

Vol. LXXII  
*nuova serie*

ISSN 0391-2108

Fasc. 3  
luglio-settembre 2019

# Rivista di Letterature moderne e comparate

fondata da Carlo Pellegrini e Vittorio Santoli

Periodico trimestrale - POSTE ITALIANE SPA - Spedizione in Abbonamento Postale - D.L. 353/2003  
conv. in L. 27/02/2004 - n. 46 art.1, comma 1, DCB PISA - Aut. Trib. di Firenze n. 216/50 del 16/4/50



## AMERICAN WOMEN POETS IN THE POSTMILLENNIAL PERIOD: MAPPING THEIR OWN POETIC PATHS

### 1. Introduction

The *contemporary moment* of American poetry, which has been designated as post-millennial<sup>1</sup>, is mostly characterized by the hybridization of traditional and experimental lines of American poetry or, in other words, it is constructed as a combination of lyrical tradition and the impact of Language writing. This phenomenon has initiated many contradictory reactions, from the positive to the negative. Another characteristic of this moment is the vast number of women poets who are active on the poetry scene, due to the continuous articulation and urge of feminist discourses after the Second World War. In the first part of our paper, we will point to the genesis of this contemporary phenomenon of hybridity in regard to women poets, while in the second part we will focus our attention on several women poets' poetic statements and interviews, to research the way they understand poetry as a practice in the post-millennial context. Artistic self-awareness has been an important component especially of radical American poetry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the genre of *poetics* is to be understood as being paradigmatically developed in the context of New American Poetry<sup>2</sup>, as well as by the Language poets<sup>3</sup>.

In relation to the notion of hybridization, we will refer to the phenomenon of *hybrid poetry*, a new phenomenon in the sense that it appeared and was widely defined and practiced after the year 2000 in American poetry. We are aware that it can be argued that hybrid poetics was present in American poetry throughout the 20th century<sup>4</sup>, but this will not be the focus of our attention.

### 2. Feminism, radical modernism and the linguistic turn

Successive waves of feminist criticism throughout the 20th century marked what Jo Gill calls a feminist framework for a revisionist understanding of female writers<sup>5</sup>. As a result of this engagement, since the 1970s, along with second-wave feminism, more and more women have been appearing in poetry. Despite the fact that poetry was constructed as a masculine field of expression, in which women were positioned as icons, historical and allegorical references, or as the mute Muse<sup>6</sup> who inspired great male artists, this field was appropriated by feminist critics and poets. Thus poetry and, broadly speaking, *writing* became a

*feminist practice*<sup>7</sup>, a practice which has explicit connections with feminist politics, which insisted on *feminist interventions*<sup>8</sup> directed at challenging and reshaping the male-dominated poetic canon and the way of representing women in poetry.

During the period from the 1960s to the 1990s, two phases of feminism were developed: the first one was, according to Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "a feminism of 'equality/sameness'", and the other was a "feminism of 'difference'"<sup>9</sup>. The second phase produced the awareness that there is no one type of feminism, but that it exists in the plural, which also meant that female poets' practices became marked by multiple poetic differences. In other words, feminist interventions made possible the development of poetry as *female practice*, by which we are referring to the proliferation of different female politics and positions within the field of poetry production<sup>10</sup>. In other words, the women's liberation movement was developed from the understanding of *women* as a unique group oppressed by different kinds of patriarchal social structures, towards the articulation of different identity groups formed in regard to their different race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality<sup>11</sup>.

What is also important in the context of this paper is that the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s took poetry to be its most important tool for "expressing" women's rage, experiences and gender constraints as an important part of the awareness-raising process and a tool that invites women, be they poets or listeners, to be active in an attempt to change their position within the family and societal structures<sup>12</sup>. In this way, writing poetry became not only a *feminist* or *feminine* practice but, as Audre Lorde expressed it, writing poetry became a "survival tactic"<sup>13</sup>. One of the most important feminist interventions in the field of poetry is the construction of *women's writing tradition* and the idea of the *woman writer/poet*<sup>14</sup>. At the same time it is also important to mention that from the 1970s onwards American universities underwent constant transformations, in which departments for women's and minority studies were opened, impacting to such a degree the transformation of the practice of poetry, as well as the issues relating to the literary canon<sup>15</sup>. From the 1980s these transformations were accompanied by the diffusion of French poststructuralism, affecting the number of students who became familiar with the anti-essentialist constructivists' perspective on subjectivity and textuality. Thus, Sewell emphasized the importance of third-wave feminism on the production of post-millennial poetry because of its "poststructuralist critique of subjectivity and language"<sup>16</sup>. The important cultural force that appeared within critical theory was postcolonialism, theories of race, class, etc.



