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21st Century Poetic Trends in Britain and America: Glimpsing at the Poetic Crafts of Simon Armitage and Billy Collins as Sampler CaseStudy

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Abstract
The focusing feature of 21st-Century British poetry could be diversity and inclusion which means that poetic arena reflects the multicultural and multiethnic nature of Britain, with poets from various backgrounds and experiences contributing to the canon. Then, it often addresses real-world problems like poverty, climate change, technology and human society, concerns regarding mental health, and reflections on the concerns of the 21st century.Similarly, 21st-century American poetry is diverse, characterized by a mix of traditional and experimental forms, with free verse being particularly popular. Many poets engage with contemporary issues, reflect personal experiences, and the complexities of identity. In this context, two emerging poets viz one from Britain named Simon Armitage and the other from America named Billy Collins have been critically focused here with a notional perspective of experimental analysis of case studies. The aim is to see if such poets carry the pace of the time in different manners or not. While contemporary poets identify themselves with certain social issues, or identify themselves with the trending social movements, these two poets however look to be normal and natural in their appeals focusing on the delicate emotions and imaginations associated with common perceptions of life in its organic form. Their poems available in the internet platforms show that they are still in pursuit of life and learn lessons from a good many daily life experiences and subtle choices of activities of life unique to them. Evidently, they can be representative poets of a common mass, and not the propagandists of trends or movements.

Key words: Diversity, personal experiences, delicate emotions, common perceptions, subtle choices, representative poets

I. Introduction

While talking about British and American poetry, it makes us delve deep into the realms of art, delicate thoughts of love and lyric, remaking history with verbal music, philosophy of life and beauty nature. The great musical masters ranging from Geoffrey Chaucer to William Shakespeare, John Milton and John Donne have left indelible imprint of the art of versification transforming the genre from mechanical composition to a passion of artistic embellishment. Carrying forth the legacy, John Dryden, Alexander Popelike satirists establish the reforming power of poetry in human society. The poets of the Romantic movements are an evolution of self of each and every human being those who are sensitive to natural feelings. They manifest the thoughts, beliefs and artistic values of every human being. The reformative tone and the increasing consciousness regarding Nature develops subtle eco-consciousness along with a super and sublime sense of aesthetic relish. Right from the Romantic Revival to the end of the Victoria era, British poetry is simply incredible. They transcend the poetic predicament from self to souls and revert back to the intricacies of nature both internal and external displaying notions of reality and fancy in diverse forms that accommodate utopias in themselves. The legacy is superimposed with the changing facets of the cohort as the world wars, materialistic illusion and de-natured passion of so-called modern human become a reality. Here comes the thundering voices of T.S.Eliot, W.B.Yeats, and Wilfred Owen like advocates of poetic sensibility those who not only inspire but also usher a change in the perception of the world from an in-depth commitments towards survival which embodies anthropomorphic empathy. Worth saying, the stream of American poetry was more of a passion of exploration of self and the surrounding world that embodies the glimpses of soul-force. The thought of freedom in line with the growth of plants, animals, the natural phenomena in the poetry of Walt Whitman, R.W.Emerson, and Robert Frost transcend the boundary across cultures

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and beliefs to prove themselves of possessing greater human value. Revolution was a spirit in quite a number of such American poets engrossing and endorsing the tenets of democracy and human relationship. The music of emotion is set into onomatopoeic tune in the writings of Emily Dickinson whereas Maya Angelou and Louise Gluck are recognized as the unmistakable voices of the human world glisten with austere beauty very often exploring the path of the inner recesses of human self. By the way, the poetic-self rejoices over a profound sense heralding "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" and "Miles to go before I sleep." Thus, poetry is a passion making us endeavor to inspire emotion and perspire to "see into the life of things." This seems to be the track of the spectrum of the British and American poets of the 21st century as well.

1.1 21st Century British Poetry: An Overview

Notable Poets of this continuing era so far are Carol Ann Duffy (1955-), a Scottish poet known for her playful and experimental style. Duffy was the first woman and the first Scottish poet to be appointed poet aureate. Simon Armitage (1963-), is a highly acclaimed poet and playwright, Armitage's work often explores themes of memory, history, and social commentary. Warsan Shire (1988-) is a Somali-British poet. Her work addresses issues of displacement, identity, and the refugee experience.Poetry of Penelope Shuttle (1947-) explores themes of grief, loss, and the female experience, offering a unique perspective within the British tradition.Peter Scupham (1933-2022) acts as a bridge between traditional and contemporary poetry ashis works emphasize careful craftsmanship and historical awareness.

