"Digital Echoes and Poetic Memory: Reimagining Human Emotion in the Age of Screens

Dr. Aachal Mundafale

Assistant Professor (English) Matoshri Anjanabai College of Social Work, Narkhed

Abstract: Human emotion is being mediated, archived and transformed by the screens more and more in the modern digital age. Social media feeds to memory feedbacks at the hands of a computer AI, digital technologies have transformed how people feel and share, as well as retain feelings. The paper covers the overlap of digital culture and poetic memory whereby experience of emotion is recreated in a technologically saturated atmosphere. The research is based on media theory, research on memory and digital humanities, the work explores how digital platforms serve as storage of affect, how poetic performance is transformed to screen communication and how memory becomes an algorithmically mediated experience. However, the argument of the paper is that, although screens can be dangerous in terms of muddying emotional expressiveness due to the process of commodification and acceleration, they also open the possibility of new poetic space through fragmented, hybrid and interactive expressive forms of emotion. Finally, the paper will suggest that digital echoes permanent residues of human association are a novel kind of collective poetic memory in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Digital culture, Poetic memory, Human emotion, Social media, Algorithmic memory, Screen studies, Digital humanities.

Introduction:

Human emotion has had an enigmatic interaction with technology throughout the last century, yet this is the period when modern technological advancement has changed the nature of this relationship the most significantly. With the advent of digital technologies, not only people have altered their communication but have also been able to transform the nature with which people perceive, document, and recollect emotions. With the proliferation of screens, personal and collective memory is becoming mediated by devices that save and replicate as well as algorithmically selected and shaped into an emotive form of life. Digital communication as a concept has its roots in the invention of the first computing systems in the 1940s and 1950s. Networked communication was predetermined by the invention of ENIAC in 1945 and further advances in the computational technology. Nevertheless, the invention of ARPANET in 1969 became the breakthrough in web connectivity. ARPANET came in and provided an opportunity of connecting computers through distances, which created the conceptual framework of what would be known as the internet later.
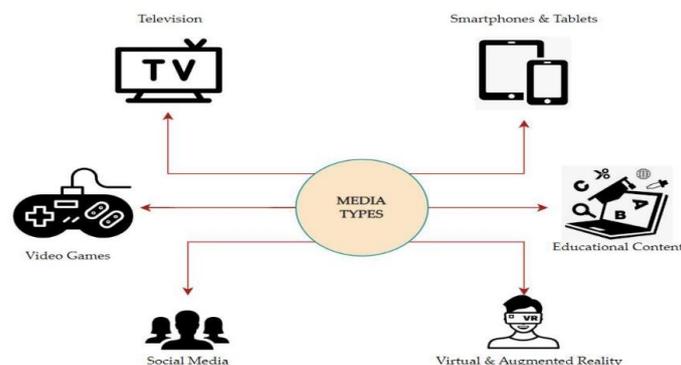

Fig. (1)

The 1980s was the period of growth of personal computers, in the period following the introduction of the IBM Personal Computer in 1981 and the Apple Macintosh in 1984. These inventions introduced computer interfaces in the home and business environments. Nevertheless, emotional communication still represented a texting and formal one, restricted to emails and initial messaging platforms. Computer interaction was greatly changed in digital interaction with the invention of World Wide Web in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee with its public introduction in 1991. The web created a possibility not just of the exchange of information but also of self-expressions and construction of identities.

The emergence of social networking websites in the late 1990s and early 2000s would be the beginning of the emotional communication that would forever be changed. The idea of online social profile was developed by SixDegrees.com (1997). Friendster (2002), My Space (2003) and Facebook (2004) added to this model to make the users shar.

we personal experience, pictures, as well as emotional updates. The additional possibilities to express emotions were introduced with YouTube (2005) and Twitter (2006) via video sharing and microblog. Visual storytelling became a feature of digital identity by the time the Instagram was released in the year 2010 and Snapchat was released in the year 2011.