Along with feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism and ethnic studies, an important factor of the recent development in women's poetry was the new rise of modernist studies. After the Second World War, modernism became important for the production of poetry, as it managed to revolutionize poetic taste<sup>17</sup> at the moment when women were entering the public sphere and becoming important agents on the poetry scene. Also, in this period, the boundaries between the arts were blurring, as well as the boundaries between high and popular art<sup>18</sup>. Ezra Pound proclaimed "Make It New" as a motto for the modernist movement. For women poets, this was not just a rethinking and reshaping of the poetic form, but also "a revisioning of gender, sexuality, desire and subjectivity – and perhaps, more importantly, the language to represent these"<sup>19</sup>.

For modernists, writing poetics became a crucial activity as they questioned Romantic and Victorian poetry, and in that questioning they challenged and changed the notions of the poet, poetry and the poem. Poets therefore needed to explain their new ideas of what a poet is, what poetry is and what its specifics were as an art form in the 20th century<sup>20</sup>. For these reasons, poetics became an important tool of exchange and self-understanding of the poet as an artist. It became a specific genre in which poets self-consciously act out a specific kind of artistic self-reflexivity. According to Barrett Watten, *poetics* could be defined as "a discourse between creative practice and critical interpretation"<sup>21</sup>, as poets write about their craft, the world they inhabit, and as they explicate their poetic relations to poets present and past. In doing so, they construct and explain their own poetic canons and shape themselves as poets. In the words of Charles Bernstein, "[p]oetics is an extension of the practice of poetry, and poetry is an extension of *thinking with* the poem and also the reflection of poetics"<sup>22</sup>.

The appearance of the Language poets in the 1970s remains crucial for at least two reasons. The Language poets positioned radical modernists (Stein, Mina Loy, Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, etc.) at the core of their revisionist canon, and they connected experimental poetry and poststructuralism with its *linguistic turn*. The Language poets brought a different attitude to poetry as a practice, as they insisted on writing poetics, and at the same time they put poststructuralist theory at the centre of their activity indicating a twofold principle as they wrote theoretical texts heavily informed by poststructuralism and neo-Marxism and, at the same time, their poetry was informed by theory, while the fact that these two productions were inseparable remains most important<sup>23</sup>.

Moreover, the Language poets made a critique of the so-called *voice poem*, a term which points to the construction of a unified speak-

ing subject, who expresses himself/herself in the poem. They were also critical of the coherent narrative urge in the mainstream poetry of the time, which they referred to as the need for poems to be constructed around a specific theme which is expounded in the poem. Instead of this, the language poets developed poetry in which they questioned the authenticity of the expressive lyrical 'I', pointing to the fact that it is a rhetorical effect of a specific language usage, which means that it is a linguistic construction. They developed a highly fragmented and narratively discontinuous mode of writing poetry.

Additionally, the 1970s and 1980s were characterized by the pluralization of poetry, along with the proliferation of poetics as an effect of multiculturalist politics<sup>24</sup>. This meant that minority poets of various origins – African-American, Chicano/Chicana, Asian Americans, Native Americans – as well as poets of different sexual orientations, constructed their poetic voice with the subject positions pointing to the group represented by it and their work being presented in many then-new anthologies governed by *identity politics*. The problem with this kind of work, as Hank Lazer noticed, was that this poetry was written in the mode of the mainstream, dominantly white and male poetical culture. In representing otherness and alternativeness and their different experiences, minority poets used the *voice poem*, coherent narration and, according to Lazer, "under the rubric of diversity and difference, we are presented with poetry that expands the hegemony of a predominantly white, mainstream, highly professional and intensively regulated writing practice"<sup>25</sup>.

In the 1990s, however, the impact of Language poetry gradually caused specific transformations in poetry. Primarily, many of the poets who were usually referred to as the second generation of Language poets, like Juliana Spahr and Mark Wallace, started writing about "post-Language" poetry<sup>26</sup>. This generation, which appeared after 1989, accepted the poetical devices developed within the Language poetry movement, but their position as the next generation was also gained by appropriating devices which had been rejected by the Language poets, such as the construction of the 'I' of the so-called voice poems, introducing lyricism, which had been among the most important targets of Language poetry criticism<sup>27</sup>. The ideology of this kind of poetry production would be favoured by the anthology *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, edited by Claudia Rankine and Juliana Spahr, in which Spahr pointed to the fact that experimental poetry practices are always hostile to lyricism, from Italian Futurism and the Anglo-Saxon high modernism of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, to Language poetry.



