresome. Versatility must be habitual. As for we who "love to be astonished." But this procedure is exhausting in that it reflects. As for we who like to think logically. Just as language itself is inexhaustible it has logic. Our exhaustion might account for the passage of time but not for progress through it, through innumerable temporal passages or conduits without a subsequent sense of communication, of acknowledgment, and of achievement. The bone of communication is hollow. During its absence my presence. My aporia achieved the glamorous anticipation of an answer. What does someone mean with such an expression? I have thought you misinterpreted my emphasis occasionally. I understand, I said — but it's poetics, not linguistics. It is a poetry of certainty. It is completely straightforward. It invites participation. It was of great beauty. It is not imperfect. It keeps no memories. It is impossible. It holds. This is no accident. I would not prefer lack of complication. I was not disappointed. I have broken with fidelity to big things. Nothing was betrayed from my betrayal. Erring is faithful. But it's tempting. We will believe everything we say. For others, however, explanations are due — if not forthcoming. The hunt goes on. There's no where to get lost — or no, there's nowhere to be found. Now you know where you are. And what have we truly experienced. Too little danger, too much love. I can't know what I've missed. Poetry is violent. There is absolutely no catharsis. Everything is perpetuated. Particulars are always true. Disintegration is the grain of thought. The century of the fragment is demi-technical. Poetry is continuous. I am grateful.