Fig. (2)

This change was speeded up with the introduction of the iPhone in 2007 with permanently portable screen. Smartphones combined cameras, messaging software and social media into one handheld phone, which allowed recording emotions on a constant basis. Instances of happiness, sorrows, affections, demonstration and celebration could be gained and spread around the world at a moment. In the 2010s, digital platforms were not end bursting tools of communication; they had transformed to be emotional ecosystems.

In line with these technological changes, researchers started exploring the influence of digital space on memory and impact. The idea of sites of memory introduced by Pierre Nora took a new dimension of relevance during the 1990s when digital platforms were starting to work as an archival memory. Towards the start of the 21 st century, the previous theory of collective memory (as proposed by Maurice Halbwachs in 1950) was redefined with regards to online communities and shared online experiences. The book Alone Together written by Sherry Turkle (2011) critically touched on the problem of technology and its role in intimacy and emotional presence in the world of screens.
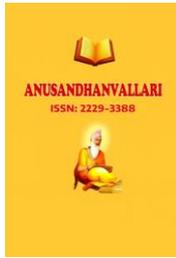
Another characteristic of an algorithmic memory, introduced in the 2010s, is Facebook, which had the feature Facebook on This Day (introduced in 2015), an automatic resurrection of old posts and photos. These algorithm-based memories changed what memory was: a voluntary reflection to a digital stimulus of reminiscence. Previously intimate and time-based feelings were stored as archived data that could appear again even without an individual effort. In this regard, memory became persistent and programmable.

At the same time, poetic form was transformed to the aesthetics of the digital space. The conciseness of the initial 140 (2006 2017) character limit of Twitter, the visual poverty of Instagram poetry in the mid-2010s, and the multimedia experimentation of electronic literature transformed the literary creativity. In the digital era the poetic memory was broken, fractured, and even implanted into the screen culture. New symbolic languages of emotion that were born were emojis, hashtags, GIFs, and short-form captions. The screens became the main arenas of social engagement, lamenting, celebrating, and togetherness by the 2020s, which have been compounded by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Online memorials, virtual meetings and digital activism continued to underline the fact that emotional life was now taking a turn into the networked spaces. The pandemic increased dependency on the online platforms, which strengthen their membership of the joint and individual memory.

In this historical process, a new discourse of its own emerges, namely that of the digital echoes. Digital echoes are the traces after human contact in the form of a post, comment, voice message, photograph and video that the person continues to access even after the Once emotional element has been expired. In contrast to the traditional memory, which loses its characteristics and changes with time, the digital memory may be accessed numerous times in its original form. A continuation such as this redefines the manner in which people recall as well as expect to be recalled. Thus, to rethink the issue of human emotion in the era of screens, one has to resort to using an interdisciplinary approach, involving technological history, media theory, and the adaptation of literature. Since screens are absorbing more of experience, emotion is both archived and aestheticized. Electronic media are used as diaries, and as stages and memorials at the same time. They create new forms of poetry and deliver a new definition of authenticity, intimacy, and recollection.

This study situates contemporary emotional life in a larger technological and cultural transformation in looking at this change in early networks based on computational networks in 1969 to algorithmically curated memories in 2020s. Screens are not killing poetic memory they are transforming it into a vibrant, interconnected and sustainable digital reverberation that makes the entire process of feeling and remembering something new in the twenty-first century.

Literature survey

The research on the memories, emotions and cyber culture can be traced to the mythology presented in the theory of collective memory applied by Maurice Halbwachs (1992), who claims that memory cannot be purely individual, but it is rather socially construed and supported by the collective cultural formations. The conceptual foundation of the mechanism of remembrance in the community is presented by Halbwachs, which is especially applicable in the cyberspace where social networks influence the chosen and remembered. Later on the same year, Reading (1992) explored the interaction of media, gender and political identity and proved the effects of media mediating stories on collective consciousness. Her work emphasizes the fact that the memory is never unrelated to power, representation, and communication technologies, soon enough, discussions about digital mediation will become possible.