Contrary to this, Spahr in her introduction emphasized that the lyric is a more complex poetic tradition and that it remains important for the contemporary American poetry moment, which was expressed in the subtitle of the anthology (*Where Lyric Meets Language*)<sup>28</sup>.

The anthology which canonized this tendency was edited by Cole Swensen and David St. John under the title *American Hybrid*. At the very beginning of the anthology, Swensen claimed that in American poetry, the "model of binary opposition is no longer the most accurate one"<sup>29</sup>, referring thus to the division into two streams of post-Second-World-War American poetry. While in the 1950s and 1960s there was academic poetry or the official-verse culture which was conventional and traditional, there was on the other side the anti-academic, avant-garde and experimental poetry<sup>30</sup> of the New Americans (Beats, New York School, Black Mountain College, San Francisco Renaissance)<sup>31</sup>. Later in the 1970s and 1980s, this opposition was maintained by the established binary opposition of workshop poems (and New Formalism) vs. Language poetry. The idea was that this division made it easy to neglect or erase experimental women writers and pointed arguably to the more inclusive term of "experimental hybrid"<sup>32</sup> which could be a solution to this state of affairs.

### 3. *Feminism, écriture féminine, poetry experiment and ethnicity/race in the poetics of American women poets in the postmillennial period*

In our analysis of the poetics written by Kimiko Hahn, Mary Jo Bang, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Rae Armantrout, Joan Retallack, Harryette Mullen, Laura Mullen, and Eileen Myles, our attention will be focused on several points, the first one being the importance of modernism in their writing as well as that of feminism, which we perceive as being crucial to their work and their artistic self-understanding. Their attitude towards experimental writing, lyricism, the technical devices they use and write about and the contextualization of race, ethnicity, and sexuality, also remain important. Most of the texts that we have taken into consideration are shorter pieces, but they focus on a variety of issues, ranging from considerations of poetic devices, discussions of important poets and their precursors (Hahn, Bang, Armantrout, H. Mullen, and Myles), through complex work with citations and the materiality of language, where a textual strategy is a kind of textual experiment (L. Mullen, Berssenbrugge), to complex, multi-genre essays (Retallack).

Hahn, Bang, Armantrout, H. Mullen, L. Mullen, Myles, Berssenbrugge, and Retallack consider modernism important to their work, emphasizing

male and female modernists as their precursors. Radical modernism is crucial because of its rapture with European poetic tradition, as it was the moment when women were entering the public sphere, which included poetry<sup>33</sup>. Retallack would point to the importance of Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett, and Gertrude Stein; Hahn would discuss the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop; Bang would point to T.S. Eliot and to the neglected Bauhaus photographer Lucia Moholy, while Hahn would stress the early importance of Eliot's model of mixing different cultures in his poetry, which suggested the possibility of mixing "different cultures in one piece"<sup>34</sup>. She also pointed to the way Eliot had impacted her poetry and then pointed to the status of popular culture in her work: "Eliot's *The Wasteland* gave me permission very early on to bring things together from different cultures into one piece. And Eliot and Dickinson for the erratic way they sometimes present formal elements: whether his rhyme in 'Preludes' or her dashes or slant rhyme. Then of course there's influence from rock 'n' roll and popular culture in general"<sup>35</sup>. But male modernists were trying to emasculate the field of poetry, which they considered to be effeminate<sup>36</sup>, as Armantrout reminded us in her work, citing Pound's ambivalent comment on H.D.'s poetry as being "straight as the Greek" and reaching the perfection of Greek masters, but adding that her poetry was "with no 'slither'"<sup>37</sup>.

