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Searching for Connection: Lyn Hejinian's Poetics of the Person

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Hejinian's poetics is related to a number of ideas that she invariably tackles in her writings, namely, the self (and its connection with the "person"), memory, consciousness, and meaning. She has delved into these issues throughout her whole career. She began to write theory in the mid-1970s in order to relieve herself of "the frustration of being misunderstood." (2000, 25) She further clarifies that what prompted her to write theory was "the need to discover relations between writing and the world and to relate those discoveries to others." (2000, 25) Since then, Hejinian's poetic and political concerns have been closely intertwined, in so far as her conception of poetry was firmly embedded in the political context in which it emerged and "at stake were the ways we could negotiate reality." (2000, 25) The language poets group in which Hejinian has been repeatedly included set out to make a critique of ideology critique and foregrounded the production of meaning. Focusing especially on poetic discourse, Hejinian aligned with these innovative poets to enlarge connections with social reality rather than engaging in Romantic introspection. As she has observed: "(…) I don't write to discover, define, describe, disclose my Self, whatever that is, nor to share my epiphanous experiences of small, intimate, everyday moments." (1989, 35) For Hejinian poetry constitutes an act of exploration in language, in the relation between poetry and the world, and in the notion of audience and its response.

Hejinian's exploratory poetics is thus mirrored in her conception of poetry as a language of inquiry, and the other way around. Precisely, in the introduction to her

collection of essays significantly titled *The Language of Inquiry* she argues that "these essays assume poetry as the dynamic process through which poetics, itself a dynamic process, is carried out." (2000, 1) That is to say, both poetry and poetics participate in the process of shedding light into the mysteries around language, subjectivity and its relations with the other(s). In this respect, poetics becomes a relational discipline that endeavours to make as clear as possible the workings of poetry, while simultaneously problematizing poetic language in its material and discursive constituents. Hejinian rejects the idea that theory is directly opposed to practice and this is evinced in the way the boundaries between these two fields are blurred in her work.[1] As Stephen Fredman argues, "Hejinian's writing maintains a remarkable continuity (…) among the forms of verse, prose poetry (…), and the essay: all three forms are employed in the service of a single, multifaceted project, in which the relationship between language and personhood is a major part of the inquiry." (2001-2002, 60) Thus, all her writings are aimed at understanding the relationship between the self, language and the method used to deal with this relationship. In this respect, a number of concepts recur throughout Hejinian's essays: "process," "investigation," "exploration," "relation," "consciousness." However, she has repeatedly warned against the ideas of immanence and fixity in either poetry or poetics. Throughout her texts, one finds a tendency to defer meaning and open sentences for a wide range of interpretations. And more specifically, she has come to see poetics as "mobilizing and participating in the ongoing, interminable (…) process of 'relating'—the process of establishing relationships, the process of contextualization in this sense, as a process of *making sense*. It is always speculative, always in transition. To make sense is not only to find it but also to create it." (2006, 208) Her best-known poetical work is *My Life*, published twice in the 1980s (1980, 1987) This book has received wide critical attention, whereas other compelling works such as *Oxota: A Short Russian Novel* (1991), for example, remain less discussed. For this reason, I have chosen to focus precisely on this text to examine how Hejinian's poetics are practically enacted. More specifically, I will address the question of estrangement and the relation between the "self" and the "person," as they are textually embodied in *Oxota* and critically endorsed in some of her seminal essays.

