



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

“The portrait of pseudo-intellectualism”:

Rupi Kaur’s posture and reception in the literary field



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May 31st, 2021

Abstract

This master's thesis aims to add to the research surrounding the phenomenon of Instapoetry, by looking at the position-taking of instapoet Rupi Kaur and her reception. Using Pierre Bourdieu's notions of capital and the literary field, I aim to show the interaction and negotiation between Instapoetry and the literary field. In addition to Bourdieu's concepts, I have made use of Jérôme Meizoz's posture theory. I focused on Kaur's output on Instagram, comparing her online presence in 2014, the year in which Kaur self-published *Milk and Honey*, to 2018, the year after the publication of her second collection *The sun and her Flowers*. It appears that Kaur employs four different postures online: the 'influencer'; the politically engaged poet; the South Asian poet; and the private poet. The reception of Kaur helps place Instapoetry in the literary field. Instapoetry finds itself at the intersection of internet culture and the literary field, in which it is part of the avant-garde, the newcomers.

Keywords: Instapoetry, Instagram, E-literature, Rupi Kaur, reception, posture, literary field

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Introduction

“Artless poetry sells (...). The reader is dead: Long live consumer-driven content and the ‘instant gratification’ this affords.” (Rebecca Watts, *PN Review*)

Over the past few years, poetry on Instagram has been on the rise. Some ‘instapoets’ have millions of followers, and several are now (self-)publishing their poetry collections. Some collections have been published in no less than 35 languages and nearly half of all sold poetry collections in 2017 in the United States were written by instapoets (PR Web). As Instagram is a predominantly visual social media platform, one would expect poets to have flocked towards more text-based platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. But something about the seemingly restrictive square pictures attracts a significant amount of people to share their work there. Of course, it should be noted that Instagram started as a very creative platform, mainly used to share photography. The visual aspect and specific size limit bring us a new form of digital poetry, and perhaps even poetry in general (Johnson 132). It can be said that Instapoetry “produces distinctively different content and audiences when compared with predecessors” (Marshall 3). The current discourse around social media remains predominantly on political and social activism instead of how social media is used to express or share creativity from within marginalised communities (Thomas 23). The current discussion around Instapoetry also focuses mostly on the activist aspect, as well as the question as to whether it is ‘real’ poetry. This thesis, instead, will zoom out and explore the friction between Instapoetry and the literary field by using a case study. If and where do Instapoets fit into the field?

So far there has hardly been any research on the phenomenon of Instapoetry. Part of the reason shall be that Instagram was only launched in 2010. While it is nearly impossible to determine when Instapoetry started, we can assume Instapoetry is only a few years old. It is

getting some attention in the media, yet it has proven difficult to find any academic research on the phenomenon. Most studies are still ongoing, such as Kila van der Starre's. She is currently working on a study that looks at the production and reception of poetry outside of the traditional book form, and how people experience new forms of poetry (such as poetry outdoors, on social media, tattoos, products, and on the radio). By combining historical research, institutional research and empirical research she aims to find out how our experience of poetry is changing. In their article 'I too dislike it: The Evolving Presence of Poetry on the Internet', Debora Richey and Mona Kratzert argue that "the Internet has facilitated a renaissance in poetry" (49). Their article was published several years before Instagram was founded, however, so it does not include Instapoetry. Rather, they analyse the rise of digital poetry and find that the Internet has modified poetic form forever, including unlocking unlimited ways of approaching poems. It can be argued that the same goes for Instapoetry, which has undoubtedly built upon earlier forms of e-literature. E-literature will be addressed further in the theoretical framework. Online poetry, particularly pre-Instagram, includes a large variety of visual aspects. The internet offered new ways of conveying meaning such as motion and sounds. Instagram, being the visual medium it is, offers people a chance to play with typography. To that end, Instapoetry suddenly does not seem like such a far stretch for a visual social medium, because text is always designed, made to appear in an intentional form. The main difference between Instapoetry and earlier forms of digital poetry/e-literature is the serious constraints in terms of length. In general, academia thus far has mostly neglected Instapoetry. A reason for this could be that academics deem it a lowbrow form of poetry that does not show a lot of literary merit (Pâquet 3). Lili Pâquet looks at Instapoetry, instapoets Atticus and Rupi Kaur in particular, and focuses on the self-help aspect of the connection between them and their followers whilst performing a textual analysis of the poems concerning the theme of self-help.

The majority of research is on Instagram as a medium, but that research mainly focuses on advertising, photography and on self-expression. Whereas a medium such as Facebook is meant to connect with people one knows offline, to be “friends” with them (Ellison et al.), Instagram and Twitter function differently. Shane-Simpson et al. mention how these platforms do not have the option to “friend” people, only to “follow” others and be “followed” (back). Their study aims to “examine the social media landscape, exploring questions about who is drawn to popular social media sites, why they prefer each site, and the social consequences of site preference” (3). Their findings on the use of Instagram provide some clarity on who, in general, these ‘followers’ and ‘commenters’ are. According to them, Instagram was the most popular with college students, women in particular. The participants in their study who preferred Instagram named the visual imagery as their primary reason to prefer Instagram over Facebook or Twitter (34).

In *Rise of the Citizen Author*, Miriam J. Johnson explores the concept of the ‘citizen author’ in the ‘global village’. This needs to be placed in the wider context of the ‘web 2.0’ (which will be explained more thoroughly in the next chapter), which are websites that allow users to interact with each other as creators of user-generated content. The average consumer becomes a producer of cultural goods (a citizen author), thus circumventing the traditional cultural industries and their revenue models. Essentially, she looks at why people decide to publish works of fiction onto social networking sites and circumvent, whether intentionally or not, the mainstream publishing industry. This, according to Johnson, creates tensions within the publishing industry (132). The global village is a concept from Marshall McLuhan and describes the phenomenon of people across the world becoming increasingly interconnected through technology (e.g. through ‘web 2.0’). It is important to note that there is a significant difference between a self-published author and a citizen author. A self-published author could somewhat subvert the traditional publishing system by selling their work themselves, but would

still follow a somewhat traditional publishing method (with a physical book as the end goal). Self-publishing requires more capital as one needs to invest their resources (whether that is time, money, connections or knowledge). Citizen authors, on the other hand, actively ignore the traditional publishing industry business model as they embrace “the new digital technologies to produce their own works online, create new networks, communities, and followers, bypassing the gate-keeping mechanisms of the publishing industry” (Johnson 133). Hence citizen authors require less capital than self-published authors because one can make do without, for example, financial capital regarding the production/publication of their work. Each social media platform should be seen as a different home in the global village (McLuhan 14). Rupi Kaur ‘housed’ herself in Tumblr and later Instagram, both different homes in the global village. Following this idea, one could argue that Instagram is part of the global village and that instapoets are citizen authors. It is however important to note that citizen authors are not by definition more prone to success than self-published authors and vice versa.