In all the texts we are considering, either explicitly or implicitly, feminism remains an important issue. As women were excluded from the literary canon and their work was totally neglected for a long period of time, Hahn, Bang, Armantrout, H. Mullen, L. Mullen, Myles, Berssenbrugge and Retallack's approach to poetry remains deeply informed by feminist concepts, like the very notion of *women as serious writers*, because in earlier epochs they could not gain this status. What they also refer to is the notion of *écriture féminine* (feminine writing). Being a woman and a woman poet means expressing and discussing their *Otherness*, which is often connected to issues such as ethnicity, race or sexuality. Feminist critique of patriarchal societies points to these societies' deep misogyny, in which women are considered to be *the Other*, the strange, the dangerous one, and the word 'monster'<sup>38</sup> as an inhuman being appears in this context. That is why Myles, a lesbian poet connected with the New York School, points in her poetic statement that "a woman exists in a constant state of war in this culture that still sees us as not quite human. I had considered focusing this statement on being queer but I actually think it stands up pretty well for all women, conventional or weird"<sup>39</sup>. On the other hand, Berssenbrugge sees her position as *the Other* as ambivalent: "Being non-



white (and half-Chinese), marginalized, is an insecure and at the same time a dynamic situation. You have to identify yourself, and there's no set point of view. It gave me access to the wonderful cosmopolitanism of the multicultural movement of the seventies, my first escape from the mainstream"<sup>40</sup>. Hence, *Otherness* is seen as a risky subject position, but at the same time one that could be powerful and full of unexpected possibilities. Hahn expresses a similar attitude, pointing to the transformation from the conventional female position as a mute object to be looked at, to that of a subject which, for her, meant being an active writer: "Coming of age during the civil-rights era meant that, in my own writing, my female Eurasian body was a potential subject, as opposed to someone else's object"<sup>41</sup>. While Myles connects the *Otherness* of being a woman with her lesbianism, Berssenbrugge and Hahn connect it with their ethnicity.

Laura Mullen pointed to the figure of the monster, which is the figuration of a woman in patriarchal societies. Transfiguring it into a positive figuration, she cites Irigaray's words about a woman: "*She is neither one nor two ... She resists all adequate definitions. Furthermore, she has no 'proper' name*"<sup>42</sup>. Irigaray was dealing with the complexity of a woman's position in a patriarchal culture, which did not want to recognize or acknowledge her plurality, which was difficult to determine. In the vein of feminist critique of binary oppositions, L. Mullen insists that her "[politics] poetics" are moving "against inherited body/mind distinctions, in an effort to chart the involvement of thought in feeling and vice versa: embodied. Self and other are entangled, as are sound and silence. Exposures. Sudden uncertainty or a sudden glimpse of continuous uncertainty"<sup>43</sup>. Her *Poetic Statement: Still Writing the Body* was written by mixing her text with citations taken from a range of books by various authors including Jacques Derrida, Emily Dickinson, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Arthur Rimbaud, Mary Shelly, and Gertrude Stein. Recoding the monstrosity from misogynist discourse to feminist positive figuration, L. Mullen asked what "the monstrous text" could be like<sup>44</sup>, or, instead of this term, we could use another and ask: what are hybrid texts like? Her poetic statement gives us the answer. She connected the cultural designations to a woman and her body with a specific kind of textual production, referring to it as a monstrous text. But not only is she writing about this kind of textual production, she also demonstrates it by the complexity of her poetic statement. In a manner similar to Retallack and other women poets, L. Mullen celebrated "[c]omposition as de-composition"<sup>45</sup>, which meant a search for new ways of writing, which avoid, question and play with strict rules.



We have already referred to Laura Mullen's critique of body/mind polarization, and it is the misogynist patriarchal Western culture that produces the discourse of polarization in which the male (connected with the mind or intellect) and the female (connected with the body as a despised and neglected materiality) are constructed as opposites. Binary oppositions are always structured hierarchically, which means that in this opposition, the male is seen as the norm and powerful, and the female is seen as marginal and subordinated. Feminists deal with this discursive construct by pointing to the gender asymmetry which makes women the oppressed, the inferior *Other*. In the feminist *discourse of difference*, this opposition was reconsidered, revaluated and women's position recovered, becoming positive, powerful and productive. For this reason, in her text *The Experimental Feminine*, Joan Retallack first refers to discourses of polarization of women and men, and she points to the cultural practice of putting *Masculine* and *Feminine*, *Rational* and *Irrational* in opposition, which could further be associated with Determinism vs. Freedom and Order vs. Disorder<sup>46</sup>. Following feminist discourses, Retallack highlighted all the feminine characteristics which were then considered to be negative, now as being positive, such as weakness, indeterminateness, contingency, and fuzzy thinking. In a similar way to French feminists Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, Retallack speaks of what she called *feminine dyslogic*, "the need to operate outside official logic". *Feminine dyslogic* is essential for Retallack because it avoids official logic, generally viewed as masculine, rational, linear, and coherent. Official logic functions to prevent any possibility of operating outside that which is considered to be masculine logic, particularly preventing the possibility of developing *feminine dyslogic*<sup>47</sup>. Hahn locates this feminist intervention in the 1960s and 1970s, at "a time when one could re-view something typically female, like intuition, as powerful rather than inconsequential"<sup>48</sup>.

