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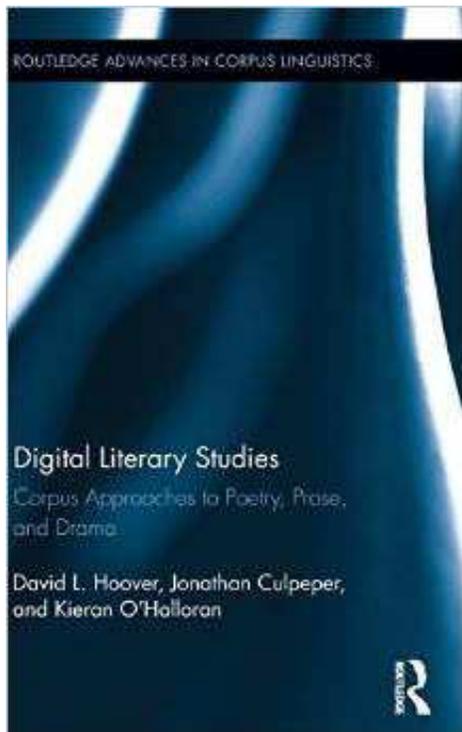
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Book Review

Digital Literary Studies: Corpus Approaches to Poetry, Prose, and Drama.

Eds. David L. Hoover, Jonathan Culpeper, and Kieran O'Halloran
New York: Routledge, 2014.

ISBN: 978-0-415-35230-7
202 pgs. 6,228.00 INR



Review by P. Prayer Elmo Raj, Pachaiappa's College, Chennai

Digital Literary Studies brings to focus the issues, methods and approaches to the recent advent of an area of studies, 'digital literary studies.' The book focuses on an in-depth analysis of non-digital literary texts with an objective to be studied from a digitized perspective. It attempts a study on the literariness and style of work employing natural language compilations fabricating particular tasks, including the three major literary genres, poetry, prose and drama, to bring in compelling present issues. The methods used in the book such as "multivariate analysis," "text-markup/ annotation," and application of "huge corpora" brings in fresh focus to the texts with innovative schemes. Textual analysis makes use of the digital nature of the texts to examine them from the point of view of media. Various computational methods significantly influence the avenues of digital literary study to mark the worth of corpus linguistics. The book has a

glossary of corpus linguistics terms employed in digital humanities to make aware the complex theoretical propositions. Corpus, here, is explained as “structured collection of digital texts.” For analytical purposes the essays create a corpus within their spectrum of research. For instance, Culpeper on his studies on *Romeo and Juliet* collects the speeches of the characters in relation and comparison to each other to form a corpus. Central to the study of corpus linguistics is the role played by linguistics, the manner of interpreting style and aesthetics of a text. The intermingling of corpus linguistics and stylistics is a call for the stylisticians to note the broader vision of stylistics and its importance in digital literary studies. This also meant to underline the encompassing nature of corpus linguistics that deploys varied methods bringing in qualitative, quantitative and computational methods.

Jonathan Culpeper’s “Keywords and Characterisation: An Analysis of Six Characters in *Romeo and Juliet*” aims to study how a key area in stylistics, characterisation becomes beneficent of keyword analysis, an empirical method and an elucidation of what keywords and how keyword analysis could help in corpus linguistics. Culpeper examines the dialogue, the voice of the characters for keywords facilitating the individual subject positions by using tagging system. Lexical and grammatical patterns surface as the analysis of speeches of various characters in *Romeo and Juliet* progress. For instance, Romeo’s keywords *beauty* and *love* and Juliet’s key words *if* and *yet* offers deeper insights on the mechanics of word functions and stylistics. However, the study does not deal with the interconnection between keywords across corpus and the limitations of keywords within multiword units from a semantic point of view. Proceeding on this chapter is Culpeper’s “Developing Keyness and Characterization: Annotation” that appropriates the grammatical and semantic annotation to the words of the data and investigates the annotation for keyness to seek the habitation of meaning in texts. In order the computer to recognize the grammatical and semantic traits annotation is fundamental. The chapter also deals with the question which aspect of the text is important or should we attribute fundamental significance to text. The grammatical and semantic analysis of the speeches of Romeo brings in closed words to highlight patterns that are annotated to achieve desired results. Culpeper concludes by stating “we can trust the text” (61) because the analysis both grammatical and semantic brings in possibilities that move beyond the generalizations of style and characterization.

