

Instapoetry: The Emerging Poetic Genre of Digital Humanities

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Abstract

The present study acquaints readers with the field of Digital Humanities, focusing specifically on Instapoetry. The researcher aims to inspire scholars to explore significant human issues through the application of innovative digital tools. Undoubtedly, the readership is offered an opportunity to engage with concise and visually enhanced poetry facilitated by digital humanities. This paper analyzes "Salt" by Nayyirah Waheed as the primary text, shedding light on global issues such as the oppression of women, fragmented identities, racism, and the overall creative process. The research findings emphasize the necessity for innovative approaches within literary genres, enabling writers and poets to effectively reach their audience. This shift challenges established poetic structures and conventional publishing paradigms.

Keywords: Digital Humanities, hypertext, Innovation, Instapoetry, Racism

Introduction

Defined concisely, "digital humanities" involves the application of computational techniques to traditional humanities problems, both as a scholarly practice and as the study thereof. "Digital humanities" thus describes both a technology-empowered methodological approach (or approaches) and a self-reflective critical component. (Simon Burrow, Michael Falk, para. In current wave of hype of digital media, the reader/viewer is looking for abrupt access to creative manifestations. Many scholars exclude the emerging genre of Instapoetry from the English canon. The research gap makes it visible to declare it a research-worthy genre for our future researchers. Instapoets like Lang Leav, Rupi Kaur, Najwa Zebian, and the rest ask for serious feedback from the readers.

Literature Review

There is dearth of scholarship since the researcher manages to find some reviews and research works. The review written by Michael Kim published on July 24, 2020, starts off with the reviewer's inability to understand poetry and the deeper concerns attached to it. He admires how Nayyirah Waheed's poems are capable of capturing human emotions.

Another review by Jcotzin published on Feb 9, 2018, deliberates how juxtaposed ideas of human existence persist in this collection *Salt*. The review acknowledges the fact that she tackles tough subjects like African diaspora, motherhood, and feminism; she has scored a special talent for imagery and rhythm. Moreover, great external issues like imperialism and transnationalism are explored with a description of recovering from trauma and self-healing.

A thesis "Poetry in the 21st Century: The Digital Humanities, Instapoetry And Society" by Irene Martinez Misa chronicles the lifelong struggle of digital humanities throughout the ages. She differentiates among all the diverse digital classifications: SNS, PGS, TMS. etc., Moreover, she talks about digital humanities not being introducing innovative forms but also apps for disseminating literary concerns. First, the poets celebrate success digitally and later print their work to reach out to the massive recipients. She traces back its history to haiku-style poetry, confessional poetry and the imagism movement. Strangely enough, these female Instapoets are indeed creating communal digitalized humanities where they signify that the individual lived experience is rather a lived communal suffering.

The article "Courage to be Disliked" invites criticism of this innovative genre since it challenges the traditional poetic genres. Its strength is that it is easily accessible and utterly honest. It incorporates the notion that the digital age is the product of a capitalist system. Here the scholar applies formalism to the works of Lang Leav. The research work throws light on the lingual attitudes of this era too where there is intensive use of the 'un' prefix and 'ness' suffix adding innovative lingual patterns. Honesty here is defined as clarity based on data analysis on Instagram.

“The Eco critical Instapoet: Digital Media Ecofeminist Poetry” by Gawrieh Ekmark focuses on female Instapoets using natural elements to explain the notions of exploitation of females and ecology by men. Females share their sufferings with the environment. It traces its birth to meta modernism. Rupi Kaur’s work speaks volumes of eco poetry. It also introduces readers to the ideology of meta modernist erasure; a state of ambivalence, public-private, serious-trivial, peripheral- vast. Thus, Instapoetry is responsible for social shaping while reflecting the current political issues and personal thematic concerns dealt with an air of urgency.

“Neoliberal Chicks: A Comparative Analysis of the Neoliberal Aspect of Chick Literature and Feminist Instapoetry” by Nina Waagemans elaborates on Instapoetry through the lens of neoliberalism. Instapoetry is compared with concert merchandise. The critics discuss the feministic rhetoric of commodification. Strangely most of the Instapoets are females who are denied a voice in traditional poetic genre.

Saraswati was the first one to introduce Instapoetry from a neoliberal perspective. This research concludes that female Instapoets are engaged in a commercial venture. They are comparatively studied with chick -literature too. Instapoetry is determining the personal choice and responsibility of these young female poets.