Such a host of contemporary poets establish some of the remarkable trends like most of them usefree verse predominantly allowing greater flexibility and experimentation. Spoken word poetry has gained popularity as a means of connecting with audiences and addressing social issues. Versification art increasingly addresses social and political concerns, with poets taking a stand on issues of injustice and inequality. Similarly, visual poetry incorporates images and design elements becomes more common as a way of exploring complex ideas and emotions.Besides traditional forms, some poets explore new styles, techniques, and mediums, including free verse, spoken word, and visual poetry. Some also emphasize the physical and emotional aspects of human life, moving away from purely intellectual approaches whereas some others reflect on a wide range of themes, including personal experiences, historical events, social justice, and the natural world.

1.2 21st Century American Poetry at a Glance

Like the British poets, dominant in 21st-century American poetry, free verse prioritizes natural flow and avoids traditional meter and rhyme. Some poets push boundaries, experimenting with language, syntax, and structure. They explore their unique personal experiences, identity, and the complexities of being in the 21st century.

Notable Poets of the contemporary American world include Sherman Alexie (1966-) is known for his insightful native American perspectives and storytelling. Claudia Rankine(1963-) explores themes of race, class, and cultural identity. Then, Kevin Young (1970-)is a prolific and influential poet who engages with themes of race, history, and memory. Elizabeth Alexander is a similar trending poet with diverse academic haul known for her diverse range of themes. Billy Collins is a popular poet known for his accessible and engaging voice.Poems exploring themes of race, gender, and cultural identity, such as those by Claudia Rankine and Elizabeth Alexander. Poems addressing contemporary issues like war, inequality, and environmental concerns, often found in the work of poets like Sherman Alexie and Kevin Young. Poetry that challenges conventional forms and explores new ways of using language, often seen in the work of poets like Kenneth Goldsmith and Juliana Spahr.

II. Poetic Crafts of Simon Armitage and Billy Collins as Sampler Analysis

2. 1 Simon Armitage's Retaining Normalcy in Poetry

"Prose fills a space, like a liquid poured in from the top, but poetry occupies it, arrays itself in formation, sets up camp and refuses to budge." (Armitage, *Walking Home: A Poet's Journey*).

Simon Armitage was named UK Poet Laureate in 2019. The recipient of numerous honors and awards, Armitage was named the Millennium Poet in 1999 happens to be a Fellow of the Royal Society for Literature in 2004, and a Commander of the British Empire in 2010. In 2014 he was awarded the Cholmondeley Award.Known for his deadpan delivery, Armitage is formally assured and his darkly comic poetry is influenced by the work of Ted Hughes, W.H. Auden, and Philip Larkin. His poetry is often influenced by music, a connection he pursues in his nonfiction book Gig (2008). Armitage is the author of numerous collections of poetry, including *Magnetic Field: The Marsden Poems*

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(2020); *Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic* (2019); *The Unaccompanied (2017)*; *Paper Aeroplane: Selected Poems 1989–2014* (2014); *Seeing Stars* (2010); *Tyrannosaurus Rex Versus the Corduroy Kid* (2006). The poetic search of Armitage can be represented in the following lines:

"This misfortune you find is of your own manufacture.
Keep hold of what you have, it will harm no other,
for hatred comes home to the hand that chose it."(Armitage, "The Death of King Arthur: A New Verse Translation")

In his "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations," he says that thorough poetry, he can feel the depth of the music of life. As he starts "swimming though the bricks" of poetry, he also gets inspired by the "Aeolian harp whispers alluringly" leading him to the thoughts beyond all these music and places him in "silence." Although to become a poet or the reviewer of poetry, one needs to be highly sensible and profoundly philosophical, he finds that it provides him "contentment." This contentment cannot be understood by a human of the so-called world of worries and anxieties. It cannot be measured in terms of financial benefit because the world of a poem is different from the world of a banker or business tycoon like "a meteor showerthrough the infinity of dark spacebetween his world and mine."

"And wonder, dread and war
have lingered in that land
where loss and love in turn
have held the upper hand." (Armitage, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight")

His "Avalon" is in Arthurian legend, a mystical island, often depicted as a paradise or the "isle of the dead," where King Arthur and other heroes are said to have gone after death. The name also means "island of apples". It is a key location in Arthurian legend, representing a hidden and mystical place of healing, rest, and sometimes, even immortality.The name itself, meaning "island of apples" in Celtic languages, suggests a place of abundance and perhaps even a connection to the ancient world's belief in a paradise.Legends suggest that King Arthur was taken to Avalon after his final battle, symbolizing his transition to a realm beyond mortal existence. It can be interpreted as a symbol of the afterlife, a place of rest, or even a source of mystical power.