Joan Retallack, who is connected with Language poetry, writes about the *experimental feminine*, defining feminine as *polylogical*<sup>49</sup>. The *experimental feminine* could be compared with *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) and, according to Ann Rosalind Jones, this concept, proposed by French feminists, points to the repressed bodily experience of women. Irigaray and Cixous implied that "if women are to discover and express who they are, to bring to the surface what masculine history has repressed in them, they must begin with their sexuality"<sup>50</sup>. That is why Irigaray claimed the following about a woman's position:

'She' is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she

is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious ... not to mention her language, in which 'she' sets off in all directions leaving 'him' unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with fully elaborated code in hand. ... One would have to listen with another ear, as if hearing an '*other meaning*' always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also of getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them. For if 'she' says something, it is not, it is already no longer, identical with what she means<sup>51</sup>.

Irigaray and Cixous linked women's sexuality to women's language, encouraging them to understand their difference to men and, based on this recognition, to generate new female discourses. But at the same time, they claimed that both male and female writers are capable of writing *écriture féminine* (for example, James Joyce and Gérard Genet). Similarly to this, Retallack highlighted writers who worked with extending the limits of official logics and experimenting with language, such as Stein, Woolf, Beckett, Pound, John Cage, Oulipenans, and the Language poets.<sup>52</sup> The field of *feminine dyslogic* is, according to Retallack, important to women writers because it is also traditionally considered to be feminine territory, as irrational and inconsequential, and therefore risky for them, because it meant breaking through to less intelligible forms. Retallack therefore claimed that "[i]ronically, it's been particularly courageous for women to work in the territory of the Feminine, insofar as it can be called distracted, interrupted, cluttered, out of control"<sup>53</sup>.

Within French feminism *writing the body* is one of the crucial ideas. In 1975 Hélène Cixous conceptualized the idea of writing the body in following words:

To write: An act which will not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength: it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the super-egoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any, for being frigid, for being 'too hot'; for not having both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any, for nursing and for not nursing...<sup>54</sup>

In her poetic statement, Kimiko Hahn pointed to the importance of this idea for her work<sup>55</sup>, as well as in numerous interviews, an interview



with Laurie Sheck being one of them: "I do wish to write from the body, from this female body. From the sacred and the scandalous, the luscious, and the ageing"<sup>56</sup>. *Writing the body* in Hahn's statement is connected to the notion of *texture* offered by Jack Mayers, referring to it as "the tactile aspect of poetry"<sup>57</sup>, or we could point to it as emphasizing the material aspect of words. For Hahn, texture "is composed of the elements of a poem that cannot be paraphrased – the aesthetic effect beyond semantic meaning – but which in and of themselves are 'intelligences' or units of nonverbal meaning in the poem"<sup>58</sup>. She points to Bishop and Dickinson, two important American women poets, who worked with formal elements like diction, cadence, syntax, and sound, emphasizing the way a poem exists in the world and how a poem physically comes into being<sup>59</sup>. Her insistence on corporeality in her poetic statement led Hahn to refer to her sister's practicing for a dance performance. The feminist idea of *writing the body* is now connected to a dance in which the teacher inscribes the lesson on the student's body in what Hahn's sister calls a "corporeal lesson", and the body in dance is considered similar to function in a text. This kind of understanding and practicing of dance is, according to Hahn, possible thanks to Japanese dance techniques and Japanese philosophy, in which theory and practice are not separate. This complex way of thinking of the process of writing analogously to a dance technique introduces Japanese tradition, which is important for this Asian-American poet, who also insists on female tradition within the Japanese literary culture, which she learned in translation as an undergraduate. It is to two traditions that Hahn work belongs, as on one side there is American poetry, with its bringing of the female voice to the fore (interview with Hahn). She stressed the genealogy of female poetry when she wrote that poets like Dickinson, Plath, Adrienne Rich, and Louise Gluck – 'shamanesses', as she calls them – use their metaphors in a 'female way'. She conceptualized their artistic power as being at the same time magical, disturbing and powerful, as well as vulnerable, while the connection to the body connects her with male poets like Whitman and O'Hara. There is also Japanese literature from the 11th century, when educated men were writing in Chinese and women, who were not formally educated, dominated the literature written in Japanese<sup>60</sup>.