“Redefining Literary Space: Instagram Poetry, Nayyarira Waheed and The Rise of The Sub-genre Online” by Dana Waheed Maan is a dissertation that urges the need for social media integration with literature. So here Instagram is used as literary space where readers interact as a literary community. It discusses the issues of race and poetry through feminist lens. The Africans are the most Europeanized since they use the English language they must voice their concerns to the world. Further, black artists’ works are labeled as ‘alien voices’ (53).

The researcher is interested in assessing whether the poets on social media are challenging, resisting, or critiquing the basic structure of both Instagram as a platform

and poetry as a genre. This work also deals with the answers to how literary circles view Instapoetry they consider it as easy poetry yet both Kaur and Waheed share themes of feminism, motherhood and the writing process. Their self-published poets have subverted the publishing hierarchy. They have devised their own means to bring out creativity.

“Woke And Reading: Social Media, Reception And Contemporary Black Feminism” by Kristin L. Mathews, 2019 USA reexamines the way social media is the medium through which poets create awareness of black feminism. It offers a variety of platforms now available to insta celeb poets. Social media as a site for resistance discusses the types of reception these forms explore how these forms of media and reception are adding to the new wave of social consciousness and participation.

Patricia Hill Collins describes how black women were given the opportunity to see the white elite they were working as domestic helpers. They face exploitation by their white employers; they face double exclusion which is at work and as selves too.

The essay, 'The Cult of Noble Amateur' by Rebecca Watt's proposes that if we are only going to familiarize the readers with new forms without theory application then it is going to challenge the conventional forms of poetry. This emerging genre is posing a resistance to mature and established poets.

But it also gives an air that the validity is questionable since the resilience of hash tag poets is there in the realm of hypertext. It provides a digital sharing economy that not only provides therapeutic value but challenges the marketing world too. It voices greater global concerns and reformulates issues of race and ethnic biases. One can study it with reference to Victorian tapestry, seaside postcard and greeting cards. Thus, it is the visual grammar of the instapoets using the medium of social media.

Statement of Research

This section focuses on how modern poets/writers use social media for creating an urgency to highlight certain injustices faced by them on global scale.in doing so they

present a challenging environment to the modes of traditional poetry which was following rigorous protocols for publication and reception. For this purpose, contemporary digital poets reach out to the masses using communication tools of Instagram and twitter. This study utilizes the platform of Instagram only.

Research Questions:

The following are the research questions:

1. Why do poets improvise innovative genres to address global concerns?
2. How do female Insta poets challenge the traditional poetic genres?

Research Methodology

The research methodology is descriptive in nature; it is an attempt to make the readers familiar with this emerging genre of digital humanities. It aims to aware the researchers incorporate this contemporary genre in the academic syllabi which will subsequently extend help to bring it from the periphery to the canonized literature. Primarily the readers are introduced to Rupi Kaur through her book *Milk and Honey* and Nayyirah Waheed through her work *Salt*.

Theoretical Framework

Reverse racism deals with the prejudice faced by the dominant group in society because of affirmative action taken by the institutions. In consequence, the dominant group, which is in the privileged position, ends up facing hindrances based on their race. Amy Elizabeth Asnell has extensively talked about the plight and injustice faced by the dominant group at the hands of minorities through the backing of the government and other authoritarian institutions.

Asnell came up with the book *New Right, New Racism: Race and Reaction in the United States and Britain* (1997) in which she talks about how whites are facing racism and inequality because of the affirmative action taken by the government of Thatcher in the UK and Reagen in the USA during the 70s and 80s. Therefore, Asnell asks for

political solution to the problems and challenges related to race as she has said that political discourse plays a critical role in "producing and shaping the links between public beliefs and social experiences".

Asnell has made different claims to bring the challenges faced by the dominant group (Whites) to the surface. The first claim propagated by Asnell is that the authoritative institutions come up with programs that categorically favour the people of color, thereby making the dominant group an invisible victim. Moreover, Asnell says that unequal treatment between people of color and whites along with the idea of color consciousness are the prime reasons which are not letting people think beyond gender and race. Therefore, Asnell discourages restrictive dominance and is in favor of expansive (wide-ranging/inclusive) dominance that allows the possibility of "racist discourse without the category of race", simply which means inclusivity.

Salt by Nayyirah Waheed deals with the themes of racism and reverse racism and how the repercussions of racism are not just limited to the marginal community but also has an overwhelming impact on the lives of the dominant group. The claims and theories given by Asnell in *New Right, New Racism: Race and Reaction in the United States and Britain* (1997) have been applied to the text to shed light on the concept of reverse racism and prejudice faced by the dominant group.