Whereas Richey and Kratzert argue that poetic form has (been) changed forever since the rise of digital poetry, Johnson goes even further and claims that the role of the book is changing. The only thing a citizen author requires is a device that can connect to the internet. A location close to large cities or connections to people in the publishing world is not necessary anymore to get people to read their work (Johnson 140). What Johnson fails to address, however, is that the majority of people worldwide is still far removed from access to the internet, let alone possess adequate knowledge of the English language, or any other language that can reach a large worldwide community. Publishing online also does not automatically mean that you will be discovered and read. Rather, it has become even harder to be discovered as there are significantly more players on the field. Johnson also notes an interesting shift. Self-published authors, many of whom were previously rejected by agents or publishers, have paved the way for people to circumvent the gatekeepers in the traditional publishing industry, by

making their products directly available to consumers (143). Then, citizen authors made the distance between the author and reader even smaller. Johnson finds that sometimes after a “citizen author has gained power (...) publishers are willing to give them notice. This can be seen again and again with publishers soliciting work from social media influencers” (144). She argues that this power is measured in terms of connectivity within the global village. One could argue that Johnson is hinting at a new form of capital, but she fails to dig deeper into this. Other researchers have coined terms such as ‘digital capital’, or use the existing ‘social capital’ (Seale, Ziebland & Charteris-Black; Hofer & Aubert; Lewis et al.).

We can see that Instapoetry has not gained much traction in the academic world, which is somewhat surprising when you look at the attention it has gotten in the media. Literary critics have a predominantly negative opinion on the literary merit of Instapoetry, as will be shown in chapter four, but cannot deny the impact it has, both on the discussion of what literature is and the influence on young readers. Canadian Rupi Kaur is perhaps the poet most closely identified with Instagram and has been covered in media worldwide. In an interview with the *Guardian*, she is described as revelling in being anti-establishment, saying she does not “fit into the age, race or class of a bestselling poet”. The article mentions that Kaur is “at the forefront of a poetry renaissance in both Britain and the US” (Walker). With over 4 million followers as of June 2020, it would seem fair to call her a celebrity. However, it is too easy to dismiss the rise of Instapoetry merely “as the celebrification of the poet, or as writing that relies on flashy visual triggers rather than inviting close scrutiny or prolonged engagement with the rhythms and words of the published pieces” (Thomas 89). Instead, their words seem to be even more heavily scrutinized, as Instapoets, especially female poets, are often attacked for being too self-indulgent and too popular. Rebecca Watts, for example, finds the rise of Instapoetry objectionable, arguing that just because these new players in the poetry market attract mass audiences, that does not mean their ‘honest’ and ‘accessible’ writing is good (par. 6). This

tension is not surprising or new. Bourdieu, in ‘The field of cultural production, or: the economic world reversed’ (1983), observed that a mass audience was often inversely proportional to critical acclaim (320).

On Instagram, you can post one or more pictures in a square or wide rectangular shape. Underneath it, the person posting it can write a ‘caption’, which, when it comes to instapoets, can range from the title of the poem, some personal explanation or simply the text of the poem again. Additionally, some might add a hashtag, in order to let new people discover their account. Hashtags are widely used in the Instapoetry community, as we can see in fig. 1 and fig. 2. “#Instapoetry” has over 2.5 million posts, and “#poetry” an astounding amount of 31.4 million posts.

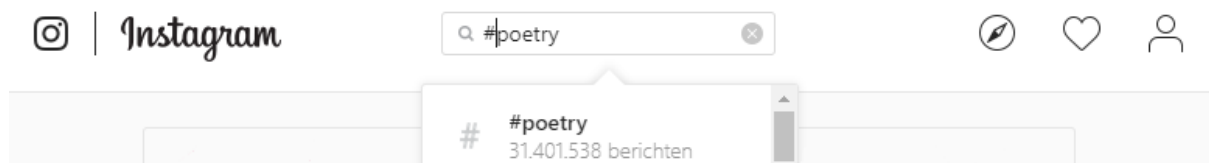


Figure 1: Screenshot of the Instagram search of “#poetry”, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved 8 May 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/>. Screenshot by author.

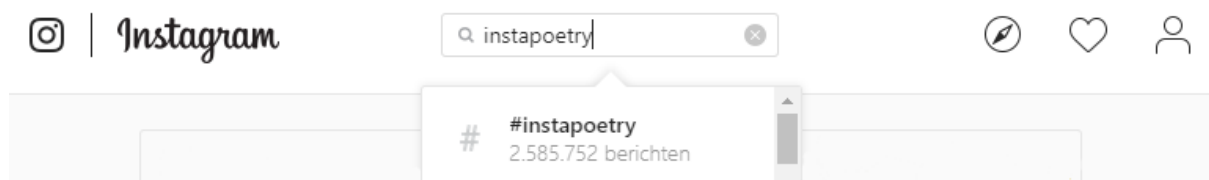


Figure 2: Screenshot of the Instagram search of “#Instapoetry”, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved 8 May 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/>. Screenshot by author.

To illustrate the use of such hashtags, see fig. 3. The more (fitting) hashtags someone uses, the more chances it gets of being seen by a large number of users.

#poetry #poem #quotes #love
 #lovequotes #poet #poems #writers
 #atticus #atticuspoetry

Figure 3: Screenshot of the hashtags in the caption of a post by Instagram user @Atticuspoetry, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved 8 May 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BwxYu1gh5s6/>. Screenshot by author.

Even though many people would claim to be able to recognise Instapoetry immediately, it remains difficult to determine the exact nature of what exactly makes it so recognisable (even when not shown in its square Instagram format). That makes it hard to define, just as poetry itself is hard to define. The definition that will be used going forward in this thesis will be ‘poetry (texts explicitly presented and/or recognised as poetry) intentionally written for and shared on Instagram’.

This thesis aims to answer the following question: How does the work and career of Rupi Kaur show the interaction and negotiation between ‘Instapoetry’ and the literary field? In order to map the interaction and negotiation, the study will focus on the position-takings of the (insta)poet, her followers and critics.