The research of the constitutive division in American poetry between mainstream narrative and experimental poetry, with its two aspects (the first aspect exemplified in the relationship of mainstream narrative poetry paradigm towards race and experimentation and the second in the context of women's poetry), leads us further to Harryette Mullen's essay titled "Poetry and Identity", in which she emphasizes

that representative "black" poets could be assimilated by mainstream poetry, because both communities wrote in the narrative manner of a *voice poem*. At the same time, avant-garde, experimental poetry is constructed in opposition to mainstream poetry. On the other hand, avant-garde, experimental poetry is constructed in opposition to minority poetry<sup>61</sup>. However, her own position as a poet is positioned between these two poetic traditions, as her work belongs to the Afro-American tradition, which has been usually considered as one working within the social boundaries of identity<sup>62</sup>, as well as to the avant-garde, experimental tradition. Mullen started her career in poetry writing in the manner of a *voice poem*, generating an "emphatically ethnic 'voice'"<sup>63</sup> and being recognized as a representative black, feminist and regional poet<sup>64</sup>. After being influenced by Language poetry and after abandoning narrativity, her work became experimental. She described her contradictory position as both 'avant-garde' and 'minor'<sup>65</sup>. However, her research, as well as the research by some other black poets into contemporary African-American poetry tradition, revealed that there is a repressed, black, formally innovative poetry, in which Lorenzo Thomas had a special position<sup>66</sup>. Mullen also pointed to this division in the work of LeRoy Jones/Amiri Baraka, with the possibility of Jones's poetry being opposed to Baraka's. From the 1950s, before he became a militant Muslim, active in the Black Arts Movement in the mid-1960s, Jones was close to white bohemian poets, especially the Black Mountain poets. A similar division could also be seen in the poetic practices of some female poets, to which Myles refers when recounting autobiographical details of her life, with a special focus on her arrival in New York, where she wanted to enter the poetry scene, which was male-driven and heterosexual<sup>67</sup>. Although there was a lesbian poetry scene, with Adrienne Rich and June Jordan among the main protagonists writing narrative poetry, Myles had different aesthetics and could not be part of that scene. Although Myles considers herself to be a lesbian and queer poet, she was more interested in the work of gay poets like John Ashbery and those on the queer male poetry scene<sup>68</sup>, who did not write poetry in the manner of straightforward narration. So it could be said that feminism aided the construction of the field of feminist poetry as a tool for women to express themselves "through transparent and immediate forms of representation"<sup>69</sup>. But this obligatory framework excluded experimental feminist poets, whose work was on the margins of experimental poetry. It seems that, for many contemporary poets in America, these contradictions were arguably solved by *hybrid poems*, because this concept could embrace more female poets than is usually the case<sup>70</sup>.



#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explained the main characteristics of the contemporary moment in American poetry characterized by hybrid poetry, which combines lyricism and experimentation. We have pointed to the importance of the Language poets and their production, as well as to institutional changes with more and more women teaching feminism, women's studies, and minority professors teaching ethnic studies. These all, as a part of the project of multiculturalism, impacted the pluralization of the poetry scene, in which more and more women poets became active. We have also stressed the importance of modernism, in which poetry, as a practice, was crucially changed, and particularly the importance of writing poetics as a practice from the modernist time to the present. In focusing on the poetics written by Hahn, Bang, Armantrout, H. Mullen, L. Mullen, Myles, Berssenbrugge, and Retallack, we have discussed the importance of feminist concepts, especially *écriture féminine* and the complex negotiating between mainstream, narrative poetics and experimental poetics, which is presented in all their writings. Due to this mixing, we have classified their work under a new hegemonic poetry practice called *hybrid poems*.

