TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES : A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE ON POETRY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

Much has been written about the challenges associated with understanding poetry. The dominant model of teaching poetry through printed text sometimes focuses on finding a single meaning that limits and narrows one's view of the literary text. However, in the digital era, different modes of expression- audio, visual, gestural, and facial- come together in one single environment, broadening the scope of poetry and making it accessible to a broader audience. Words can be deeply touching, whether read on a book page or on a monitor screen. It simply remains a matter of preference. But with the world moving toward digital reproduction, it becomes essential to analyze poetry's vibrant future and the technological implications for how art, especially poetry, is created and received. The present paper focuses on two upcoming sub-genres of poetic expression, viz. Spoken Word Poetry and Video Poetry. These two forms of poetic mediums have distinct elements that set them apart as the new faces of visual and performance poetry. By examining four audio-visual poems, the paper attempts to explore the convergence of poetry and new media and looks at what happens when the pedagogical ideals are expressed by aspiring poets digitally.

Keywords: *Poetry, New Media, Transformation, Digital Reproduction, and Implications*

Introduction:

"The most important thing is to publish in people's hearts – and there are many ways to people's hearts."
– Benjamin Zephaniah (qtd. in Claire Askew)

Digital media has transformed how literary texts are created, received, and read today. The emergence of technology has paved the way for literary scholars to explore the connection between literature and new media. In this modern-day age of cutting-edge technology, it is not unreasonable to question where poetry might fit in with the ongoing technological revolution. This study attempts to examine the multimodal, digital culture on literature, especially poetry, and the new media treatment of the poetic text. Through analysis of the four audio-visual poems taken from YouTube clips, the paper explores the idea of what might make poetry different when it is experienced in a digital environment.

Poetry occupies a central place in our lives for the profound pleasure it provides and its ability to connect and awaken our senses. It has become more than merely a vehicle of expression; it is a way of knowing, securing, and developing communication between ourselves and the rest of the world. Earlier, people used to write poetry by hand and submit it to magazines and publishers for publication. However, this is not the case today. The widespread use of digital media is fast transforming how poets compose their work and how they preserve it

Now, Literature that is born on social media is accessible; at a single click beside the canonical pieces of poetry that are readily made available all across the globe. From Shakespeare to Sylvia Plath, poetry is no longer limited to the physical media- books, printed journals, magazines- but has moved away from such constraints towards digital platforms, adding newness through the use of light and sound as opposed to the traditional use of words, ultimately giving this medium touch of unique human expression.

Digital poetry, in its purpose, is not much different from classic poetry. This form of literature displays a wide range of approaches to poetry- hypertext, visual poetry, code poetry, and like. But what makes it different from conventional literary text is its use of third dimension space- colours, images, music, clipart, and symbols- giving the readers a chance to experience the real-time emotions of the poet and his work.

Creativity has woven its knits in every sphere, so much so that poetry has become one of the finest mediums that appeal to readers' minds. This paper intends to discuss two primary yet widespread forms of poetry, i.e., spoken word poetry and video poetry.

Spoken word poetry is a type of performance where the speaker uses his elaborative style to express his feelings and emotions through his voice. The voice orbits around the emotional appeal and encapsulates the meaning to be delivered. It is one of the emerging trends of poetry because of its freestyle, which does not allow the poets to put their emotions in a specific structure but instead gives a helping hand to shape their undefined sentiments. It has become a platform for democratic engagement and sharing discrete points of view. This form of poetry is in demand due to its flexibility and openness to the common mass. Video poetry is another new age of e-poetry that depicts those behaviours which were not spoken earlier.

Thus, the New Age Digital Poetry yields an immense platform for exposure; it gives the liberty to express without disclosing the identity by letting a person be anonymous; this quality brings wide recognition from the present generation. Digital media has given a new shape to the traditional medium of expression.