To gain a better understanding of the ‘Instapoetry’ phenomenon, this thesis will look at one instapoet, by analysing her ‘feed’ and her reception (both by her Instagram followers and by literary critics). I have decided to opt for only one instapoet due to the scope of this research. The poet I will be looking at in this thesis is Rupi Kaur (@rupikaur_, 4 million followers). She has published two physical poetry collections after having published her poetry online for several years. One could argue that Kaur is too obvious a choice, as a bestselling poet and one of the few that has been written about. Still, the wildly varying opinions on her, the pride she seems to take in her identity and public posture, as well as her being one of the first Instapoets to make the jump to (self)publishing her Instapoetry in a physical form, make for an interesting case study. My approach in this thesis regarding Rupi Kaur is new as well seeing as I will not be looking at her poetic form.

I predict that there will be a significant difference in the interaction between followers of Instapoetry and the instapoet and literary critics and the instapoet. I hypothesize that the

Instagram followers do not provide any practical comments nor provide any formal or thematic analysis of the poems, but rather comment on the personal/emotional value of the poem. This would be in line with findings on the importance of relatability (Felski). Rita Felski, in *Uses of Literature*, argues that there is a history of – often marginalised – women seeking to assert their individuality but also look for affirmation from others, and that this often can be seen in their reception of poetry (47). I also hypothesise that instapoets, in particular Rupi Kaur, will not see themselves or each other as literary authors and that critics will only discuss their poetry once it has been published in a poetry collection. The latter follows Bourdieu's observation regarding the paradox of having a mass audience versus having critical acclaim.

This thesis will start with a chapter on the theoretical background and methodology of the research. It discusses Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, as well as his ideas regarding capital, and will address the potential need for a new kind of capital. Related to this is Robert Putnam's concept of bonding versus bridging capital. The concept of posture, introduced by Jérôme Meizoz, will also be discussed, and the chapter will provide a theoretical base for understanding internet culture and the phenomenon of Instagram as well. The thesis will then move on to the case study of Rupi Kaur. Chapter two focuses on the poet herself. The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with a better understanding of how Kaur externally identifies and positions herself. This chapter contains a detailed analysis of her Instagram account in the years 2014 (soon after she started her account and before publication of her first poetry collection) and 2018 (after the publication of her second poetry collection). Chapter three offers a closer look at the followers of Rupi Kaur. This chapter contains an analysis of the comments underneath the most-liked posts in the aforementioned years in order to determine how the followers receive the instapoets and what aspects of the poems they focus on. The last chapter will give an overview of the reception of Rupi Kaur's work by literary critics thus far. Looking at

Instapoetry from these three perspectives will provide us with an answer as to where Instapoetry stands in regard to the traditional literary field.

Theoretical framework

To answer the question of ‘how does ‘Instapoetry’ reveal the interaction and negotiation between internet culture and the literary field?’ effectively, this chapter aims to provide an overview of several concepts. First, I will look at Bourdieu’s concepts of the (literary) field and capital and Putnam’s ideas on bonding vs bridging social capital, before delving into Meizoz’s concept of posture. Then, several aspects of internet culture will be explained. Together, this will form an appropriate theoretical framework to help answer the research question.

1.1 The literary field

In order to analyse the position of Instapoetry as a new player in the literary field, we need to first define that field. Pierre Bourdieu, in ‘The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed’, describes a field as a system of social positions, an area of activity in which creators aim to build a certain cultural product (167). It should be mentioned that Bourdieu wields a large understanding of culture when he talks about ‘cultural production’. Other than expressive – and more widely understood as cultural – activities as literature and music, law, religion and science, for example, are also included in this broad definition. The field can thus be anything from the literary field and cinematic field, to the academic field, etc. Any products created in these fields are not only defined by the creator, but by the expectations and opinions of the audience as well (Hesmondhalgh 216). In ‘Distinction’, Bourdieu explains that a field contains two main sub-fields: the sub-field of small-scale production (*sous-champ de production restreinte*. Bourdieu also tends to call this restricted production) and the sub-field of large-scale (mass) production (*sous-champ de grande production*). The primary difference between these two sub-fields is the level of autonomy. Small-scale production has a relatively high level of autonomy, and is, according to Bourdieu, aimed at the production of ‘pure’ artistic

products (Hesmondhalgh 214). By rejecting the mass market and thus being an ‘outsider’, small-scale cultural producers are left talking to each other. Mass production, on the other hand, is subject to the external rule (of how the market works) and is thus aimed at creating ‘commercial’ cultural goods (214). Bourdieu continuously observes oppositions. Distinctions between art and money, or creativity and commerce, are used by Bourdieu to explain differences between production and consumption in any field of cultural production (223).

The fields of cultural production, including the literary field, are structured by sets of possible positions. Fields consist of and are maintained by constant struggles over these positions. Newcomers, the avant-garde, have to fight against dominant styles to take up a place in the field, and the dominant producers, the conservatives, fight against newcomers to ensure they keep their place and keep the field as it is. This is done by position-takings (*prises de position*) and enables newcomers to restructure the sub-field and field (Bourdieu 1991 p. 5). Over the years the field of cultural production grows bigger and more intricate, largely due to the rise of new technologies. Positions previously seen as dominant can, by the arrival of newcomers, later on, be seen as old-fashioned. This shows that the meaning and value of a position-taking can constantly change, even though the position-taking itself does not change. It can thus be concluded that a dominant position is always temporarily dominant, at some point newcomers will catch up (19).

Hesmondhalgh notes that Bourdieu has little to say about mass cultural production and rather focuses on small-scale production in his studies, which is remarkable because mass cultural production, of course, has a lot of social and cultural importance nowadays, but it also largely determines conditions in the restricted production sub-field. Of course, it should be noted that the literary field as Bourdieu described it does not exist anymore. His field was based on the French literary field in the late 19th century, but it is fair to assume that the English-language 21st-century literary field looks vastly different. All of this makes it harder to

determine where to place Instapoetry. It could be said that Instapoetry started as sub-field small-scale production, however, it is tricky to determine whether it is now small-scale, mass-production or outside of the literary field altogether. The question that arises is whether everything on social media is inherently mass-production because anyone, anywhere, can see it? Or is it small-scale because it only takes one person to create it and upload it without any apparent outside influences (other than the restrictions imposed by the social media platform itself)? To get closer to answering this question we will need to look at capital.

