



Bards of Social Media: Metaphysical Conceits in Facebook Poetry

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ABSTRACT: In earlier times poetry was not much attempted by common people. They did not have a medium to express the verses of their heart but today people have various means to express their ideas and views through poetry. Social media plays as the major medium and Facebook is most common and most used social media. Metaphysical conceits are the ingenious fanciful comparisons made in poetry which is the hallmark of Metaphysical poetry. In this paper twenty poems taken from Facebook are studied in depth and an evaluation of the metaphysical conceits in these poems is done.

KEYWORDS : metaphysical poetry, metaphysical conceits, facebook, poetry

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I. BARDS OF SOCIAL MEDIA: METAPHYSICAL CONCEITS IN FACEBOOK POETRY

Poetry was not a cup of tea for people in the ancient times. Very few came up with their poetry and got it published whereas the majority remained quiet or perhaps didn't dare to take their poems to the forefront. But in this twenty first century people have developed so much that they shed the inhibitions and dare to express themselves through every possible medium. Social media acts as a great medium for the people and in it Facebook plays a major role as it is the most accessed among the social media. In this paper entitled **BARDS OF SOCIAL MEDIA: METAPHYSICAL CONCEITS IN FACEBOOK POETRY**, twenty poems taken from Facebook are studied in depth and an evaluation of the metaphysical conceits in these poems is done.

Metaphysical conceits are the hallmark of Metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical poetry dealt with beyond physical conceits. The term "metaphysical poets" was coined by the critic Samuel Johnson to describe a group of 17th century English poets whose works were characterized by the use of conceits that were beyond physical in nature. The major metaphysical poets are John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell and Henry Vaughan. John Donne established the metaphysical style in the 17th century.

Conceit means an ingenious or fanciful comparison or metaphor. A metaphysical conceit is a complex literary device that makes a comparison between the spiritual aspect of a person and a physical thing in the world. It is a kind of extended metaphor which may be prominent throughout a poem. The sensory perceptions of the reader is connected to the abstract ideas. It is an unconventional metaphor between objects that appear to be unrelated. It is an imaginative leap made to compare two unlike things and bringing out similarities out of them. Major example of a metaphysical conceit is in the poem 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' by John Donne where he compares the souls of a couple to the hands of an architect's compass:

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.
And though it is in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home. [1]

In these lines, John Donne compares the two lovers to the two hands of a compass. Donne says that when he moves around the world his partner remains still like the fixed foot of the compass but leans as the poet moves. It is only this co-operation that can make the circle complete and makes life meaningful. Another notable metaphysical conceit is found in Donne's poem 'The Flea' where the poet says that being unable to consummate their love, their love gets consummated in the blood of the flea that bites and sucks the blood of the

two of them. The flea unite their blood with a bite and so the woman need not feel guilty for having sex with him.

The Facebook poet Orok Duke in his poem 'Duties' says he writes poem and passion takes over and he fills his poems with village proverbs and thus projects his culture beyond the "foreign cobwebs". Here the poet compares the foreign invasion and conversion to "cobwebs" which is metaphysical:

I write in verse and passion takes over
I savour it and then recover,
Imbue my lines with my village proverbs
And project my culture beyond foreign cobwebs. [2]

The poet like a prophet says that after a storm surely the days of calmness will come and God will bless us and shower His abundant blessings. The poet declares how he will remain unchanged, however life turns the circumstances. He metaphorically compares the adversaries who keep soaking the society in the pool of hatred to a snake which is metaphysical and says that the offspring of a snake always have a long tail and such people who chooses the path of hatred can never bring about the progress of the town.

David De'Vere in his poem "I've been shot by love" narrates how he fall in love:

I've been shot by love
And I am not sure
If it's a damn curse
Or blessing from above
Is it the prick of a cactus
Or the sensual touch
Of a soft velvet glove. [3]

In these lines he says he has been shot by love, the Cupid strike him and he is unsure how it feels. He is in a dilemma whether it is a curse or a blessing from above; whether it is the prick of a cactus or the sensual touch of a soft velvet glove. Here he compares love to the prick of a cactus which is very much metaphysical.

The poem 'Infidels' by Orok Duke tells about how the two lovers feel about their bodily desires. They say they must not call each other home and if they do they must disguise their voices. The lover tells about his dream of consummating their love. The comparison of their liaison to that of a phoenix is metaphysically presented in these lines:

I wish I knew all the days
That I would have you my way
Our liaison acts like the phoenix
In stolen moments that we may fix. [4]

Phoenix is a mythical bird that rises from its ashes. Their cooperation and communication that binds them or thickens their bond rises like a phoenix and keeps their relationship alive.