An Analysis of Digital Poems:

To understand the implications of the digital environment on poetry, the paper examines four audio-video poems. "From Up There" by Jon Jorgenson is a video poem that discusses a person's aspirations and encourages the audience to not give up on their goals in times of difficulty and hardships. What makes the poem unique is its visual quality and the way text is embedded in the form of an image

rather than simply printed letters. The poet's comparison of being on a plane and looking at the bigger picture of life catches up the attention of the listeners:" From up there, I see… A city is perhaps a synapse of God's brain…Lighting up where connections are being made with the Almighty' (Jorgenson, 01:48- 01:55).

Phrases from the poem's text are incorporated into a slow and steady movement as they appear and disappear on the screen so that it becomes easier to read the verbal text. This poem is also accompanied by sound effects to emphasize the message that life is not all about winning the game. Through rhetorical questions, 'what if' and 'how many, ' the poet can directly reach the audience's hearts (Jorgenson, 02:15-02:22).

Similarly, in "can we Auto-Correct Humanity?" by Prince Ea, the musical endeavours a message to have a meaningful steadiness in life. The repetition of 'I 'emphasizes how people have become selfish by being socially active (Ea, 01:09-03:27). The video explains a broader picture that we are incapable of actually doing so despite being in a digital world trying to connect. And we only land up saying that yes, we are okay, and the irony to it, no one can see the bitter truth because we are touchless.

A peculiar linguistic quality of such digital poems is their noncompliance with traditional punctuation rules. "If the World was a Movie" is a Covid-19 spoken word poem by Hannah Flores in which she talks about the 'phobia being a toxin in itself, 'driving people to become selfish (Flores, 02:10- 02:15). The poem depicts mankind's inner turmoil and inter-relationships during the Covid-19 pandemic. Another poem, "I'm Okay," by Melissa Paiz, is a lyric that delivers a very subtle question simultaneously a recurrent emotion. The poet calls it an 'automatic response, 'To an extent, it's true because our body is so conditioned to look okay, whether it is on a superficial level or not, that's not the concern (Paiz, 0.06). The poet calls it 'fake it until it feels natural, the poem focuses more on the psychology of the human mind and how we try not to be vulnerable and pretend to be okay, but in reality, we are not (Paiz, 0.56).

The poems' narrative style, symbology, and aggressive delivery provide a real-time experience that may otherwise not be possible if spoken in the physical presence. The anger and urgency conveyed by the use of intonation and voice inflection ('not cancelling hope...love…and life') and the use of silence as a background score as a medium of delivery – compels the viewers to be deliberate, understand, and appreciate the weight that words carry through an audio-visual medium (Flores, 05:05- 05:07). The poet's idea to remain with the audience is, thus, very well accomplished.

In the context of the apparent dichotomy of print-based texts versus e-texts, the present paper is not in favour of any two or against. Instead, the present paper tries to be egalitarian and brings forth the context that things need to transform as per the need of the changing times. The Digital Age has brought significant transition, primarily positive, as it has given a platform and exposure to new thinking without any danger of being neglected or rejected. The paper tries to engender a harmonious relationship between the two leading concepts. This new age has given way to numerous subjective interpretations and opinions stating that e-texts are an imitation of the authentic form of literature. There is undoubtedly a loss of the traditional and purity, but the paper believes that this metamorphosis from real to reel to digital is required

as time demands but certainly not the end of an indigenous form of literature.

This digital form of literature has several pros and cons, such as difficulty in screen navigation and positive aspects being available in every possible environment. There are both sides to it, and the present paper believes that technology brings development and definitely printed text has its own appeal and a sense of satisfaction that cannot be replaced. But it is also proven that literary awareness has increased twofold with the dawn of the digital age. Therefore, the present paper totally agrees that affordability and accessibility to e-literature will give rise to greater awareness and an ever-growing well-read population.

Conclusion

Poetry is an integral part of creativity and, for that matter, literature as well. The paper focused on the different aspects of digital poetry and how it impacts and influences the readers and gives way to other possibilities for poets in this era. The analysis of four audio-visual poems clearly states that this new age has manifested the original thoughts that earlier were not said. More anonymity and intuitive expressions are coming out, which will make the literature more accessible to the coming generation.

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