ALEKSANDRA NIKČEVIĆ-BATRIĆEVIĆ  
(University of Montenegro)  
alexmontenegro@t-com.me

DUBRAVKA DJURIĆ  
(Singidunum University)  
dubravka2012@gmail.com

- <sup>1</sup> Lisa Sewell, *Post-Millennial Women's Poetry*, in *A History of Twentieth-Century American Women's Poetry*, ed. by L.A. Kinnahan, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 377-392.
- <sup>2</sup> Donald Allen and Warren Tallman, eds., *The Poetics of the New American Poetry*, New York, Grove Press, Inc, 1973.
- <sup>3</sup> Ron Silliman, ed., *In the American Tree: Language Realism Poetry*, Orono, University of Maine, 1986.
- <sup>4</sup> Amy Moorman Robbins, *American Hybrid Poetics: Gender, Mass Culture and Form*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> Jo Gill, Jo, *Women's Poetry*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 8.
- <sup>6</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 26.
- <sup>7</sup> R. B. DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*, pp. 1-19.
- <sup>8</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Looking Back to the Future: Essays on Art, Life and Death*, Introduction and Commentary Penny Florence, Amsterdam, G+B Arts, 2001, p. 64.
- <sup>9</sup> R. B. DuPlessis, *Blue Studios: Poetry and Its Cultural Work*, Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press, 2006, p. 66.
- <sup>10</sup> R.B. Du Plessis, *Blue Studios*, pp. 62-64.
- <sup>11</sup> Jeanne Heuving and Cynthia Hogue, *American Women Poets, 1950-2000*, in *A History of Twentieth-Century American Women's Poetry*, ed. by L.A. Kinnahan, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 56.
- <sup>12</sup> Nancy Berke, *The World Split Open: Feminism, Poetry, and Social Critique*, in *A History of Twentieth-Century American Women's Poetry*, ed. by L.A. Kinnahan, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 162.
- <sup>13</sup> N. Berke, *The World Split Open*, p. 161.
- <sup>14</sup> Alicia Suskin Ostriker, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1986.
- <sup>15</sup> Aleksandra Nikčević-Batričević, ed., *Size zero/Mala mjera III: Od margine do centra: Feminizam, književnost, teorija [Size Zero/Small Measure III: From the Margins to the Centre: Feminism, Literature, Theory]*, Podgorica, ICJK, 2013.
- <sup>16</sup> L. Sewell, *Post-Millennial Women's Poetry*, p. 389.
- <sup>17</sup> Jason Harding, *Modernist Poetry and the Canon*, in *Modernist Poetry*, ed. by Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 225, pp. 225-243.
- <sup>18</sup> J. Gill, *Women's Poetry*, p. 190.
- <sup>19</sup> *ibidem*, p. 191.
- <sup>20</sup> Jon Cook, *Introduction*, in *Poetry in Theory: An Anthology 1900-2000*, ed. by J. Cook, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 4-5, pp. 1-26.
- <sup>21</sup> Berrett Watten, *Questions of Poetics: Language Writing and Consequences*, Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2016, p. 2.
- <sup>22</sup> Charles Bernstein, *Pitch of Poetry*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2016, p. 204.
- <sup>23</sup> Hank Lazer, *Opposing Poetries, Volume One: Issues and Institutions*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1996, p. 37.
- <sup>24</sup> N. Berke, *The World Split Open*, p. 164.
- <sup>25</sup> H. Lazer, *Opposing Poetries*, p. 129.
- <sup>26</sup> Wallace, Mark, "Emerging Avant-Garde and the 'Post-Language' Crisis", *Poetic Briefs* No. 19 (1995), Juliana Spahr, *Spiderwasp, or Literary Criticism*, in *Telling It Slant: Avant-Garde Poetics of the 1990s*, ed. by M. Wallace and S. Marks, Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press, 2002, pp. 404-428.
- <sup>27</sup> Dubravka Djurić, *Jezik, poezija, postmodernizam: Jezička poezija u kontekstu moderne i postmoderne američke poezije [Language, Poetry, Postmodernism: Language Poetry in the Context of Modern and Postmodern American Poetry]*, Podgorica, Oktoih, 2002, pp. 155-156.
- <sup>28</sup> Claudia Rankine & Juliana Spahr (eds.), *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002.
- <sup>29</sup> Cole Swensen, *Introduction*, in *American Hybrid*, ed. by Cole Swensen and David St. John, New York, W. W. Norton Company, 2009, p. xvii, pp. xvii-xxvi.
- <sup>30</sup> Eliot Weinberger, ed., *American Poetry Since 1950: An Anthology*, New York, Marsilio Publishers, 1993, p. 397.