Oxota: A Short Russian Novel is based on Hejinian's experiences in Russia during the 1980s.[2] Hejinian's intention in writing this work was to re-create the consciousness of her experience in Russia: "When I started writing *Oxota,* I wanted to recreate in writing the Russian-ness of what I experienced as a kind of strangeness and to experience it again but intentionally." (McCaffery, 1996, 128) In other words, the novel offered her the possibility to re-experience her feeling of strangeness within a Russian context. But this strangeness is neither merely "local" nor provoked by the simple reality of being in an unusual place. Hejinian's "strangeness" is also connected to her interior life. As she says: "(…) the more fundamental and pervasive strangeness of having a life, with its various parts, the seeming randomness of one's encounters with events, the unpredictability of the ways in which it unfolds." (McCaffery, 1996, 128) "Unpredictable" and "random" are terms which might well define some features of the novel. Hejinian has defined her poetics as "a poetics of affirmation, but also a poetics of uncertainty, of doubt, difficulty, and strangeness." (2002, 235) A poetics like the one she espouses is also "inevitably contradictory, dispersive, and incoherent (…). It exhibits disconnection while hoping to accomplish reconnection." (2002, 235) Precisely, these very same elements characterize her work: contradiction, dispersion and "incoherence." However, rather than "incoherence," I should talk about what Hejinian calls "the delaying of coherence," which is a strategy she uses in her essay "Language and Paradise," and that she defines as resulting from parataxis and plotlessness. Although she is specifically referring to the structure of the essay, I think the concept of "coherence delayed" applies just as well to her poetical writings.[3] The novel's subtitle (*A Short Russian Novel*) accounts for the above mentioned "contradictory" nature of Hejinian's poetics: 1) it is not short since it contains 270 chapters, 2) it is not Russian, and 3) the most relevant, it is not actually a novel, at least, not a novel as it is conventionally understood. *Oxota* is written in the 14-line stanza of Alexander Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin* (1825-1832) and is divided into 8 books. Written in poetic, non-narrative prose, its real subject is not the account of her experiences in Russia, but the writing itself of the novel, that is to say, the story of the author's construction of the novel, the record of Hejinian's consciousness of being conscious that she "is/was" writing a novel because, as she has observed, "I'm

considerably more interested in the 'experience of the experience' than in recounting the experience itself." (McCaffery, 1996, 132) As a consequence, *Oxota* displays a number of features that convey the sense of that "consciousness," which is in turn as fluid, inconstant, flexible, unstable, dynamic… as the novel itself.

From the outset, one can see that *Oxota* is a multilayered text that works at two levels simultaneously: the level of real events related to Hejinian's life in Russia and the level of the inner relationship of the novel with itself. In the first chapter we read:

> We must learn to endure the insecurity as we read
> The felt need for a love intrigue
> There is no person—he or she was appeased or withdrawn
> There is relationship but it lacks simplicity (12)

The "insecurity" is that of the readers about the text. We soon find out that we cannot be sure of anything, we have no certainties about this novel: what the plot is (even if there is a plot) or who the main characters are. As she says, the relationship of this text with the novel it purports to be "lacks simplicity." It is a complex relationship, as far as it has transgressed the novel's generic assumptions. Precisely, one of its most obvious transgressions is the absence of a central, stable "self" that makes the plot advance through the narrative, as we shall see.

But at the same time, that "insecurity" is also an allusion to the "insecurity" of life in Russia in the 1980s, a time of social and political upheavals brought about by Gorbachov's Perestroika, when Russian people lost the confidence in a stable social order and became anxious about their future. In the course of the narrative, Hejinian makes reference to a number of political events, such as the rise of nationalism, the impoverishment of the Russian economy and, most importantly, the psychological and economic effects of these social changes on the Russian people.

The text is characterized, among other things, by the concept of "coherence delayed" which can be observed through the use of parataxis and the absence of plot. Indeed, in this novel there is no plot outline; it is rather a paratactic rendering of social events in Russia (for instance, the reference to the opening of the first MacDonald's in Moscow in 1990), conversations overheard while in the bus or in the street, accounts of dialogues at the Dragomoshenkos' house, or references to the political situation in Russia. The coherence delayed can be further seen in the way

some incidents and episodes are presented. For example, in chapter 2 the word "hunting" is mentioned for the first time and we don't know at this moment whether it is important or not:

> In the evenings particularly we made notes and took dictation in anticipation of writing a short Russian novel, something neither invented nor constructed but moving through that time as I experienced it unable to take part personally in the hunting (12)