David L. Hoover’s “*The Moonstone* and *The Coquette*: Narrative and Epistolary style,” deals with the deviations in style within a single fiction. John F. Burros reveals how Jane Austen’s characters can be differentiated distinctly one from the other in the manner which they use words in a particular dialogue. The author investigates two novels written with compound style with the help of multivariate authorship attribution method to establish how an author alters between styles. While Wilkie Collins through his narrative style exemplifies the distinct voices, Hanna Webster with her epistolary style was not successful in granting distinct voices her characters. The failure and success in creating distinct voices of their characters belongs to the cultural and social arguments put forth by the novelists rather than their literary technical quality. The next chapter, “A Conversation Among Himself: Change and the Styles of Henry James,” employs authorship attribution technique to locate the uniqueness of Henry James’ style from that of the others but internally exhibits three distinctly different styles in his earlier and later writings. In order to drive home his thesis Hoover compiles 19th century novels into

a corpus employing multivariate authorship attribution and statistical methods. Rather than delving into any methods of form critical methods he employs word frequencing techniques to enhance the style variants in James's work which is uniformly progressive.

“Corpus-Assisted Literary Evaluation” by Kieran O’ Halloran advocates subjective literary evaluations can be substantiated through evidences. Roger Fowler’s evaluation of Fleur Adcock’s poem “Street Song” is forceful and brings in disconcerting effects on a reader into the work even before any in depth study of the poem begins with. The author maintains that through empirical corpus evidence literary evaluation can be substantiated through schema theory and corpus analysis from the reader’s perspective. His essay “Performance Stylistics: Deleuze and Guattari, Poetry, and (Corpus) Linguistics,” O’ Halloran utilizes propositions from Deleuze and Guattari to engage in alternative interpretations like performance stylistics where a poem is viewed as an invitation for the audience to be creative and partake in the interpretive journey allowing the poem to be inclined and evocative spurring knowledge to employ the resources available in World Wide Web to form fresh subjective perspectives on the poem to innovatively “fill in” personas and settings of the poem. Web based stylistic analysis forms the basis of such interpretative performance to activate a creative interpretation of the poem calling for a computational participation of the reader.

The book, though takes its cue from stylistics, does not succumb to the traditional stylistic methods like using select instances or textual excerpts to interpret the whole corpus of an author. It opens up spectrum of possibilities for digital literary studies and research with its lineage to corpus linguistics and stylistics. The subject matter discussed in the essays are analysed with theoretical academic rigour coherently and innovatively. The essays encompass three major literary genres highlighting the significance of corpus linguistic analysis from a computational point of view taking it beyond the traditional methods. These essays lay foundation for the upcoming researchers in digital literary studies offering a platform to build on and propose fresh avenues. The book attempts for particularity in its approach by relating the study to poetry, fiction and drama. However the esoteric nature of the digital literary approach is kept intact to analyse the work of art chosen by the authors in detail. The authors bring together extensive amount of creativity in putting together disciplines with their ability to catalogue and define the new area of literary studies. The book, however, fails to draw the challenges and issues pertaining to digital literary studies in particular and corpus linguistics as a whole. The conciliation and renegotiation of corpus linguistics with traditional texts traverses only through a nascent vision weakening to reconfigure and recreate a fresh perspective to literary studies. Though not a compendious study on corpus linguistics, these essays are groundbreaking in the manner in which they tread through the developing digitized literary research. These essays are not for beginners of digital literary studies but for those who aspire to undertake fresh researches in a rapidly transforming and developing field.

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