The poet gives a reference to the city of San Francisco to say that keeping confined to the "asylum gates are locked and chained" cannot stop the "wandering thoughts" from moving round to see the tramps, to "overshoot Gloucesterby several million strides, having walked on water." The city that has "sad foghorns and clapboard ziggurats"; and "cadged cigarettes." It is the "city of pelicans, fish bones and flaking paint," and "underfoot cable-car wires."Whatever "scour and purge" him"inside and out" leads his mind to "still phosphoresces with lightning" strikes and that makes him "straddle each earthquake." From dawn to dusk, the poet gets inspired to see the goings-on of the activities like he watches "boats heading at home with the day's catch" at the Golden Gate Bridge or "sense the waterfall at the end of the journey." The context of the poem makes him remember Ivor Gurney (1890-1937), a British poet suffered from bipolar disorder and stayed in psychiatric hospitals.

"The Unaccompanied" talks about the unique experience of having the company of sounds and emotions in a dark night while walking along "a river, toward a suspension bridge,"where he is able to hear "a tune" which turns to become "a song" "being sungby chorusing men, all pewter-haired or bald," and were looking like attending a function at a hotel. They were singing songs "about mills and mines and a great war"; "about mermaid brides and solid gold hills, songs from broken hymnbooks and cheesy films." This seems to be transcended to an illusion of the echoes of the songs of the generations back making him profoundly thoughtful and feeling nostalgic all the way.

"The Unthinkable" is about how "A huge purple door washed up in the bay overnight" making the poet deeply meditative as it washed away the hope of a family. Then, "There was some plan to use the door as a jettyor landing-stage, but it was all bullshit, the usual idle talk." The poet only recollects the memory or laments over the "big ideas or carpentry skills" and feels as if the artist-cum-carpenter is seen "sailing out" in a small boat "with tell-tale flashes of almost certainly purple paint."

"Camera Obscura"is about an "Eight-year-old sitting in Bramhall's field" and the poet attempts at a kaleidoscopic observation of life through her. He finds her "shoes scuffed from kicking a stone." She can manage to walk "back from school." The poet really enjoys the way the school girl remains with her mother all the way. She remains with her mother when she comes walks to the shopping mall with her purse and "shopping bag, a boiling of peas, rags of meat, or a tail of fish." She also does her chore which is witnessed by the girl. The poet had a gaze at her until she walks "On Old Mount Road" and looks smaller in size and then vanishes from sight in order to become a vision.

"Zoom!" is a panoramic picturesque portrayal as the poet observes the expanding views

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of a street that "begins as a house, an end terrace," and then it leads to an "an avenue" which runs "past the Mechanics' Institute," leading to the main road and then the town with its physically spread sketches of the "Planning Acts," up to "the green belts,". Then, it is spread all long to "a nation,hemisphere," and the universe finally. Just like the map of Google earth, from a house to the earth, it looks smaller, even smaller until one zooms to see a place on its 3-D rendering where the earth looks like a "billiard ball" stood as a neighbor to another planet in the galaxy. The appearance of the planet is small, but the feeling of the poet is heavier as he realizes the mysteries and miracles of vision. In the heat of the poetic perception, when he responds to the queries of people regarding this miracle of vision, he credits the gift of words which can make us express everything that we see and envision as well.

"Homework" for a child is as good as drawing pictures and sketches. This makes him or her feel funny by drawing "a beard and mustacheon the face of the moonwith a red pen." It may be the sketch of the hill, or an old teacher with power glasses" who "wipes her lenses with a soft cloth." This is not only funny but also an art of imitation.

For Armitage, poetry and music are the wealth of nations. As he perceives, poetry provides the greater contentment which cannot be measured by wealth and money. Referring to Arthurian legend, he brings forth the sense of plenitude which presupposes his notion of positivity in existence. The scenic beauty of towns and cities are always a part of his writings. Feeling inspired with the imaginary beings like mermaid and walking along the river bank in search of life is a passion in him. What's more, in every sense of art, he beautifies the creative art. In some of his poems, he appreciates the craftspeople befitting his sense of delicate thoughts. This is incredible that poets, painters and craftsmen are all the same although the outward manifestation is different. Very often, he seems to observe the daily chore with minute details and glorify them as the arts of life. Even, the activities of a child with all its childishness are highly artistic for him.