1.2 Capital

The concept of capital is central to Bourdieu's field theory. The battle on the cultural field predominantly revolves around two kinds of capital: economic and symbolic capital. As John B. Thompson explained: "Power is not a magical property that some individual or organization possesses: it is a capacity to act and get things done that is always rooted in and dependent on the kinds and quantities of resources that the agent or organization has at its disposal" (5). Economic capital is centred around profit and commerce, which usually involves a large audience. Symbolic capital, however, is synonymous with recognition in the literary field. Not the public, but rather a select group of people that have a certain cultural capital (such as critics, highly acclaimed authors, a literary prize jury, etc.) plays an important role here (Bourdieu 7). Often, symbolic and economic capital are associated with certain genres. When it comes to literature, thrillers and romance are often associated with low-brow culture and economic capital, while plays and poetry usually suggest high-brow culture and symbolic capital. Those creators who strive for economic capital rely more on people outside of their field (for example investors, politicians and consumers) than those that strive for symbolic capital. Those striving for symbolic capital are usually more autonomous because symbolic capital revolves around recognition inside the field. The autonomous make art for art's sake rather than to entertain the public. What is interesting, however, is that there appear to be even more subdivisions in the

field of cultural production. If you only look at the small-scale production side, you can divide this field into two again. You have the avant-garde ‘art for art’s sake’, often newcomers in the field, and the consecrated avant-garde, who often have high levels of symbolic capital in the shape of honour and acclaim (such as literary prizes). When newcomers enter the field, they often seem to start at the side where symbolic capital is big and there is little economic capital, but throughout their career will slowly move towards the other side. However, one can merely guess at the creator’s motivations and whether someone only strives for either economic or symbolic capital. I would argue that most present-day creators seek a mix of both.

With the rise of social media, we have to re-examine the different kinds of capital. We will see that economic and symbolic capital are still in play, of course. One cannot escape the push-and-pull of both in the literary field. There is no evident kind of capital that is specific to social media yet, though. On Instagram, for example, posts can be commented on, liked, and shared. Say we call this ‘social media capital’. The attention a creator gets on Instagram through comments, likes and shares, in turn, influences the algorithm and shows their work to more or fewer people depending on how well they’re performing (this says nothing about the apparent quality of the work, just about the social media capital. The higher the social media capital, the more they will be promoted, which in turn leads to even more social capital). This shows just how much social media, and the internet in general, have disrupted the existing cultural field. Not only can newcomers bypass the gatekeepers of the field in ways previously not possible (e.g. by self-publishing work online), but they can acquire a new kind of capital whilst going against the status quo of the literary world.

I first opted to call the aforementioned capital ‘social capital’, but I found that social capital did not cover the full meaning. It is, however, important to delve into social capital a bit more. Social capital, originally coined by social theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, has been studied extensively by political scientist Robert Putnam. He distinguishes two forms of social capital:

bridging social capital, which emanates from weak ties, and bonding social capital, which emanates from strong ties. In essence, bonding and bridging social capital has to do with different kinds of communities, which is what makes it so interesting to apply this theory to social media. Before the advent of the internet, one's bonding social capital was usually restricted to intimate ties such as family relations, likely also connected. Strong ties like this are associated with trust, reciprocity and emotional support (Ellison et al. 20). Bridging social capital is mainly based on weak ties, such as acquaintances. Strong ties can also provide bridging though, and weak ties can provide bonding (Hampton). If we look at social media, it is clear one can find predominantly bridging social capital. The main medium providing bonding social capital would probably be Facebook, but Instagram provides mainly bridging social capital. Still, social networks can be seen as a way of enhancing weak bridging ties because of their accessibility. It has become easier to grow from bridging social capital (weak ties, mere followers for example) to bonding social capital (friends, or a close community). This corresponds somewhat with the findings of Neves, who studied the academic discourse on the link between social capital and the internet. That study only looked at friends-of-friends who evolved from bridging to bonding though. It did not focus on networks such as Instagram that involve ties between a creator and their followers/fans.

1.3 Posture

The term 'posture' was first used by Swiss sociologist Jérôme Meizoz. Meizoz described posture as "a dynamic self-representative frame in which their work and behaviour should be understood" (Franssen & Honings 182). Because I will be looking at a poet who presents herself and her work online this concept seems especially appropriate to use. It will be useful in order to determine where, or even *if* Rupi Kaur places herself in relation to the literary field. Things such as calling oneself a poet, publishing a book and doing poetry readings can all be indications

of a desire to be accepted as an actor in the literary field. Meizoz's research is built on Bourdieu's concepts of 'position-taking' and his field theory:

The space of literary or artistic position-takings, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field is inseparable from the space of literary or artistic positions defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital. The literary or artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles that tends to transform or conserve this field of forces. (Bourdieu, "Rules of Art" 30)

This means that actors in the field (for example a writer or musician) need to possess "a determinate quantity of specific capital" to justify their presence in the field and take up the position in 'the structure of the distribution' of that capital. Every actor benefits from an advantageous objective position and will strive to enlarge their symbolic or economic capital.

Meizoz tries to construct a link between the institutional and discursive approach of literature in his interpretation of Bourdieu's ideas. In this approach one still looks at the context of the creation, but one also looks at the artist (in this thesis the instapoet) and their work. Meizoz describes the position-taking in the literary field using his term 'posture': "Meizoz sees a literary posture as a 'dramatization' of authorship, the staging of an image constructed by the author and adopted by the media to introduce a particular work to the readers. Posture is a form of self-representation that authors implement in the context of their literary production" (Odile Heynders 182). Both the work ("ouvrage") and the relationship to the collective are part of the position-taking. A poet will most likely instinctively follow some kind of similar career path as their predecessors in order for the public to recognise them as a specific kind of artist. Meizoz argues that even if the artist presents themselves in a singular thus unique way, they will still model themselves after pre-existing postures. In 'Modern posterities of posture,' he argues that

“posture is not uniquely an author’s own construction, but an interactive process: the image is co-constructed by the author and various mediators (...) serving the reading public” (Meizoz 84).