This paragraph contains a key concept: that of "hunting," but it is not until chapter 259 that we learn about its relation with the book, when we read: "It was Zina who called it oxota / The hunt" (278) "Oxota" is the Russian word for "hunt" and Hejinian has explained that Zina, Dragomoshenko's wife, "often referred to herself as oxotnista, the "huntress," because "like most Russian women she spent much of her time out in the city in an endless hunt for food for her family." (McCaffery, 1996, 128) However, the significance of "hunting" goes beyond the mere reference to the title, since the author recognizes that she can't participate personally in Zina's hunting because Hejinian is a "stranger" and thus only an observer of Zina's everyday fight for survival. This represents an early instance of the poet's "estrangement," in both a literal and literary sense. Jacob Edmond argues that in *Oxota* Hejinian "conflate(s) poetic estrangement with the estranging effect of Russia itself, and in so doing, developed her poetics of the person, which linked the material text (…) with the social poetics of everyday life." (2006, 97) In other words, the notion of "person" developed in *Oxota* is intimately connected to the social context in which it lives, giving rise to the estrangement of the author from her American reality in the course of her stay in Russia. And both her social and literary estrangement are revealed in the text through its special "narrator," as she so aptly explains: "The 'Russian novel' was about unsettlement and disorientation; its milieu, the Soviet Union, is for a Westerner perhaps exotic, but in the 'novel' it is the narrator who becomes exoticized; she becomes estranged from the markers of self and incapable of self-location." (2000, 209-210) The literary narrator is as "dis-located" and disoriented within the novel's text as the real narrator, Hejinian herself, is within the Russian social context in which she lived for some time.

On the other hand, this "hunting" also works as a metaphor for the readers' position in this novel, since we become "hunters" for its meaning. In this respect, readers are involved in a similar exploratory process to that engaged in by the author while writing the text. The task of finding a conventional interpretation is complicated by the fact that *Oxota* doesn't meet the requirements of classical novels in a number of respects. For example, there are no clear-cut characters, or, rather, some characters are like ghosts who appear every now and then, but whose role in the novel remains elusive. Cases in point are the "colonel" and "Gavronsky." There are numerous references to them, but it is hard to get a precise knowledge of who they are and if they have any relationship with other characters (Hejinian, Zina, Arkadii, Ostap…). Gavronksy appears in 11 chapters before we can surmise that he is a painter. The main incident in Gavronsky's story takes place in chapter 42, when we read that he has been stabbed by a nationalist. Actually, we know that Gavronsky's story responds to Hejinian's decision to include a violent act in *Oxota* because "[she] had seen enough violence in Russia that [she] knew she could transpose [this incident: meaning the actual stabbing of an American musician in San Francisco, her own nephew, a drummer] and intertwine it with the rise of nationalism that appeared in the wake of perestroika." (McCaffery, 1996, 128) But in the novel it remains uncertain why and what Gavronksy is doing there.

The colonel, on the other hand, appears in twenty chapters but it is not always the same colonel, since the stories are different. He is a sort of symbolic character that represents a common figure of Russian life. As Hejinian explains: "The Russian equivalent of our urban myths almost always includes a colonel." (McCaffery, 1996, 128) Hence, she thought it was imperative to include a "colonel" in her Russian novel but his role in the novel is also ambiguous. Hejinian mentions several times in the course of the narrative that the people she knew in Russia kept advising her about prospective characters and other issues in her novel. Chapter 89 exemplifies this through a conversation between Hejinian and Arkadii:

> Misha should be a major character in the Russian novel
> Sasha, too, and Nadia
> You will start with the third chapter, Arkadii said, and the first sentence must be attributed to Emmanuel Kant as follows:

> everything happens so often, that speaking of it makes no sense
> You will meet people accompanying their ghosts, said Alyosha, and speak with them
> Kolya, Shura, Borik, Sveta, Tanya, Natasha, Igor, Vladik, Vanya, and the other Misha (101)

This provides a clear view of the process-like nature of the novel, which comments self-reflexively on its own construction. The text reminds us that the notion of "person" conceptualized by Hejinian is not equivalent to the idea of an essential self that gets perfectly delineated in the story.[4] Here the characters are reduced to mere Russian names whose presence in the novel is uncertain, only contributing to give a Russian flavour to this otherwise non-Russian novel. And this provokes in the readers the feeling of not being sufficiently or adequately informed. Characters, readers, author and text, all of them embark on an enterprise which doesn't promise reliable outcomes. It is the process that really matters and not the end.