Amid the emergence of the new media in the twenty-first century, scholars started revisiting the notion of collective memory in the environment of the Internet. According to Neiger, Meyers, and Zandberg (2011), the media technologies do not just reflect the memories but actively organize them with the introduction of the concept of media memory under the influence of immediacy, repetition, and participation. This process of changing the traditional archives into the new interactive sites of digital technology indicates a wider change in
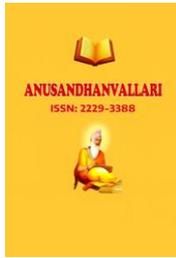
the memory practices. On the same note, Manovich (2013) highlights the fact that cultural production during the digital era is governed by software. In arguing that software takes command he emphasizes the role that interfaces, databases and algorithms play in dictating the way information is stored and retrieved including personal memories. Borsuk and Bouse (2012) also depict this shift in the literature world whereby digital poetry transforms textual experience through interactivity and immersing aesthetic of the screen and consequently redefines poetic memory.

The emotional aspect of the digital culture has also received the serious attention of scholars. Karatzogianni and Kuntsman (2012) address the issue of the mediating role of digital technologies in political emotions and state that emotions spread quickly in online networks and influence the mobilisation of actions. Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) regard this argument by hypothesizing the work that emotion does on the Internet, focusing on the performative and visible character of Web-based emotion. Affect theory is applied to textual analysis in the Palgrave Handbook of Affect Studies and Textual Criticism (Wehrs and Blake, 2017), which provides tools that help to understand how a text works with emotional resonance in the digital and literary texture. Rajcic and McCormack (2020) bring about the concept of the human-machine co-construction of emotion and in this case, emotional experiences are suggested as being more influenced by communication with smart systems. Evans and Riley (2023) also say that digital intimacy is empowering and commodified because these platforms make the emotional exchange to be measurable. By offering an empirical view of how users manage their feelings on social media, Verma et al. (2023) found out that digital spaces, besides expressing them, influence their processing and management.

This recent scholarship is more and more concerned with the problem of algorithmic influence and mediation of technology in creating memory. Graus, Odijk, and de Rijke (2017) consider the emergence of the collective memory in the case of the digital text streams, and it is proven that some of the narratives are picked up and either amplified or not within the algorithms. Storm and Soares (2022) investigate how digital memory has cognitive implications by stating that the use of technological memory modification affects the way human memory works. The article by Mandolessi (2023) emphasizes the concept of ethical and political aspects of digital remembrance since digital archives are incorporated into the institutions of power. In an analysis of the concept of memory as a human right in relation to media and legal policies, Reading and Reading (2023) put the issues of ownership, disappearance, and digital permanence into question. Ruckenstein (2023) also highlights the emotional impact of algorithms arguing that it does not only define what one observes but how they emotionally feel. These developments are viewed as historic by Han (2023) who follows the path of mediated memory by broadcasting to digital networks, and Merrill, Keightley, and Daphi (2020) illustrate how digital platforms are used by social movements to ensure the continuation of culture and activism.

All of this literature creates a common understanding that memory and emotion have ceased to be exclusively human privileges, and have been increasingly influenced by digital infrastructures. Although the theories underpinning exists on explaining memory through a social construct, recent researches uncover the way the algorithms, software, and platform economy mediate remembrance and influence. Nevertheless, even though extensive studies have taken place in the field of digital memory and affective media, there is a significant lack of research in the area of the intersectional digital processes with poetic imagination and aesthetical expression. This chasm explains why one needs to discuss how digital echoes, recurring correlative remnants of on-screen communication, restructure human emotion, poetic memory, in a screen-oriented world.