- <sup>31</sup> D. M. Allen, *The New American*, New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1960.
- <sup>32</sup> A. Moorman Robbins, *American Hybrid Poetic*, p. 8.
- <sup>33</sup> R. B. Du Plessis, *Gender, Races and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry 1908-1934*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 2, p. 43.
- <sup>34</sup> Laurie Sheck, *Kimiko Hahn by Laurie Sheck*, in *Bomb*, No. 96, Summer 2006, <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2834/kimiko-hahn>.
- <sup>35</sup> L. Sheck, *Hahn by Laurie Sheck*.
- <sup>36</sup> D. Djurić, *Poezija teorija rod: Moderne i postmoderne američke pesnikinje* [*Poetry Theory Gender: Modern and Postmodern American Female Poets*], Beograd, OrionArt, 2009, p. 136.
- <sup>37</sup> Rae Armantrout, *Poetic Statement: Cheshire Poetics*, in *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, ed. by Claudia Rankine & Juliana Spahr, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002, p. 25.
- <sup>38</sup> Laura Mullen, *Poetic Statement*, in *Eleven More American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Poetics Across North America*, ed. by Claudia Rankine & Lisa Sewell, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2012, p. 201.
- <sup>39</sup> Eileen Myles, *Poetic Statement*, in *Eleven More American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Poetics Across North America*, ed. by Claudia Rankine & Lisa Sewell, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2012, p. 241.
- <sup>40</sup> Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, *Poetic Statement: By Correspondence*, in *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, Middletown, ed. by Claudia Rankine & Juliana Spahr, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002, p. 66.
- <sup>41</sup> Kimiko Hahn, *Poetic Statement: Still Writing the Body*, in *Eleven More American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Poetics Across North America*, ed. by Claudia Rankine & Lisa Sewall, 2012, p. 107.
- <sup>42</sup> L. Mullen, *Poetic Statement*, p. 201; Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 26.
- <sup>43</sup> L. Mullen, *Poetic Statement*, p. 200.
- <sup>44</sup> *ibidem*, p. 202.
- <sup>45</sup> *ibidem*.
- <sup>46</sup> Joan Retallack, *The Poetical Wager*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 2003, p. 99.
- <sup>47</sup> J. Retallack, *The Poetical Wager*, p. 92.
- <sup>48</sup> K. Hahn, *Poetic Statement*, p. 107.
- <sup>49</sup> J. Retallack, *The Poetical Wager*, p. 92.
- <sup>50</sup> Ann Rosalind Jones, *Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of 'Écriture Feminine'*, in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by R. R. Warhol and D. Price Herndl, Houndmills, MacMillan Press Ltd., 1997, p. 374.
- <sup>51</sup> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 28-29.
- <sup>52</sup> J. Retallack, *The Poetical Wager*, p. 94.
- <sup>53</sup> J. Retallack, *The Poetical Wager*, p. 94.
- <sup>54</sup> Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, Houndmills, MacMillan Press Ltd., 1997, p. 351.
- <sup>55</sup> K. Hahn, *Poetic Statement*, p. 109.
- <sup>56</sup> L. Sheck, *Kimiko Hahn by Laurie Sheck*.
- <sup>57</sup> Quoted in K. Hahn, *Poetic Statement*, p. 109.
- <sup>58</sup> K. Hahn, *Poetic Statement*, p. 109.
- <sup>59</sup> K. Hahn, *Poetic Statement*, p. 109.
- <sup>60</sup> L. Sheck, *Kimiko Hahn by Laurie Sheck*.
- <sup>61</sup> Harryette Mullen, *Poetry and Identity*, in *Telling It Slant: Avant-Garde Poetics of the 1990s*, ed. by M. Wallace and S. Marks, Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press, 2002, p. 27.
- <sup>62</sup> H. Mullen, *Poetic Statement: Imagining the Unborn Reader*, in *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, ed. by Claudia Rankine & Juliana Spahr, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2002, p. 403.
- <sup>63</sup> H. Mullen, *Poetry and Identity*, p. 29.

<sup>64</sup> *ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>65</sup> *ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> *ibidem*, p. 31.

<sup>67</sup> Trish Bendix, *An Interview with Eileen Myles*, in *After Ellen*, 10 November 2010, <http://www.afterellen.com/people/81056-an-interview-with-eileen-myles>.

<sup>68</sup> T. Bendix, *An Interview with Eileen Myles*.

<sup>69</sup> Ann Vickery, *Leaving Lines of Gender: A Feminist Genealogy of Language Writing*, Hanover, Wesleyan University Press, 2000, p. 38.

<sup>70</sup> See texts in Linda Kinnahan (ed.), *A History of Twentieth-Century American Women's Poetry*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016.