Renton de Alwis in his poem 'Childhood' brings in the colours and innocence of childhood. In the following lines the poet makes a comparison of the questions asked by the children to rivers which is quite metaphysical:

Where questions are like rivers
With an endless flow to the sea
Where rubbing hands mean friendship
Tugged fingers say you're cross. [5]

The poem 'Smile' by BrindaBalaSreenivasan presents the picture of a child whose parents are going through divorce. The child smiles at its father and that smile took him to court once again probably for the case of custody. A metaphysical comparison of the smile is made to a shimmering piece of coal:

The smile, no doubt,
Took him and her to court once again
The smile was a shimmering piece of coal
Laced with innocence. [6]

The child instead of surrendering to it's parents decisions is set to stretch his arms and move on with the power of his own wisdom. Usually children remain under the pressure of parent's decisions and succumbs to it but here the child remains quiet unaffected being in his own world of innocence.

The poem 'Kochi Of Course' begins with a metaphysical comparison of the city to a beautiful woman with long eyelashes:

The city flutters her long lashes
The summer and intermittent rains
Have given way to cooler days of
Thin fog. [7]

In this poem, the poet describes the metropolitan city, Kochi. She describes how the summer and the rains in between gives way to cooler days of thin fog. The boxes of grapes from Ooty adorns the fruit stalls and

juice parlours. The lips are filled with pomegranate juice. The city fulfills the needs of the wandering people referred to as “globalized vagabond gypsies”. The city remains quiet in the afternoons and dreams about the ships. The beauty of Kochi is completed with the reference to the harbours which is characteristic of Kochi. The poem ‘Marina’ by BrindaBalaSreenivasan is the poet’s words of love for her friend whom she lovingly calls ‘Marina’. People often refers to their friends as “childhood sweethearts” but the poet instead would like to refer themselves as rivers which is metaphysical; comparison of rivers to the abstract term friendship:

You and I Marina were never childhood sweethearts or teens in love
We were two rivers, running parallel
Unseen to each other...divided by
A massive landscape...
Years went by...the benevolent landscape lifted
Her skirt knee-length
The rivers ran into each other...Marina and I. [8]

Here we also see the metaphysical comparison of the landscape to a girl who lifts her skirt.

The poem ‘Seduction’ by BrindaBalaSreenivasan presents the amorous plea of the lover to allow him to touch her which she abhors. The woman looks at him with disbelief. According to her he tries to charm everyone and compares him to a stallion which represents his sexual inclinations:

He who charms everyone with his poise
Now sweats like a stallion. [9]

BrindaBalaSreenivasan in her another poem ‘Fishelicious’ takes her eyes from the book and imagines about the making of a fish curry:

The claypot when swirled gently
Should move like a ballet dancer
In a slow motioned swirl. [10]

Usually a metaphysical conceit is often used to compare humans as we see in Donne’s ‘Valediction: forbidding Mourning’ the two hands of a compass are used to compare two lovers. Here the vice versa happens! A human, the ballet dancer and her moves are used to compare the clay pot and its swirling. The poet also compares the proper mixing of the ingredients to taste as perfectly as the first kiss. In another poem, ‘Soliloquy of a City’ she compares the city to an old ship:

I am the City, the ill-planned Urban jungle!
I never pause, but move on,
Like an old ship too steeped in her pride.[11]

The poet in the poem ‘In an evening shaped like a boat’ compares the evening to a boat and compared the daybreak to dewdrop that hang like a chandelier:

The delightful daybreak is carved out
Like a giant dewdrop
It hangs down from the lowest rain cloud
Like a chandelier! [12]

She also compares the flower aster’s shedding its petals to the moths shedding its wings in the poem ‘The Warmth of Elation’. [13] In the poem ‘You are like shades in a painting’ BrindaBalaSreenivasan compares the one whom she is addressing as shades in a painting comparing the shades to different moods. [14] Priya K Nair in her poem ‘I had a teacher’ refers her teacher to “feet of clay” for being a bad teacher. [15] In the poem ‘Park view’ Duke Orok compares humans to germs and says that in the unified chasm of differences, human beings are liberated like germs.[16] In his poem ‘Unity’ brings in the image of an infant mosquito and makes quiet an unusual comparison:

What the infant mosquito called
Human applause,
Was the sum of the failed
Attempts to kill it. [17]

In his poem ‘The Spirit of the Dancer’ he talks about the dance movements and compares the moves to “cat-like motions” and also to the “mating dances of the peacock”. [18] And in the poem ‘In the Heat of the Night’ he presents the heart and spirit of the night. He compares the bees and birds sucking the flowers and trees for the nectar to rape:

But the flowers and trees do not
Feel the daylight stress
Of being pestered or raped by
The bees and birds,
Who incessantly poke and prod

Them for nectar.” [19]

ApuMondel in his poem ‘The Inside of our Skin’ compares the pores of the skin to drains:

Maybe our skin is tightly fit

Keeping out worries of others

The pores are clogged like drains. [20]

Clive Norman in his poem ‘Picked from the Dust’ compares body to a simple vessel for his “in-descendant soul”. [21] Social media and very specifically Facebook plays as a great platform for the common people to express their poetic skills. People without getting entangled with so much of literary criteria like meter, rhyming scheme and all showcases their inner thoughts in the form of verses. The figuring of metaphysical conceits in these poems proves that the poetic skill and most of all imagination is not absent in such online poetry. Thus the Bards of the Social media continues to elate us with their metaphysical conceits.

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