2.2Billy Collins: Journeying to the Unknown

Dubbed "the most popular poet in America" by Bruce Weber in the New York Times, Billy Collins is famous for conversational, witty poems that welcome readers with humor but often slip into quirky, tender, or profound observation on the everyday, reading and writing, and poetry itself. Collins was born in 1941 in New York City. In 1975 he cofounded the Mid-Atlantic Review with Michael Shannon. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the New York Foundation for the Arts and has taught at Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence, and Lehman College, City University of New York, where he is a Distinguished Professor. He is also Senior Distinguished Fellow of the Winter Park Institute in Florida, and a faculty member at the State University of New York-Stonybrook. The power of his poetic lines can be played with a greater realization as he says:

"I could feel the day offering itself to me,
and I wanted nothing more
than to be in the moment-but which moment?
Not that one, or that one, or that one,"(Collins, *The Trouble with Poetry - And Other Poems*)

Collins's level of fame is almost unprecedented in the world of contemporary poetry: his readings regularly sell out, and he received a six-figure advance when he moved publishers in the late 1990s. He served two terms as the US poet laureate, from 2001-2003, was New York State poet laureate from 2004-2006, and is a regular guest on National Public Radio programs. In 2002, as US poet laureate, Collins was asked to write a poem commemorating the first anniversary of the fall of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center on September 11. The reading was in front of a joint session of Congress held outside of Washington, DC.

Though Collins published throughout the 1980s, it was his fourth book, Questions about Angels (1991), that propelled him into the literary spotlight. The collection was selected by poet Ed Hirsch for the 1990 National Poetry Series. Collins's subsequent work has been regularly lauded for its ability to connect with readers. *Discussing Picnic, Lightning* (1998) and its predecessor, *The Art of Drowning* (1995), John Taylor noted that Collins's skillful, smooth style and inventive subject matter "helps us feel the mystery of being alive." Taylor added: "Rarely has anyone written poems that appear so transparent on the surface yet become so ambiguous, thought-provoking, or simply wise once the reader has peered into the depths."

"all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means." (Collins, "The Apple that Astonished Paris")

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Taking off Emily Dickinson's Clothes (2000) was the first Collins collection published outside the US. It selected work from his previous four books and was met with great acclaim in the UK. Poet and critic Michael Donaghy called Collins a "rare amalgam of accessibility and intelligence," and A.L. Kennedy described the volume as containing "great verse, moving, intelligent and darkly funny." *Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems* (2001), the US version of Collins's selected, had a tumultuous journey to print. The story, which garnered a front-page slot in the New York Times, originally cast Collins's first publishers, the University of Pittsburgh Press, in an unfair light, accusing them of refusing to grant rights for poems requested by Random House for inclusion in Sailing Alone Around the Room. However, it later emerged that Random House had begun to produce the book without first securing rights from Pitt Poetry Press, a highly unusual move for a major publishing house to make. Dennis Loy Johnson reported on the controversy for Salon, noting that "ultimately it was Random House, not Pitt, that chose to delay the publication of Collins's selected volume." The battle between Random House and the University of Pittsburgh Press was public and uncharacteristic of the world of poetry publishing. When Sailing Alone Around the Room was finally published, in 2001, it was met with enthusiastic reviews and brisk sales.Collins's next books *Nine Horses: Poems (2002), The Trouble with Poetry (2005), Ballistics (2008), Horoscopes for the Dead (2011), Aimless Love (2013), and The Rain in Portugal (2016)* have continued to offer poems that mix humor with insight. Talking about Collins' poetry is an experience of a transcending to be a profound thinker.

"In Afterlife," the poet draws a sharp ironical contrast between daily life activities in the world in which everybody is engulfed as compared to the dead who is ready to set for his or her journey to the unknown. The pictorial presentation of the life after death has been done quite amusingly as he says that after death, you are free enough to go anywhere you could not when you were alive. All your "imaginable directions according to private belief," could be realized. As the prejudiced thoughts go on like after death, some will enjoy the heavenly comforts, "join celestial choir"; others can join air-conditioned rooms full of food and chorus girls; whereas some others have to face the judgement; and the rest people have to go hell.The poet has a proposition that some would also enter into animal lives such as "eagles and leopards,". Some also make efforts to start a new simpler life. Finally, some look for some better alternatives which may have vague propositions too.

