

Representation of Female Identity in Instapoetry: A Study of Works of German Female Poets on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

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Instapoetry is a new form of poetry written on Instagram. Its lines are short, and its words and sentences are quite simple. Initially, instapoetry was not considered a literary work, but over time, many people became popular and gained financial benefits from this digital platform. Instapoetry writers are generally women and young people. In Germany, several women have written poetry on Instagram. Some account names include #kursives_ich, #kursives_du, #aufdenpunkt, poeticademi, enila_writes, _oneironautin, and others. German female poets have addressed themes of gender identity and personal experiences. Viewing women as writers rather than merely readers aligns with Elaine Showalter's concept of gynocriticism. Themes such as self-exploration, love, the body, and digital space serve as evidence of women's transformative processes in asserting their identities amidst social and technological changes. Instapoetry is not only an art form but also a tool for women's liberation and resistance in the modern digital literary landscape. Through a gynocritic approach, Elaine Showalter emphasizes the importance of identifying and understanding women's voices in literary works.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media platforms, such as Instagram, has revolutionized the way individuals express their identities and share creative works. Instagram not only functions as a means of self-presentation that is habitual and authorial, but also as a textual and aesthetic self-presentation (Jürgensen & Weixler, 2024). Visual and textual elements combine on Instagram to form a unique medium for poetic expression, allowing poets to reach a variety of audiences (Roje, 2023). Although, sometimes the term poetry is determined by pragmatic interests, codes, and contexts (Ruckdeschel, 2024).

The term Instapoetry then became common and gained extraordinary popularity and has become part of digital culture (Mackay & Mackay, 2023). Currently, many people produce a lot of texts that are marked as poetry and are popular on Instagram. These texts cover a variety of text forms (Penke, 2021). Although many oppose Instapoetry as part of literature (Aman, 2022), this popularity is unstoppable. The popularity of instapoetry has made a Canadian woman of Indian descent named Rupi Kaur famous. Through Instagram, Kaur shares short poems and illustrations about love, trauma, women, and the immigrant experience that have successfully touched her readers, especially women (Aspany & Murni, 2024). Kaur is not only popular in her country, but she is also known globally (Führer, 2023).

Kaur is not the only person who has gained popularity and financial gain from Instagram thanks to her poems that are loved by many readers. This trend is also happening in Germany, where many people are writing poetry on Instagram, especially women and young people. Female poets have emerged as important contributors who use Instagram as a dynamic space for self-expression. A great example of a German woman who has succeeded with instapoetry is Carina Eckl from Munich. Eckl has two equally active profiles, #kursives_ich and #kursives_du. She creates lyrical conversations and

melancholic lines about herself, women, love and life. Besides Eckl, there are Erika with the account #aufdenpunkt, Denise Sylvia Kuchta (poeticadeni), Enila, Nabilah (_oneironautin), and others. German female poets have addressed the themes of gender identity, and personal experiences in a way that resonates with a global audience.

Many German women who express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences on instapoetry are interesting to study. There is little research that specifically examines how German female poets use this medium to redefine female identity. Seeing women as writers rather than readers is inseparable from Elaine Showalter's concept of gynocriticism. Gynocriticism emphasizes the study of women's writing as a distinct literary tradition. The focus is on women's experiences and how women articulate their subjectivity (Plate, 2016).

Understanding women's literature requires an appreciation of the cultural, social, and historical contexts that shape women's experiences, rather than adapting male models or escaping from a literary world that tends to be patriarchal (Islam, 2020). Showalter believes that women's literary traditions are built from idealized feminine images and values, rather than built from patriarchal oppression that seeks to identify women as other (Nouri, & Aziz, 2015).

This study aims to analyze the work of German female poets on Instagram, as their writing often reflects highly personal and female perspectives on issues such as love and identity. Complementing this feminist perspective, Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation provides a broader cultural and semiotic framework for understanding how meaning is constructed and communicated. Hall's emphasis on the role of language, symbols and media in shaping representations of identity is particularly relevant in the context of Instagram.

Applying Hall's theory allows this study to explore how German female poets use the ease of Instagram to construct and disseminate representations of female identity, and how these representations challenge and conform to prevailing cultural norms. Previous research has highlighted the potential of Instagram as a platform for developing feminist discourse and amplifying marginalized voices. This research highlights the transformative potential of digital platforms but often overlooks the specific contributions of German female poets. By focusing on these demographics, the current research offers a nuanced exploration of how cultural and linguistic specificities shape representations of female identity in digital poetry.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, specifically a content analysis of Instapoetry posts from prominent female poets on Instagram. The sample for this study consists of Instagram accounts of prominent female poets who are active in the Instapoetry. The research focus on posts published within one year to ensure a contemporary understanding of the themes and representations in the digital space. A total of 10 posts are randomly selected from each poet's account, yielding a total of 50 posts for analysis. The collected posts are analyzed to identify recurring themes related to female identity.