To properly analyse Rupi Kaur’s posture, we do have to adjust Meizoz’s concept of posture to include Ervin Goffman’s definition of performance, as well as Stephen Greenblatt’s concept of self-fashioning. Goffman, a Canadian sociologist, wrote in his first and most well-known book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) that performance can refer to “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (8). This definition enables us to observe the effects of various performances like captions on Instagram posts, interviews, photos and interactions with the audience. Meizoz briefly refers to Goffman as well, saying that “the committed writer, the poète maudit, the buffoon, the anti-establishment figure, or the working-class author, are just so many ‘presentations of self’ derived from a tradition” (81). Stephen Greenblatt, one of the founders of new historicism and an American literary historian, introduced the concept of self-fashioning in his book *Renaissance, Self-Fashioning* (1980), which is meant to refer to constructing your identity and public persona based on a set of widely accepted standards. This idea corresponds with Meizoz’s notion of modelling oneself after previous actors in the field so you will be recognized as also being an actor in the same field. I will be looking at the ways in which Rupi Kaur does or does not model herself after previous actors in the literary field.

1.4 Internet culture

Social media

First, we need to establish a definition of the term *social media*. In *Pragmatics of Social Media*, Hoffman notes that the concept of the *medium* has traditionally been used by linguists as the material system that enables people to produce, store, access and engage in

communication over time. This can be anything from paper, your voice or a screen. The term *social media*, according to Hoffman, “refers to (the totality of) digitally mediated and Internet-based platforms which are interactively used (by individual and collective participants) to exchange, share and edit self- and other-generated textual and audio-visual messages” (4). It is this broad definition of social media that will be used in this thesis. In addition to this definition, I think it is valuable to add that accessibility plays a large role in the interactive aspect of social media. Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram) are, first and foremost, free, and thus accessible to anyone with an internet connection and a device. Content on social media platforms is also usually relatively short which also contributes to its accessibility.

A study on possible emancipation as a result of a sense of community found that the participatory aspect of social media allows for a stronger sense of encouragement. Social media platforms and their use may develop a sense of self-efficacy and empowerment (Riquelme et al. 1114). It allows for communities to be formed, deliberately or unconsciously, by enabling people to find particular topics, often via hashtags (Hoffman 549). The (ostensible) ease at which communities can form is critical when it comes to online activism and exploration of identity, both topics exceedingly relevant to young adults today (Holowka 183).

Instagram

Instagram is one of the fastest-growing social media platforms out there at the moment. It was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and launched in October 2010 for iOS phones. Android phones did not have access to the app until April 2012. Back in 2018, the platform reached 1 billion monthly active users, and that number is still growing (Instagram, 2018). Over 70% of teens use Instagram and it is particularly popular among women (Pew Research). Users can upload photos and videos to their account and edit them with various filters. In recent years the story feature has become increasingly popular. This feature allows

followers or all users (depending on privacy settings) to see a photo, video, text or a shared post uploaded to the story for only 24 hours. An account can be either public, where everyone can follow the account and see, like and comment on the posts, or private, where posts can only be seen by pre-approved followers. Users can either scroll through their feed that shows uploads from people they follow, watch stories uploaded by people they follow or scroll through their explore page. This page is different for everyone as an algorithm determines what is shown based on who they already follow, what content on Instagram they tend to like, the hashtags used in a post, and overall popularity. On top of that, users can also look for content based on hashtags and locations.

Whereas a platform like Facebook is meant to connect predominantly with people you already know, Instagram is aimed much more at discovering other people. The way the platform is built provides new opportunities for social interactions and self-representation. Along with the rise of Instagram came concerns around the effect on body image (Fardouly and Vartanian; Feltman et al.; Cohen et al.; Holowka; Lup et al.; Waterloo et al.). Seeing as Instagram's primary function is sharing images, some studies suggest that Instagram is perhaps more detrimental to women's body image issues than other social media platforms (Fardouly and Vartanian; Holland and Tiggemann). The amount of likes posts would get was increasingly affecting young women (Feltman et al.). In 2019, Instagram started rolling out a pilot that would hide the number of likes on a post, hoping that people would stop attaching their self-worth to the number of likes their post would get (BBC). Accounts that promote body positivity and counter body objectification are ever-increasing though, and several studies have also determined that the public space of Instagram allows users to explore activism, body positivity and self-identification more than they feel comfortable doing so in their offline lives (Cohen et al.; Holowka). This ties into the importance of community formation that social media platforms such as Instagram enable.

Thus far we have established what social media is and what functions Instagram has. We also need to define Instagram to have a framework through which we can view Instapoetry. Following the aforementioned studies on both social media and Instagram, Instagram is defined as an open platform on which photographs are generally enhanced and which encourages users to connect through follows, likes, comments and hashtags. Its interface stimulates users to compare themselves to others and to see and share positive content on their feed.

E-literature

Instapoetry cannot be seen as a completely new phenomenon. It is, according to Berens, part of a long tradition of E-literature. E-literature is, as the name already suggests, the umbrella term for all electronic literature. Rettberg (2018) defines e-lit as “writing created by or on computers which responds to the affordances of new technologies and is characterised by a ‘sense of play and wonder’” (203). He also provides insights into the motivations writers might have to experiment with a new medium. In line with his definition, he suggests that it originates from the urge for writers to explore how to write in/on it, whereas readers experience the urge to question how to read it. Flores (2018) distinguishes different generations of electronic literature and suggests we are currently seeing the rise of a third generation. Contrary to the first and second generation when e-lit writers would build electronic interfaces themselves, e-lit writers are turning to existing (social) platforms and devices. It could be said that this inherently makes the third generation e-lit more accessible as readers and writers will not need to develop new skills but can use the skills they already have to read 3rd gen e-lit (because they are already familiar with the pre-existing platforms and devices).

In her book *Literature and Social Media* (2020), professor Bronwen Thomas links third-generation e-lit to the key features of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 was a term invented by Darcy DiNucci back in 1999 in an article for Print Magazine and refers to websites that allow users to interact with each other as creators of user-generated content in a community. Web 1.0 era

websites, on the other hand, restricted people to viewing content only in a passive way. According to Thomas, the idea of community and democratisation of content gatekeeping and management are inherently linked to Web 2.0. Boundaries between content creators and consumers are also increasingly blurred, as well as the line between ‘professional’ creators and those previously seen as amateurs (32). Returning to Berens, then, we see that Thomas’ findings and Rettberg’s definition correspond with her conclusion in ‘E-Literature’s #1 Hit: Is Instagram Poetry E-literature?’. She argues that, yes, Instapoetry is e-literature, because “the performative materiality of social media platforms reshapes the contemporary literary field. The e-lit aesthetic of difficulty moves from close reading the medium-specificity of first and second-generation works, to skimming the content and close reading the promiscuous read/write capacities of social media metadata” (11). Whilst Berens predominantly focuses on the aspect of surveillance capitalism on social media and the (lack of) visible data behind the medium, her conclusion that social media platforms reshape the current literary field (in length, form, themes, etc.) can hardly be countered.

