



The Language of Inquiry

Lyn Hejinian

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Lyn Hejinian is among the most prominent of contemporary American poets. Her autobiographical poem *My Life*, a best-selling book of innovative American poetry, has garnered accolades and fans inside and outside academia. *The Language of Inquiry* is a comprehensive and wonderfully readable collection of her essays, and its publication promises to be an important event for American literary culture. Here, Hejinian brings together twenty essays written over a span of almost twenty-five years. Like many of the Language Poets with whom she has been associated since the mid-1970s, Hejinian turns to language as a social space, a site of both philosophical inquiry and political address.

Central to these essays are the themes of time and knowledge, consciousness and perception. Hejinian's interests cover a range of texts and figures. Prominent among them are Sir Francis Bacon and Enlightenment-era explorers; Faust and Sheherazade; Viktor Shklovsky and Russian formalism; William James, Hannah Arendt, and Martin Heidegger. But perhaps the most important literary presence in the essays is Gertrude Stein; the volume includes Hejinian's influential "Two Stein Talks," as well as two more recent essays on Stein's writings.

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