The analysis is guided by research questions, how is female identity portrayed in the instapoetry? What aspects of womanhood are emphasized, and how are expressed through language and visuals? What are the dominant themes?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gynocritics emphasizes the importance of identifying and understanding women's voices in literary works. Gynocritics focuses on female writers as autonomous subjects, not just objects within a patriarchal framework. In the context of German Instapoetry by poets such as #kursives_ich, aufdenpunkt, herz_ausbruch, poeticadeni, enila_writes, and _oneironautin, we can see how women's identities are represented through the poems they produce on digital platforms.

Based on the selected instapoetry, several main themes emerge that are relevant to the study of gynocritics, namely the exploration of women's self and subjectivity, love and sadness, body, and resilience.

The theme of women's self-exploration and subjectivity can be found in poems such as "*Ich fuehle mich frei von den Ketten deiner Erwartungen*". This instapoetry expresses women's freedom from oppressive social expectations. The poet states that she has the right to define herself, going beyond the limitations given by society. Then, there is "*When my wife is surrounded by the wind, the wind lies in me*". This poem reflects the struggle of women to define themselves outside of restrictive social norms. Poet breaks down the boundaries of social expectations, emphasizing the autonomy of body and mind. In the context of gynocritics, this instapoetry reflects the stage of women's "rebellion" against the patriarchal worldview that has long dominated the representation of their identity.

Many women write instapoetry that describes love, loss, and introspection. For example, "*Ich vermiss uns nicht mehr, aber manchmal traem ich noch ein paar Traenen*". This poem explores a deep sense of loss, but is accompanied by acceptance. This reflects how women interpret their emotional experiences within the framework of introspection. Meanwhile, the poem "*Du hast mein Herz in die finsternis verbannt und aus deinen Erinnerungen gerissen*" is a sadness that is expressed and reflects women's struggles to overcome emotional trauma. Then, the poem "*Ich wollte mein Herz nicht mehr wie einen Anker an Menschen haengen, die nur auf der Durchreise sind*" uses metaphors to show how women begin to avoid emotional dependence, as a form of self-liberation. In gynocritics, these poems describe transformation through pain. Here, emotional experience is used as a medium to express the depth of women's subjectivity. Gynocritics sees this as a way for women to rewrite their emotional narratives, highlighting personal perspectives that are often ignored. The body is also not free from something that is highlighted in poetry written by German women. Poems such as "*Wenn ich dich liebe, gehoere ich ganz dir. Aber trotzdem gehoere ich niemanden wie mir*" reflect women's relations with their bodies as a form of self-recognition. This poem reflects a claim to oneself even though involved in a relationship. This is a form of recognition of women's identity as autonomous entities. While the poem "*Wenn du meinen Koerper nur als Fehler siehst, liegt der Fehler bei dir*" emphasizes the relationship between the body and perspective, this poem claims autonomy over women's bodies, against objectification and external judgment. In the concept of

gynocritics, this refers to the phase in which women begin to claim authority over their bodies, breaking out of patriarchal control. This understanding is reinforced by the metaphor of the body as a space for reflection and resistance.

The poem "*Bleib soft, wenn die Welt um dich sich droht zu verhaerten*" highlights the importance of remaining gentle and empathetic in this harsh world. The poem "*Manchmal ist es wichtig, dass uns Dinge brechen, denn dann kann ich alle Teile, die ich behalten will, zu einem neuen Ich zusammenstecken*" is very interesting. This poem reflects the resilience of women in facing adversity and rebuilding themselves. These two poems are the main themes in women's works, which often describe resistance to dehumanization. Women's language also plays an important role in gynocritics. In the poem "*Mein Gras ist gruen genug, kein Grund, dass ich dir deins neide*" there is a metaphor that shows how women poets use language as a tool of resistance. The poet uses language as a tool of resistance, emphasizing that women have the capacity to be satisfied with themselves without having to compare themselves with others. The free form and repetitive style in these poems reflect women's freedom in processing structures. Examples of poems such as "*Loslassen bedeutet dass man danach die eigenen leeren Haende spueren muss*" highlight women's transformative experiences through loss and relief. This structure is simple but meaningful, reflecting women's experiences in dealing with loss. Language becomes a tool to create emotional intimacy. In gynocritics, this is an important step towards recovering language that has long been hegemonized by patriarchy.

CONCLUSION

Instapoetry by German female poets on Instagram are a modern manifestation of female identity in literature. By analyzing these works through Elaine Showalter's concept of gynocritics, we can understand how women create new spaces to express their subjectivity. Themes such as self-exploration, love, body, and digital space are evidence of women's transformative process in asserting their identity amidst social and technological changes. Instapoetry is not only an art form, but also a tool for women's liberation and resistance in the modern digital literary landscape. Elaine Showalter, through a gynocritic approach, emphasizes the importance of identifying and understanding women's voices in literary works. Gynocritics focuses on female writers as autonomous subjects, not just objects within a patriarchal framework. From here, we can see how women's identities are represented through the poems produced on Instagram.

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