Digital Culture

Digital culture can be defined as social practices, values, interaction and other creative expressions corroborated by the overwhelming use of digital technologies. Thanks to the growth of the internet in the 1990s and the growth of social media the 2000s, communication has been influenced by digital culture, identity formation, entertainment, and social relationships. It has connectivity, immediacy, participation and datafication. In the digital culture, the participants do not just consume but are also producers and sharing of content. Experiences in
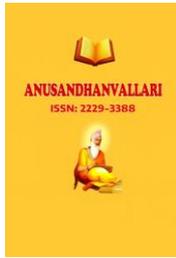
the realm of emotions are no longer the secretive ones; however, they are enacted, displayed, and stored on the Internet. Therefore, the digital culture constitutes the larger setting within the context of which the poetic memory and the emotion of humans are recoded.

Poetic Memory

The poetic memory means the creative expressive reconstruction of the past experience in the form of symbolic, aesthetic, and emotional language. Traditionally, poetry has been a tool of keeping the personal and collective memories and transforming the lived experiences into the form of art. Poetic memory is realized in the digital era moving beyond printed words and on to safety in multimedia forms; these are Instagram poetry, spoken-word videos, digital storytelling, and hypertext literature. Screens have an effect on the form of poetic memory, usually with an appeal to brevity, fragmentation, and visual minimalism. The digital poetic memory is made interactive and networked, depending on the interaction with the audience and platform design.

Human Emotion

The human emotion stands within psychological, physiological, as well as social reactions to love, grief, joy, anger, and even fear. Emotions are as personal as well as socially constructed. It is through digital interfaces that the expression of emotion in technologically mediated settings is becoming more and more influenced. Emotional communication is made standard and fast through emojis, reaction buttons, hashtags, and short form captions. As much as the digital medium opens up new horizons of emotional expression, it can also reduce the complexity of emotions to the yet simplified symbols. Thus, human emotion on the screen age is placed at the border of the realness, acting and technological impact.

Social Media

The social media sites, including Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010) and Tik Tok (2016) are used as the digital interactions, self-presentational and memory-based settings. These sites are used to post emotional bandwidth in which individual achievements, political campaigns and group sorrows are recorded. Social media promotes instantaneity and publicity, making ordinary life something that can be shared and make stories. It also promotes participatory memory-making, in which comments, shares, and reactions around the meaning are added to the meaning making. Social media is therefore one of the core processes of creating and maintaining digital echoes.

Algorithmic Memory

The concept of algorithmic memory means automatic repackaging and re-entry of old digital information through algorithms of the platforms. Such characteristics as the On This Day (introduced in 2015) feature of Facebook show the way the memory does not exist only in the power of human memory anymore. On the contrary, computational systems are used in choosing, structuring, and re-packaging the experiences of the past. It is a process through which memory becomes a phenomenon of data. On the one hand, the evocation of nostalgia and emotional continuity is possible through the use of an algorithmic memory, but on the other hand, ethical concerns regarding privacy and emotional consent as well as the commodification of past are also brought up. The memory becomes programmable and is conditioned by the systems that cannot be seen and only focus on engagement and profitability.

Screen Studies

Screen studies is an inter-disciplinary term used to research the cultural, aesthetic and psychological influences of screens such as the cinema, television, computers, smart phones and tablets. The manner in which screens influence perception, narrative as well as identity is a topic that has been examined by scholars since the late twentieth century. Screen in the case of digital emotion performs not only the displaying functions but also the interactive functions. The sensor feeling of swiping, tapping, and scrolling affects the manner in which emotions
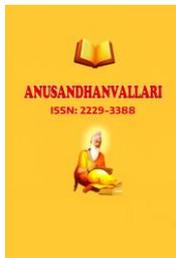
are ingested and manifested. Screen studies contribute to the evaluation of the influence of visual framing, interfaces design, and platform architecture on the emotional and memory formation.