A second way in which *Oxota* "fails" as a novel is how it undermines narrative convention and chronological linear progression. There is a shifting point of view, which fluctuates between 1st person singular, 3rd person singular and 3rd person plural. Since there is not a dominant protagonist whose fate effectively determines the action of the story, the point of view is bound to be unfixed and changing. Nothing is stable or clear in this novel. In chapter 135 the narrator says, "I cannot imagine a glass prose" (150) and indeed this prose is not transparent. The poetic prose of *Oxota* is elusive, opaque, dispersive, elliptical…many things are left unexplained and it is up to the readers to extract meanings, which in turn, will depend on their differing circumstances and won't be necessarily the same for every reader. In her essay "The Person and Description," Hejinian calls into question the Western traditional notion of the "self" as an "essential core reality at the heart of our sense of being" (2000, 201), which is constant, irreducible, immanent, unchanging. She disregards this view and takes up a contextual notion of "self" as one of "being in position, at a time and place (…)" although "this position is temporary," and it is immersed "in a matrix of possibly infinite contingencies and contextualities." (2000, 202) She further claims that "This sense of contingency is intrinsic to my experience of the self as a relationship rather than an essence" (2000, 202), and that "There is no

self undefiled by experience, no self unmediated in the perceptual situation; instead there is a world and the person is in it." (2000, 203) Hence, Hejinian advocates the use of the word "person" rather than "self." She has defined the "person" as a "long protracted messy process" (Bellamy, 1995, 24), thus emphasizing the unfinished nature of personhood and making clear that a person is always, borrowing Julia Kristeva's term, a subject-in-progress. As persons, readers exist also in a context and are bound to have a contextual response. Hejinian has insisted on many occasions on the distinction between "self" and "person." She deems the latter more accurate and true to our experience of life, since when we say "person" it has to do with "activities, our daily and nightly being in the world. The person exists in context—or in an array of contexts enabling and/or requiring us to make choices, act on intentions, make the decisions which move us through life." (McCaffery, 1996, 130-1) Thus, in a similar fashion, readers have to make decisions about how to construe a novel like *Oxota*, depending on the specific contexts which influence their readings. As a consequence, meaning is bound to be "contextual" too. All this thinking about the self, meaning and experience, shapes the "open" nature of Hejinian's work in general, and of this one in particular. "The Rejection of Closure" offers a detailed account of her distinction between "closed" and "open" texts, which she tentatively qualifies as follows:

> We can say that a "closed text" is one in which all the elements of the work are directed toward a single reading of it. Each element confirms that reading and delivers the text from any lurking ambiguity. In the "open text," meanwhile, all the elements of the work are maximally excited (…) The "open text," by definition, is open to the world and particularly to the reader. It invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies. It speaks for writing that is generative rather than directive. The writer relinquishes total control and challenges authority as a principle and control as a motive. The "open text" often emphasizes or foregrounds process, either the process of the original composition or of subsequent compositions by readers, and thus resists the cultural tendencies that seek to identify and fix material and turn it into a product; that is, it resists reduction and commodification. (2000, 42-43)

Hejinian's definition of closed and open texts draws on Roland Barthes' distinction between "readerly" and "writerly" texts, respectively. Barthes suggests that "Le texte

scriptible est un present perpetual, sur lequel ne peut se poser aucune parole conséquente (…); le texte scriptable, c'est nous en train d'écrire, avant que le jeu infini du monde (…) ne soit traversé, coupé, arête, plastifié par quelque système singulier (…) qui en rabatte sur la pluralité des entrées, l'ouverture des réseaux, l'infini des langages."[5] Both Hejinian and Barthes emphasize the qualities of non-closure, plurality, readers' participation and challenge of authority present in the open or writerly texts, since "Parce que l'enjeu du travail littéraire (de la littérature comme travail, c'est de faire du lecteur, non plus un consommateur, mais un producteur du texte."[6] In this respect, *Oxota* is a compelling example of open text, as far as the author is unwilling to impose any finite interpretation and readers are invited to actively participate in the course of its very construction. As Paul Naylor suggests, Hejinian's open text(s) "presents the 'I' in process: in the process of becoming an 'I' in the world, in culture, as well as in the process of becoming an 'I' in a text." (1999, 109) This "textual" I is of special import for a text such as *Oxota* since its fragmented structure, syntactic dislocations, veiled allusions and elliptical presentation of things lead us toward an individualized account of the text. Hejinian's work demands an active participation on the part of the readers, to the extent of making them co-producers of the text, from which multiple meanings issue and different interpretations are likely to arise. The reader is legitimized to give whatever view fits his/her perception as far as he/she becomes an independent "I" who establishes a similar process of relationships with the text as that of the writer. This "I" is not a self, but a person always at the center of its own making. In this case, the person is being transformed into a "reader." The way in which the narrator mingles personal reflection, memory, social commentary and literary discussions, defies conventional narrative assumptions and foregrounds the notion of ongoingness of writing, of improvisation. Hejinian's reasons for writing are "inquisitive," taking "writing as the site of thinking" and in that sense she "is not interested in storytelling or in recapitulating what [she] has previously figured out." (McCaffery, 1996, 132) Her purpose is not the transmission of a story or a message, but to forge connections between the reader and the text that go beyond the mere surface of what it tells about, thus making us conscious of our own differentiated