1.5 Methodology

A variety of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods are employed in this thesis. Because Instagram is a relatively new platform and Instapoetry is an even newer literary phenomenon, not a lot of research has been published yet. I, therefore, had to develop a coding system in order to get the data I required to define and describe Rupi Kaur’s posture. I picked two different (significant) years and analysed both the visual and textual aspects of all of Kaur’s Instagram posts in those years. I then created a coding system based on the recurring themes I observed and noted the number of likes on each post, which enabled me to analyse the relations between the category and like count.

Based on the data gathered in chapter two I picked the five most-liked posts from 2014 and 2018 and performed a content analysis on all of the comments that people left on those

posts. I determined a number of categories that the Instagram comments fall into in order to gain a better understanding of how the public interacts with - and receives Instapoetry: the categories *visual*, *text*, and *emotion*. I chose not to include comments in which someone merely tagged someone else by way of ‘showing’ them the post unless it also involved a statement that could be put into one of those categories.

I used Linders & Op de Beeks model for quantitative and qualitative analysis of literary criticism to look at the professional reception of Instapoetry, specifically the reception of Kaur’s poetry. They use categories based on earlier categorisation models by Mooij, Boonstra, Praamstra, Verhoeven and Zhong. The model distinguishes the object of evaluation and the quality or value assigned to that object. It lists 12 different aspects to which 15 properties can be ascribed. For the purpose of this research I only looked at the aspects, as shown below:

Aspects

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| A Style | G Themes/Ideas |
| B Structure | H Symbolism |
| C Setting | I Appearance & presentation |
| D Plot | J Author/Intention |
| E Dialogues | K Whole/part |
| F Characters | L Other |

For the sake of this research and specific corpus, I have had to make a few adjustments to the model, which will be shown and explained in chapter 4. Due to the lack of reviews of Kaur's poetry collections in traditional media, I also selected online articles for inclusion in the corpus, as well as articles on the general phenomenon of Instapoetry (as long as they include Rupi Kaur). The model will help me to perform a content analysis that will give insight into the general view of critics towards Instapoetry. Together with Kaur's posture and the public's reception, this will allow me to show how Instapoetry finds itself at the intersection of internet culture and the literary field, and to map the current interaction between the two.

Chapter 2: The Poet

2.1 Background

As a child, Rupi Kaur, born in Punjab, India, immigrated to Canada with her Sikh family. She went on to study rhetoric and professional writing at the University of Waterloo. Now, at 26, she has two published poetry collections, has been on the ‘Forbes 30 under 30 list’ and was one of ‘BBC’s 100 women’ in 2017. While she was still a student, she started putting some of her poems on Tumblr, and near the end of 2013, she moved to Instagram. She initially had a modest audience, slowly gaining followers on the internet. Fans began asking for a physical book so in November of 2014 she self-published *Milk and Honey* on Amazon. It sold nearly twenty-thousand copies, but this was not yet her truly big break.

March 2015, Kaur posted a picture from a school project on her Instagram feed. It showed herself lying in bed, showing fake menstruation bloodstains on her sheets and clothes. She aimed to break down the stigma surrounding menstruation, but Instagram removed the picture twice, claiming it violated the website’s Community Guidelines. Kaur challenged the removal and the image was eventually restored, but she also posted about the situation on Facebook and Tumblr, writing:

you deleted a photo of a woman who is fully covered and menstruating stating that it goes against community guidelines when your guidelines outline that it is nothing but acceptable. the girl is fully clothed. the photo is mine. it is not attacking a certain group. nor is it spam. and because it does not break those guidelines i will repost it again. (rupikaur_)

The story went viral, getting media attention from all over the world (BBC, Jezebel, Huffington Post, etc.), resulting in her gaining massive public support and a much larger fanbase. Of course, this was also free publicity in a way, the kind any self-published author could only dream of. Later that year, publishing house Andrews McMeel re-published *Milk and Honey*. The publishing house was first primarily known for adult colouring books, but dared to foray into a new domain with its successful publication of *Love and Misadventure*, a poetry collection by previous instapoet Lang Leav. This publication, other than strong sales, offered Andrews McMeel brand new market insight. In an interview with Publishers Weekly, Kirsty Melville (publisher and president of Andrews McMeel) admitted that they noticed “there was this generation of young women, mostly in that early-20s age group, who were responding to this form of expression” (Gross par. 4).

In an interview with *PBS NewsHour*, Kaur tried to explain why she chose to publish her poems on social media. Addressing the fact that the gatekeepers of both worlds (the literary and the digital world) are vague, she thinks that it is, in fact, a natural match. Things are rapidly changing and “social media has become a platform for so many different industries. Why can’t poetry do the same?”, she notes (*PBS NewsHour*).

It is also important not to forget her immigration background and upbringing in a tight-knit Punjabi-Sikh community. One explanation for Kaur’s success might lie in the fact that she, as a woman of colour, appeals to a massive audience of people who may be marginalised and silenced (Pâquet 305). She can give them a voice by using her words, and some might argue that no matter where the poetry appears, that is what poetry should do. In an interview with *The Guardian*, she noted that South Asian women were generally meant to be quiet and not discuss personal issues. When she started to publicly address things like rape, menstruation and abuse in her writing, “her parents would wonder what her hypothetical mother-in-law might think one day”, and Kaur hit back: “then why did you teach me to say things out loud?” (Kassam). We

will see that her cultural and historical background is a considerable part of her identity and poetry and that this is largely appreciated by her audience.