In "The Art of Drowning," in a poem of different taste as the poet finds that human being finds himself/herself involved in "the act of submergence" although it is panic-stricken and desperate moments of life. While "falling off a steamship or being swept away in rush of flood waters," The irony is that there is no time to have "a more leisurely review" of this sudden occurrence for which nobody was prepared. There is no time to think about your "album of photograph" to see how you had celebrated the festive occasions. Ironically enough, "your whole existence going off in your face." But, if you survive the accident, you feel the presence of a "Light" that helped you before your light is put out. This is how the poet has a profound belief in God or the spiritual force that saves us from drowning as a metaphor of accident in life. But, if you have no chance of getting survived, then "the tide will take you" and water of the lake will accept you to put your body somewhere down the bottom of its bed, and then forget about it.

"Books" represent the philosophy of library. They are the stock of knowledge and language. It is highly thought provoking to see the books present in the shelves of the library as ever helping the leaners and academicians in many ways. Not only this, they represent the thoughts and ideologies, the history and culture of a period. Present in an alphabetical order, they exhibit the talent of the litterateurs, the philosophers and the moralists. There are family genealogies of writers like "Dumas next to his son, each one stitched into his private coat." The readers have their own styles and perceptions of the books; their own world and the world of the books; and one reads for the others to listen. The poet can "hear the voice of his mother reading" to him some animal stories. The book shelves make him feel the walls of knowledge, one after another "straining in circle to light to find more of light." These books can shift us to an imaginary world of "shadowing forest," "brown birds flutter down" and "the voice of the boy and his sister receding into the perilous woods."

"Aimless Love" is about how the poet falls in love with a wren, and then a mouse. He feels the need of a seamstress, then a bowl of broth. He feels that the best kind of love is to be away from daily needs and to remain silent. He would like to love the chestnut, the jazz cap, the miniature orange tree, the clean white shirt, the hot evening shower, and the highway that cuts across Florida. He would love the conditions of human life randomly. Especially, the close contacts of nature like the nest of the wren which is bent upon the water of the lake. But, all it

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was like a dream for him as he realizes that he is burst into the imagination about nature.

"The Best Cigarette" is a poem of different taste as we know a cigarette cannot be best in terms of health hazards. But, as a matter of fact, the poet thinks about it as an object providing relaxation in his works. He loves the rings of smoke that touches "the chandelier"; or blows up "on a white beach"; or sitting at the kitchen over a cup of coffee. While travelling as a passenger in a locomotive the poet would send "puffs of smoke" and get its pleasure.

His focus on life with its colour and varieties; worries and anxieties; and the tapestry of thoughts of the reality makes him exceptional. We find him journeying to the unknown through his viewless poetic wings.One of his observations was transformation of self through submergence. Apparently, this becomes a metaphor of the sudden experiences of life when one has hardly any time to think and plan. Thus, it may bring destruction and reconstruction of beliefs and values. He has a deep respect for libraries because such house of collection and preservation of books speak of the knowledge accumulated by human being across centuries. The book rags help make the indefatigable knowledge stand firm guiding human beings for generations together. In addition, love for the worldly elements not necessarily human, maybe the ways animals and birds live life is an attraction for him too.

III. Critical Evaluation and Conclusion

Ken Powel on reading Armitage's poems says, "His poems are direct, accessible, deep and, very often, quite funny. He's a great gateway into poetry for young, uninterested minds." (writeoutloudblog.com). In fact, in the opinion of Kate Simpson, *Zoom!* (1989) and *Magnetic Field: The Marsden Poems*, "are like cardinal directions, pointing back to the landscape and inviting readers to gather in a geographical amphitheater."

Similarly, reviewing *Nine Horses*, Mary Jo Salter commented that Billy Collins's "originality derives, it seems, from the marriage of a loopy, occasionally surreal imagination … to an ordinary life observed in just a few ordinary words." She adds that "one appeal of the typical Collins poem is that it's less able to help you memorize it than to help you to remember, for a little while anyway, your own life." But Collins's emphasis on writing—and writing "ordinary life" at that—can, for some critics, make his poetry seem pedestrian or one-note. However, many readers find Collins a source of warmth, wit, and surprisingly sure technique, and reviewers have consistently noted how Collins's poems manifest a literal concern for their readers. Poet-critic Richard Howard has said of Collins: "He has a remarkably American voice…that one recognizes immediately as being of the moment and yet has real validity besides, reaching very far into what verse can do."

Both Armitage and Collins bear the testimonies of poetic attributes variously spread across the arena of human mind and society at large. It is very clear that both of them have keenness of thought and creative constructs which are indispensable to the readers. They do not however seem to be revolutionary and reformative with the tones of change of perceptions. They would rather look cool and have kept themselves away from the race of the 21st century world.

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