perception of it. The meaning of this text will therefore never be fixed or predetermined by the author. As she has said, "meanings are nothing but a flow of contexts" (2003, 73) and "contexts" here is synonymous with tentative, changing, unfixed, contingent, ambivalent… Borrowing once more Paul Naylor's words: "(…) the dialogue between writer and reader is constitutive of the truth that arises in *Oxota*—a truth that is provisional and open-ended rather than universal and closed off to change and revision." (1999, 130) Reality, and even more such a "textual" reality, is provisional and mutable, since it depends on the readers' perception. This is the only truth we can account for in *Oxota*, and one that, although subjective and contingent, is nevertheless able to link all readers in their "insecurity" about the novel. Hejinian has observed that she wants her work to be "shareable" but not "universal." (2003, 67) The poetic investigation of the "I" that she carries out in *Oxota* applies also to the challenging examination of the notions of reader, narrator, plot and progress of the book. This is in turn ratified by the self-reflexive construction of the novel, since it is during the process of writing that the novel actually gets written, in the same way that it is in the process of living that the "self" is actually formulated and constantly reformulated. Self-reflexivity appears at key moments in the text, for example in chapter 260 when the novel is about to end and we read:

> A Russian novel comes to its end and all further action is precluded
> And the reverse
> There's always reverse
> What we make we may forget
> Lighting by leaving, love keeping to its time
> A little prose, a collection of anecdotes
> A great disturbance
> Pushkin the person is dead but the novel won't come to that end
> All's again plotless, as it should be (279)

This self-commentary on the novel, (the allusions to its plotlessness, its qualifying it as a collection of anecdotes) evinces the resistance to closure which is exhibited throughout all the text: it is a "great disturbance" because it does not give us any sense of certainty. We become disturbed by its very ambiguity: it is neither prose nor poetry, but both at the same time. It is neither a novel nor an essay, but it contains

features of both. Hejinian's memories of her experiences in Russia motivated her conscious decision to write a novel. However, the novel goes beyond this personal basis. Dispersed throughout the text we find other things, such as poetic statements, discussions about Russian literature or reflections about daily events, that trigger our own meditations. Thanks to this, we feel "reconnected" with the text as readers and persons that participate in a similar approach to its open and unstable nature. The readers of *Oxota* share "not the experience of a world stable in its essence but the experience of the absence of an immutable essence, an experience of the open text of reality." (Naylor, 1999, 133) Hejinian's conceptualization of her own poetics as "exhibiting disconnection while hoping to accomplish reconnection," is certainly revealed in the way it makes us aware of our own reading-process. We experience the reality of our reading in similar terms to our daily reality and, in this respect, the dialogue between writer and reader is established through a common and dynamic notion of personhood that disregards essential identity as a desirable end.

Chapter 192 functions as a sort of summary of the novel's intention, structure and main features, shedding light on the very strategies of composition that Hejinian has used, which in turn illuminate her exploratory poetics. The first paragraph offers a poetic statement that applies to all Hejinian's poetical writings and to *Oxota* in particular:

> 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 examples of the freedom of expression (210)

It is worth noting that Hejinian's poems come about in terms of an internal revelation of their own characteristics while at the same time also projecting them to the outside world, making comprehensible the connections between text and readers. But this relationship will never be established in closed terms, since her conceptualization of both poem and person revolves around the notion of almost undecipherable codes that become meaningful in the course of their contingent and hesitant existence. That's why readers have to "wait" until the time comes for a poem to reveal itself.

