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FE/MALE (RE)FASHIONINGS OF THE SELF IN US AND UK CONTEMPORARY POETRY

Abstract: *The paper tries to unveil how contemporary poetry has always wondered and wandered about the question of the self, its avatars, speculating about its configurations and refashionings and trying to convince itself and its readers about the verse's capacity to define a/the self in the world by performing its language-enacting fundamental gestures or by proving and even making manifest its inexistence and/or dissolution into the same language. In US and UK literatures nowadays, this quest for or exasperation about the self comes with the whole postmodern pageant of concerns related to gender, power and authority, social and political realities, and the all-engulfing popular culture. A thorough analysis of Harryette Mullen's collection* Recyclopedia *details such concerns in contemporary poetry and tries to prove how this refashioning of the self and cultural identity themes are rooted in both literary tradition and popular culture by the paradigm of clothing and fashion. Recent critical approaches, like the ones of Susan M. Schultz, have proved that such a paradigm is relevant for certain important male poets as well, the best example being Charles Bernstein. Moreover, such approaches discover salient feminine characteristics and feminine-culture-paraphernalia and vocabularies as ways to escape various poetical impasses in other important male poets, like John Ashbery and Ronald Johnson. A review of radical avant-garde women's poetry (especially the one anthologized in Maggie O'Sullivan's* Out of Everywhere*) reveals that a somewhat symmetrical phenomenon is going on in the works of such female poets who choose to ally with radical anti- or non-mainstream male poets and thus produce poetries that are less hospitable and easy to read but extremely relevant in terms of subversive text-building strategies and in language exploration and innovation.*