

Conference CFP

Reading #Instapoetry

University of Glasgow, May 27th, 2020

Deadline for submissions: January 30th, 2020.

Conference organisers: JuEunhae Knox (University of Glasgow) and James Mackay (European University Cyprus)

One of the unexpected side effects of the digital age has been the revival of poetry as a popular art form. Rupi Kaur's collection *Milk and Honey* has become an astonishing worldwide publishing phenomenon, but she is only the most high profile example of a new wave of poets who have bypassed the traditional routes to success. These poets create poetry that is generally short and places heavy emphasis on inspirational messages, and then use various social media platforms, most notably Instagram, to share their work directly with a reading public. Audiences that have traditionally been resistant to literary work have flocked to these writers, and in a few short years this movement – if indeed it should be classified as a movement – has become enormously popular. At the same time, the poetry world has seen something of a backlash against these writers, most notably exemplified by Rebecca Watt's essay "The Cult of the Noble Amateur" (*PN Review*, 2018). Instapoetry has also been largely snubbed by academia for several reasons, not least that much of the poetry itself is resistant to formal analysis on account of its simplicity of message and lack of formal innovation. Although some collections of Instapoems have achieved great success, most Instapoetry is ephemeral, never intended to leave the Instagram platform, and writers are often adolescent or even younger, untaught and not widely read. The sheer volume of Instapoetry, too, is daunting: #poetsofinstagram alone links to nearly nine million poems and poetic images. There is little critical consensus on how to deal with poetry that relies as much for impact on the language of visual design and hypertext/hashtagging as it does on the actual text of the poem.

This will be the first symposium of its kind devoted to academic discussion of these writings and what their content, appearance and functioning in a digital sharing economy can tell us about the current moment. We welcome proposals on any aspect of #instapoetry, including but certainly not limited to:

- Precedents to Instapoetry trends, particularly in popular verse or past literary movements
- Global #instapoetries: Asian, Arabic, Russian and others
- Therapy cultures and the therapeutic value of #instapoems
- Reformulations of race and gender in the #instapoetry feed, particularly given the predominance of young women of colour among prominent Instapoets
- Poetry in material cultures (e.g. Victorian tapestry, seaside postcards or greetings cards) and its relationship to instapoetry
- Digital humanities approaches to the #instapoetry archive
- Analysis of the visual grammar of #instapoems
- De-professionalisation of poetic labour in the digital economy
- Global #instapoetry examples and their function in local cultures
- Tagging culture and poetry sharing

One of our primary aims is to put together the basis for a collection of academic essays on poetry's interaction with social media.

We enthusiastically welcome non-traditional and interdisciplinary approaches. The aim is to open up discussion of this new poetic phenomenon, and we are hoping to have participation from one or more #poetsofinstagram.

Abstracts should be around 250 words, and should include your name, institutional affiliation, and email address. Please send abstracts to instapoetryconference@gmail.com by January 30th, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact JuEunhae at Jueunhae.Knox@glasgow.ac.uk and/or James via j.mackay@euc.ac.cy.