And in the same way, the reader as a person delays in his/her own articulation of the poem's meaning, which nonetheless will be only temporal. Thus, the poems achieve their own "integrity" and make sense by themselves, without the mediation of the author. They not only speak for themselves, but they also explain themselves. The next lines also contain Hejinian's conception of poetry as improvisation, unpredictability, openness and fragmentation:

> One can't be intimidated by the threat of subordination
> Nor by petty attractions nor semantic conflicts
> By poplar fluff and Chinese islands
> And not even by compositional imperatives demanding new
> texts
> But there are days—let's not forget real days—when
> language loses speed
> Then it lags as the nights lag, brief and nonetheless long
> And one submits to a sensation
> It's something entirely meaningless and unexpected
> It's devoid of interpretation, a perfect quiddity
> The long awaited meeting of signifier and signified (210)

The writer does not know in which direction the poem will go and she cannot surrender to "imperatives" as far as it is the very text that directs her writing. It is a non-rationalized energy what drives her poetry, in which "sensations," "meaninglessness" and a non-teleological intent play a more important role than authorial control. Thus, poems become "quiddities," just the encounter between signifier and signified without any further relevance. Until finally poetic forms reveal themselves without the pressure of having to mean *something*:

> 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 nothing* (210)

Texts such as these, understood as "set of principles which say nothing," will never be finished products. Their existence depends on a number of elements that constitute the context of the poem's origin and the audience's reception. In this respect, the poem achieves a quality of relational process that refuses to impose any predetermined ending. They are marked by the deferral of conclusions, the thwarting of readerly expectations and, hence, the proposal of a completely new

understanding of poetry in which indeterminacy and multiplicity appear as central features. In this view, poems are recreated constantly in the same way as we find our "selves" immersed in a process of permanent reformulation and relocation. The poem mirrors the "I" and the other way around. And both wear witness to a sense of reality as exploratory and dynamic, as the very reality of Hejinian's texts. Accordingly, both her poetics and her texts negotiate the nature of reality as a search for relationships. As Hejinian asserts, "We perceive nothing but relationships—perception itself is that." (2003, 33) This statement applies to language in general, and to the poetic act itself in particular. Poetic language is a means to connect the person to the world, as far as language is what makes us aware of being within it. Hejinian's aim is to convey the "consciousness of being conscious" (McCaffery, 1996, 127), this last characteristic being also an important concern of her thinking about the person. The reality of language is the only one that makes us "persons", and poetic language contributes a further nuanced knowledge of our existence as persons with special abilities to search for connections outside the structures of normative discourse and deepen into the universe of endless possibilities of understanding and perception that poetry offers.

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NOTES

[1] In chapter 69 of *Oxota* she declares: "There's no need to distinguish a poem from prose." *Oxota: A Short Russian Novel*. Great Barrington (MA): The Figures, 1991. 79. Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.

[2] Hejinian made 7 different trips to Russia, the first took place in 1983 with her musician-husband on a tour to Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), where she met the Russian poet Arkadii Dragomoschenko. They became very close friends and Hejinian stayed for two extended periods at Dragomoschenko's house. They have collaborated in numerous joint projects: on a film script, a theater piece and translations of each other's work. In 1989 they organized an international conference on avant-garde writers, "Summer School – Language, Poetry, Consciousness", the first to be held in the USSR since the Russian Revolution. As a result of this event, the four American poets who participated (Barrett Watten, Ron Silliman, Michael Davidson and Hejinian herself) published *Leningrad* in 1991, a collection of poetical essays which comment on the intellectual exchanges between Russian and American poets.

[3] See *The Language of Inquiry*, Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000. 59-60.

[4] In the long poem "The Person", Hejinian clearly articulates her ideas about this notion. See *The Cold of Poetry*, Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1994. 143-181.

[5] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970. 11. My own translation from the original: "The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no consequent language (…)

can be superimposed; the writerly text is ourselves writing, before the infinite play of the world (…) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (…) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages."

[6] "the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text." (Barthes, 1970, 10).