

Poetry in the Digital Present: Multimodality and/as Self-Reflexivity in Instapoetry

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Abstract

The rise and integration of digital media have brought about a change in our literary landscape, giving birth to a new genre known as platform poetry or social media poetry. With prominent social media poets such as Atticus, Rupi Kaur and Nikita Gill, to list only a few, the genre is blowing new life into poetry in general and reaching a new and broader audience of millions of social media users. Focusing specifically on Instagram poetry, or Instapoetry, this paper explores the genre's prevalent use of multimodality and/as self-reflexivity as well as its potential for community-building. Created specifically for digital 'publication' and consumption, these works often make use of the intermedial and multimodal potential of the websites or applications on which they are posted, combining textual, visual and auditory elements on the one hand and incorporating filters and hashtags on the other. Indeed, scholars have identified this multimodality as a key feature of Instagram poetry, linking it back to the digital and globalised context that gave birth to the genre (Kovalic & Curwood 2019, Paquet 2019). My close reading of selected Instapoems will demonstrate how these poets 1) utilise multimodality to reflect on the affordances of the modes and media they use and 2) blur the boundaries between readership, authorship and curatorship through specific poetic and digital strategies focussing on community-building/activation and interactivity.

Bio

Tara Brusselaers is a pedagogical assistant and PhD candidate at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, working on multimodality in 21st-century Black British poetry. Her research interests include multimodality, intermediality and poetry. Her paper "Breaking the Mould: Multimodality in Jay Bernard's *Surge* and Koleka Putuma's *Collective Amnesia*" has been published in a special issue of the *Journal for Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 47.2 (2024).

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