2.2 Posture

It is important to mention that I will only look at the posture of Rupri Kaur in this chapter, the position-taking, not her image (e.g. how she is portrayed by others). It is, of course, nearly impossible to verify whether the posture she emits is authentic, but it will still give us an idea of what posture she chooses to perform. For example, her social media feeds, her website, interviews, etc. These can all show a similar posture but may vary drastically as well. Ervin Goffman's notions on the presentation of the self are related to Meizoz's concept of posture. In *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1959), Goffman looked at the way people compose a version of themselves for the rest of the world. The composition of the self is a conscious performance and requires careful attention. According to his theory, there is essentially a front-and backstage. If well-oiled, the posture will be believable and seemingly authentic to the audience (Goffman, qtd. in Lamert and Branaman 23). In this digital age, we can essentially see social media feeds as the stage, and the profile picture and bio can be seen as props. Rupri Kaur could start with a blank piece of paper and compose her ideal version of herself. In *Classifying the Narrated #Selfie: Genre Typing Human-Branding Activity*, Toni Eagar and Stephen Dann confirm this idea, arguing that "the internet allows noncelebrities to build and display an image of themselves to a mass audience without the power ascribed by fame. The shift from the power of celebrity to the 'everyperson' creates opportunities for individuals to self-express a constructed public image" (1837).

First, we should look at Kaur's Instagram and Twitter bio's. Her bio on Instagram (June 2019) merely says "mother of Milk and Honey and The Sun and Her Flowers", positioning

herself both as an author and a woman. It also suggests that Kaur is famous enough to be recognised by just these titles. Her bio on Twitter, interestingly, says: “author. Performer of poems”. It is worth noting that she calls herself an author here, not a poet, and emphasises the fact that she performs poetry (e.g. in her shows). What these two bios show, both consisting of just one line, is that people will adjust their posture depending on the context. The image she wants to portray on Twitter appears to be different to the image she wants to portray on Instagram. Referring back to Goffman, they could be seen as different presentations of the self. I found that we can establish four different aspects of Kaur’s posture that become very apparent: the ‘influencer’; the politically engaged poet; the South Asian poet; and the private poet.

The ‘influencer’



Figure 4: Screenshot of Rupikaur's Instagram profile on June 9, 2019, *instagram.com*, 2019. Retrieved June 9 2019, from http://www.instagram.com/rupikaur_. Screenshot by author.

At the moment of writing this, her bio contains a link to her shop, confronting the follower with the commercial aspect of her posture. Kaur cannot live purely on the words that she posts; she needs to sell her collections too.

If you scroll through Kaur’s Instagram feed, the most noticeable thing is that she chooses to alternate between her poems and pictures, mainly of herself. While this might purely be an aesthetic choice, it has been proven that “photos with faces are 38% more likely to receive likes and 32% more likely to receive comments, even after controlling for social network reach and activity” (Bakhshi et al. 973). Due to the scope of this thesis, it cannot be verified if Kaur diverts from these percentages or not, but we should keep in mind that the number of pictures

of her, rather than pictures of, say, scenery, might be a conscious decision. The Instagram algorithm, known to be tricky to adequately navigate, may influence the look of her feed as well. The algorithm will receive signals if a post gets lots of likes and comments, resulting in that post being seen as “quality, engaging content that more people will want to see” (Carbone). Hence, one could argue that since she has stuck with the alternating theme, she aims to cater to the algorithm.

Her activity on Twitter shows there is no such algorithm at play there, as she is less active on that social media platform. Rather than posting her poems on there as well, she mainly retweets things on Twitter, thus sharing other peoples’ voices. If you would look purely at tweets seemingly written by herself, she – on average- tweets about once a month.

Interspersed between pictures of herself and the poetry posts, Kaur regularly posts a picture or video of an interview that she has done on her Instagram account. Sometimes she will include a link, but every time she tags the person or outlet that interviewed her. The same goes for appearances in magazines, as well as when she attends events. This is beneficial for both parties: not only will her followers be able to see her media appearances, but she is also using her influence and number of followers to direct them to- or promote someone or something else.

Kaur is not only an influencer in the more mainstream sense of the word (commercial and ‘lifestyle’ aspects) but it could also be argued that she has influenced the literary world.

The politically engaged poet

When we consider the level of political engagement and her posture as a politically engaged poet, we once again see that the posture differs per medium. If we purely look at Kaur’s poems, we find that few poems specifically address race, for example. The majority of both collections is devoid of racial politics and instead addresses a broad audience craving relatability. Yet, to some marginalised readers, she is the epitome of diversity representation (Gulattee 21-06-2017,

5:36 p.m), while to her white and/or Western audience she predominantly represents the average millennial, having become “the voice of a generation” (Groen). In an interview with feminist website *HelloGiggles*, she mentioned that what made her start writing poems was her “desire to document the existence of a woman like me. growing up i was a very quiet girl. i was extremely sensitive and emotional. which meant i carried a lot of weight . . . i needed to share. i wrote to have a place to put those feelings so i could feel lighter.” Seeing as the website is aimed at millennial feminist women, this explanation she gave should not surprise us too much, nor the lack of any mention of race.

If one looks at her political posture on Instagram as opposed to Twitter, disparities become apparent immediately. Her Instagram feed features various political poems, such as a poem featured in *Milk and Honey*: “You tell me to quiet down / cause my opinions make me less beautiful / but I was not made with a fire in my belly / so I could be put out.” (26). Several captions that accompany poems that are otherwise not noticeably political, detail her feelings on, or information about topics such as International Women’s day, domestic abuse, immigration, climate change, inhumanity at the US-Mexico border, and activism in general. All in all, however, it is easy to overlook her political posture on Instagram. Twitter, on the other hand, features a much more politically engaged Rupi Kaur. It is worth noting that she currently (June 2019) has merely 237 thousand followers on there, as opposed to the roughly 4 million followers she has gathered on Instagram. One could argue that there is a sense of cautiousness surrounding politics in relation to the number of followers, as to not influence relatability and marketability too much. Note that Kaur shows highly autonomous behaviour on Twitter with her political (re-)tweets. According to Jasmina Illicic and Cinthia Webster, this is one of the main features a celebrity exhibits when they are deemed authentic by an audience (418). In chapter three we will look at whether this is also the case on Instagram.

So, Kaur's poetry itself is not necessarily that political. Her presence in the field, however, is. She appears in articles called "feminist movement leaders you must know" (Gray), between names such as bell hooks, Malala Yousafzai and Ida B. Wells; "Rupi Kaur: A Heroine of Feminist Poetry" (Cornillon); and "Poetry sales soar as political millennials search for clarity" (Ferguson). An interview conducted by Sabrina Estrella for *Femmagazine* shows Kaur giving the following examples of issues concerning her work:

"first there's just the disadvantage of being a woman in this society compared to a man. so much *less* privilege. and then add being coloured on top of that and you're facing even more oppression depending on what your background is, what language you speak, your socioeconomic class, what your parents do for a living, your education, etc. it's layers and layers of oppression. i always felt that being a woman of colour who is an immigrant to this country (i am from punjab and settled in canada). i was always stuck between two worlds, but never fully belonging to one. on a land that does not want me. coming from a land that no longer considers me its own, i had no place to call mine. i never felt beautiful enough, not for western standards or eastern standards. i had to build the bridge between these two worlds and attach them together to build my own foundation. perhaps that's been the greatest struggle." (*Femmagazine*)

Here, we see her touching on feminism, race, religion, class, and immigration, giving the reader the idea her work centres around those topics when in reality, only a handful of poems do. Still, we will see that this is one of the main themes people touch upon in media coverage.

