



Email Spam to “ee spammings”: Martin Kryzwinski’s Spam Recycled Poetry

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"This world is but canvas to our imagination"

Henry David Thoreau

In the case of literature in the postmodern digital era, it can be rightly said that even sky is not the limit. Techniques and stylistics have been explored and experimented with in the strangest and the most unimaginable way so much so that it has led to the birth of many vivid literary subgenres. While poets and critics, since time immemorial, have tried to emphasize the didactic purpose of literature, these subgenres aim to proclaim the aesthetics mantra of 'art for art's sake.' The aim of this study is to prove, through the poetry of Martin Kryzwinski, that there is art in everything, even a spam mail.

Literature in the digital e-world can roughly be classified into two categories; Technology-dependent, where, as a result of advanced narrative techniques, the literary work exists only in a technological base such as hypertext fiction, animated fiction, eBook, computer generated poetry and stories, fan fiction and the like in Wattpad and such similar online communities; and secondly the technology-inspired subgenres like literature in the form of emails and blogs, flarf poetry and spam poetry/spoetry etc which create literature out of technology.

Martin Kryzwinski's poems exclusively published in his blog are examples of spam poetry. Spam poetry is a technology-inspired digital literature where literature is fashioned out of a spam mail. A spam or a junk mail is an unsolicited advertisement mail send by producers to a large number of consumers in order to publicize their product or service. They are also fraud emails send in order to collect personal details of the receivers such as bank account details, ATM pin etc. The genre first came to be recognized in 2000CE when SatireWire, a satire news website based in the U.S, conducted its first 'spoetry' competition. Some major spoetry collections are *Machine Language* (2005) and *Machine Language Version 2.1* (2006) by Andrew Russ under the penname "endgame," *Happy Shopping- Massurrealist Spam Poetry* (2007) by Cecil Touchon and *Spam: E-mail Inspired Poems* (2008) by Ben Myres etc.

Inspired by the poetry and techniques of E. E. Cummings, Martin Kryzwinski, a bioinformatics scientist based in Canada, began to experiment with spam mails in the former’s style. In his blog he has published eighty-three spam poems, which he calls “ee spammings,” using spam mails as his raw materials.

E. E. Cummings (1894-1962) is a twentieth century American avant garde poet with a collection of around 2900 poems, two autobiographical novels, four plays and several essays and paintings. Cummings had a distinct style when it comes to both typography and grammar. He used discrete line breaks and had a disregard for punctuation and capitalization, so much so that he emphasized writing his own name in lower cases. His idiosyncratic style gave a picturesque distinction to his poems and often communicated more meanings in few words. A typical example of Cummings style is his poem “l(a)” which is written as follows (Sawyer-Laucanno,518):

l(a
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The poem, with the image of a single leaf falling from a tree, describes loneliness. As Robert DiYanni notes, the imagery is brought alive visually by the breaking of the words “leaf”, “falls” and “oneliness” and their vertical arrangement. Cummings’s use of parenthesis and lower cases are also notable features in the poem.

Cummings’s influence on Kryzwinski is very evident in his works, first by naming them as “ee spammings” and second, by his statement of poetic techniques in his blog:

1. all text is transformed to lowercase
2. line breaks and spaces between words can be added
3. punctuation, including brackets, can be added or removed
i think we can → *(i think) we can*
4. words can be removed from the spam
i am a young good looking girl ... → *i am young (good) ...*
5. existing words can be repeated
click together → *click,click,click (together)*
6. form of word (e.g. singular/plural, tense, etc) can be altered (applied infrequently, extends rule)
thank's for you# ... → *thank's for you ...* 2)

Given below is a fine example of Kryzwinski’s work, a spam mail converted into poetry:

The original spam mail is as follows:

From: JULIE DAVE

Date: Sunday, November 28, 2010 5:56 PM

From Dave's Wife, Julie

Hello My Dear, This is Dave's wife, Julie. I am writing this message to you today because my husband Dave passed away on December 17 2009. My late husband was diagnosed with cancer and heart attack just before he was admitted to the hospital. He did begin treatment, but suffered a blood clot and heart attack after his first treatment. After all he died on [sic] the same sickness.

It is my desire and enthusiasm to donate a token/huge amount of money he told about for the less privilege as he instructed me when he was at the point of death. Being a devoted christian [sic] family i have no other option than to use this amount is \$22 million to help those that is in need. so I would like you to think over this huge privilege that i am entrusting to your hand for the survival of the casualties and homeless, just send me your full names, home address, telephone number, occupation and more information about you in your next message for the service of God in your country and for the less privilege one's.

Finally, I know you join me and the rest of Dave's family in our sorrow and ask God to accept him in his kingdom. Kindly reply immediately together with your complete address which will be used for the transferring of the money to your country.

Reply to this address: juliebliss@mysinamail.com

Best Regards,

Mrs. Julie

It is a fraud mail, written with the purpose of alluring its receiver to reveal his/her personal details. Kryzwinski's poetry out the above spam mail is as follows:

this today passed late
with
and just before
begin

after first
after all
the same

desire the less of death
being no other than you

think over this privilege

and in your god
and in sorrow god

him (in his best)

The poem holds within it a deep meaning of pessimism arising out of a mundane life. The narrator in the poem is evaluating the day he had just lived and realizes that it was dull, routine and “all the same.” He is contemplating death and sees it as a privilege over this mundane life. Seeing no meaning in it, he turns his attention towards god, who he sees as the omnipotent who is at his best in giving sorrows and has the power to multiply it. As an endnote to the poem Kryzwinski says, “God is at his best in our sorrow. We feed it to him like seeds and grow more misery.” Thus Martin Kryzwinski’s above-mentioned poem titled “this today passed late,” describes the plight of a postmodern man caught in the web of inactivity and boredom and is therefore relevant in existential discourse.

It is remarkable to note that Martin Kryzwinski could etch such meaningful poetry from an otherwise, useless and meaningless spam mail. While environmentalists have advocated the reuse and recycle of waste materials, artists have come up with vivid ideas to create art out of trash. Musicians are creating music by beating utensils and blowing air into empty glass bottles, sculptors have created statues out of broken glasses and plastics; and when it comes to the e-world, poets are creating poetry out of junk mails. All these are but testimonies to the idea that there is art in anything and everything, one only need the eyes to perceive it and a passion to pursue it.

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