Digital Humanities

Digital humanities refer to an interdisciplinary study that combines computing technologies with studies in humanities. Digital humanities are an emergent scientific field that examines the impact of technology on literature, history, art, and cultural studies and endeavours to find solutions to them. When it comes to poetic memory, digital humanities address the concept of electronic literature, data visualization, on-line archives, and interactive story telling. It brings out the ways in which digital spaces are changing the nature of authorship, reading and textual materiality. Digital humanities contribute to an analytical approach to studying the expression of emotions in the Internet through the use of a combination of technology and humanistic inquiry.

Overall Conclusion:

Altogether, the era of the screens has changed the process of human emotions expression, sharing, and memory greatly. Online spaces serve as communication tools, as well as the archives, where individual and shared experience is stored. Today, algorithms, software and online networks shape the memory not only by social interactions, and personal reflections, but also significantly influence it.

Meanwhile, poetic manifestation has transformed into the online space by acquiring the new forms of visual posts, brief text, emojis, and multimedia storytelling. Such digital echoes are traces of eternal emotions formed during technological mediation. In this way, there is no erosion but rather re-writing of human emotion in the digital age, which is in a preening, interactive, and algorithmically edited space.

In the end, this paper ends by considering that human sentiment is not deprived in the era of the screens but rather transformed. Online spaces never erase memories, but reform them by reorganizing memory into various networked and algorithmically structured forms of dynamic memory. Introducing the idea of digital traces as poetic echoes, this study provides a paradigm of the comprehension of the ways that technological mediation may alter memories as well as emotionality in the twenty-first century.

References:

[1] Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Ed. & Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

[2] Reading, A. (1992). *Polish women, solidarity and feminism*. Macmillan.

[3] Neiger, M., Meyers, O., & Zandberg, E. (Eds.). (2011). *On media memory: Collective memory in a new media age*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[4] Manovich, L. (2013). *Software takes command*. Bloomsbury Academic.

[5] Merrill, S., Keightley, E., & Daphi, P. (Eds.). (2020). *Social movements, cultural memory and digital media: Mobilising mediated remembrance*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[6] Storm, B. C., & Soares, J. S. (2022). *Memory in the digital age* [Preprint]. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/h8q6e

[7] Mandolessi, S. (2023). Memory in the digital age. *Open Research Europe, 3*, 123. https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.16228.2

[8] Reading, N., & Reading, A. (Eds.). (2023). *A right to memory: History, media, law, ethics*. Berghahn Books.

[9] Ruckenstein, M. (2023). *The feel of algorithms*. University of California Press.
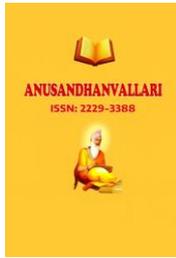
[10] Borsuk, A., & Bouse, B. (2012). *Between page and screen: Remapping literature through new media*. (Experiment in digital poetry). Dalton.

[11] Karatzogianni, A., & Kuntsman, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Digital cultures and the politics of emotion: Feelings, affect and technological change*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[12] Garde-Hansen, J., & Gorton, K. (2013). *Emotion online: Theorizing affect on the Internet*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[13] Wehrs, D. R., & Blake, T. (Eds.). (2017). *The Palgrave handbook of affect studies and textual criticism*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[14] Graus, D., Odijk, D., & de Rijke, M. (2017). *The birth of collective memories: Analyzing emerging entities in text streams* [Preprint]. arXiv.

[15] Rajcic, N., & McCormack, J. (2020). *Mirror ritual: Human-machine co-construction of emotion* [Preprint]. arXiv.

[16] Evans, A., & Riley, S. (2023). *Digital feeling: Intimacy and affect in digital culture*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[17] Verma, A., Islam, S., Moghaddam, V., & Anwar, A. (2023). Digital emotion regulation on social media [Preprint]. arXiv.

[18] Ruckenstein, M. (2023). *The feel of algorithms*. University of California Press.

[19] Han, Y. (2023). Evolution of mediated memory in the digital age: Tracing its path from the 1950s to 2010s. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 10*, Article 603.