Discussion

Nayyirah Waheed experiments with the voice of rebuttal through her book *Salt* against the narrative of racism constructed by the white master. She discusses the noxious presence of the empire on her land using reverse racism; also, she gets articulate about women's emancipation and poetic creativity. She states certain subthemes too; such as immigration. One can observe the sore issue of Immigration: "you broke the ocean in/half to be here. /only to meet nothing that wants you." (Waheed, 2013) and greater than that the voice is articulated regarding racism too: "this / hard vulnerability." from the poem "Black" (Waheed, 2013). Here the dilemma is

visible that the narrator expresses the gnawing feelings of unwantedness and being unloved by the members of another community. If one observes the next verses, the reader notices the sense of caution for the tourist coming to the land. "Would you still want to travel to/that/country/if/you could not take a camera with you". She and her community members share the apprehensions of their vulnerability while seeing some white man approaching as a tourist.

The sense of surveillance and being watched is pertinent and the poetess wants to have somebody coming to her land with maximum degree of compassion and empathy. She declines in a straightforward manner that such tourists should stay away from her continent. Then the narrative shifts to the narrative of resistance "even the small poems mean something. They are often/whales in the bodies of tiny fish". She makes the oppressor aware that she may look weak but is brave and courageous enough to fight against his unlawful authority.

The concerns of this study show how the poetess exploits the tool of Instagram to raise her voice for the voiceless; she has equipped herself with awareness of how she must address the masses; "if i write /what you may feel but cannot say. / it does not/make/ me a poet./ it makes me a bridge./ and/ I am humbled/and/ I am grateful/ to assist your heart in speaking." By coming in close contact with the verses, the readers notice how dwarf-like persona feels; many readers observe the use of small letter "I" for the speaker. She is representative of the marginalized community and now things are in her hands to be vocal about these greater global concerns on social media. She utilizes it for its urgency and quick reception. Thus, the reviewer finds it delightful as well as educative. Noteworthy thing is the use of capitalization even in another of her poems, "African American women are easy, inferior (space left) Africans are dirty. Jungle people. / African Americans are lazy. Indolent. / African people are too black. Ugly. /African Americans think they are better than

manner. For which the whites find it quite disturbing and more harmful. Since poetic illustrations are institutionalized against lifelong racial prejudice. This is even

daring of her part to come into the counter narrative in an attempt to secure the pursuit of social justice. By delving into this she provides the avenues of narrative therapy since she is re authoring her and her community's life experiences and traumas giving a document of externalizing the inner traumas into creative outlets. She is voicing the concerns of marginalized communities through her instapoetry.

Finally, self-healing is integrated for these fissured identities and marginalization instances endeared to her like Kaur: the book includes the instances of self-care like many other instapoets who feel that there is dire need to inculcate this idea of self-love and care amongst the readers. They become courageous even to share their traumatic bonds which left them unwanted and unloved for. Once the individual bears the turmoil of rejection and a haunting sense of love there follows a healing process. This emerging genre makes the process of healing a bit faster compared to self-healing books of various authors. The urgency and crispness make the healing process easy journey by benefitting his self in self-love. No matter what she herself faced she is making the reader equip with the innermost strength of fighting against all odds; and showers yourself with love and care.

Conclusion

Thus, the study concludes that innovative mode of addressing the readers is utterly beneficial in terms of its urgency and crispness. Kaur and Waheed have worked innovatively to discuss the matters of grave concerns by improvising the innovative genre of instapoetry to bring reform to their environs. These poetesses have addressed the global issues in a very eye-catching and alluring way that the read never gets taxing and this helps the readers and influencers to get certain caption and develop hash tags from their poetic works. Though these poetesses have brought originality to the horizon of literariness yet they face a back lash on not very canonized in English Literature world. It takes the courage on their part to utilize social media and mass communication modes for raising the voice for the voiceless. It is a daunting experience

to come to terms that these female poets have rigorously challenged the traditional poetic genres of the past.

Limitations:

The study is only limited to the social media platform of Instagram. Since the poetry of this social media app is captivating the readers for generating catchy captions to their reels and still photos and it serves the purpose of incorporating crispness and brevity into limelight and pushing the serious issues for the attention of global readership.

Future Implications

Future researchers can delve into further research implications of twitter and other apps to address sociopolitical issues of global concerns. The depth of certain aspects is quite dense that many offshoots of research areas can emerge from there too. It is very optimistic that digital social media platforms not only are entertaining but also enlightening.

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