The South Asian poet

When Rupi Kaur first started writing, she assumed she had to write love poems. But, she said in an interview with *Antidotemag*, she "wasn't able to, and I was so upset with myself. I was just writing about my people. When you're a first-generation immigrant, the idea of home is so

complicated to you. Home isn't here, because people look at you like you're from somewhere else, but you go back and they do the same thing. So where is home?" In this interview, Kaur positions herself as an immigrant, writing about her experiences. This does not actually come forward in many of her poems, but her geographical background often makes an appearance in interviews. Note that she does not claim a representational status for an entire group, though. In an interview with *Teen Vogue*, Kaur remarked that her "experience as a South Asian woman is not every South Asian woman's experience". According to her, it is "about time we then add more of these voices so they can show the multi-dimensional facets of things that I'm being pigeonholed into" (Ceron). There are two interesting things about this statement. First, this is a prime example of position-taking. She poses herself with, but simultaneously apart from South Asian women. She accepts that she is part of that group, but feels that 'South Asian' is oversimplified. She is in favour of adding more voices in order to prove how varied South Asian experiences can be, and is willing to be one of those voices.

On top of her position-taking in interviews, she takes up this posture in several tweets and Instagram captions as well. A number of retweets just in 2019 concerned Punjabi news, as well as spreading awareness of Punjab history, such as information about the JallianwalaBagh massacre. On Instagram, one post merely shows the text "we remember / June 1984". The caption details a long personal story about her family living through the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, or the 1984 Sikh Massacre, and the subsequent trauma ingrained in her family's history. As for the reason why she started writing, the 'frequently asked questions' section on her website notes that "our trauma escapes the confines of our own times. we're not just healing from what's been inflicted onto us as children. my experiences have happened to my mother and her mother and her mother before that. it is generations of pain embedded into our souls" (Kaur). We can argue that her posture as a South Asian poet is always at the forefront.

Private poet

Above any other aspects of Kaur's posture, however, comes Rupi Kaur as the private poet. By 'private' I mean an absence of personal details. Even though she started on Tumblr and remains active on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, she is not obsessed with social media herself:

I disconnect a lot more now, because I went through a long time when my screen was glued to my face and I was just hooked. I needed to know every detail at every moment about what was going on and what CNN was saying and following every sort of event, and that wasn't really good for my mental health. And so now I know how to take a step back. I think it goes back to self-care, because we get so aggravated and we get so frustrated because we want to see that change, right? (*Teen Vogue*)

This posture of the private poet comes forward in other interviews as well. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Rupi Kaur pointed out that while she mostly stays off social media, she also struggles with that because it is simultaneously the place where she showcases her work (Kassam). For a public figure, it can understandably get overwhelming because everyone has an opinion. Before she started her second poetry collection, Kaur decided to limit her social media use, because she noticed she was constantly waiting for the next comment. She was also scared other people's opinions would influence her writing:

"In trying to write the second book, and trying to maintain honesty with myself I didn't want that to be tainted by other people's perception of my work. Because you can read something and people might be like "Ok, love your poems about heartache, you should write about those more and less about such and such," and so when I read those types of comments two years ago I would actually sit there and be like "Oh my god yeah, that person's probably right." But then it started feeling like I was cheating on myself, and so since then I always want to write with a blank canvas." (*Interview Magazine*)

One could argue that her conscious decision to create more distance between her and social media resulted in her being able to laugh at parodies and jokes. There are countless memes - an amusing or interesting item that is spread widely online, particularly through social media (Merriam-Webster) – that reference her writing style. When Kaur is confronted about this in an interview with *The Cut*, she simply laughs and acknowledges that there are people who do not think her poetry is “real poetry”.

Other than a few personal stories in captions and some pictures with, for example, family members, Rupi Kaur remains relatively private on Instagram. Her poems deal with such personal themes, that there is a stark and almost ironic contrast between the two. When you look at the poems that are posted on her feed, it becomes clear that all of the poems are from her two collections. The seemingly highly curated feed contains no new poems, so anything personal or new has to be found in the captions that go along with the posts. The pictures, too, are often in indistinctive places, not revealing anything about who Rupi Kaur really is. In fact, while she is *followed* by many, she does not *follow* anyone at all on Instagram. For some reason, Instagram is where she draws the line: “it teaches you [to] put up your boundaries and really figure out, OK, this tool is so great, and it’s brought me so many great things, but I also need to protect myself if I want to continue doing what I’m doing” (*PBS NewsHour*). Her Twitter account shows a more spontaneous side. Here, she does follow people and retweets others, but on neither Instagram nor Twitter is there any direct interaction between her and her followers.

We can determine that she values privacy and will gladly be the private poet, yet we will see that her followers praise her for being very personal and real. That raises the question of how the two coexist, the private, almost sheltered poet, as well as the personal, relatable and authentic poet. How does she manage to do this?

2.3 On-/Offline

Kaur's public presence can be divided into on- and offline activities. According to Marshall, celebrities have been able to add and/or change a new 'self' with the rise of online culture (45), but the situation is different with Rupi Kaur. She became well-known online, and as a result, is able to publish books and tour. Even though most of her career-related activities occur online, it is nonetheless worthwhile to look at the offline activities and products. How commercial is Kaur exactly? She is creating a market for her physical books and merchandise, and tours result in money as well. What does she do on- and offline?

Books

First, we should look at Kaur's poetry collections. By popular demand, she decided to self-publish her poems on Amazon after carefully editing and formatting the book until she was fully content with the way it looked (Kaur). She went on to sell about twenty thousand copies of *Milk and Honey* following the self-publishing route. In order to clarify just how special this is, we can use Carolan and Evain's self-publisher categories. They came up with three categories: Big fish in the big pond, big fish in the small pond, and small fish in the big pond (286-288). The big fish in the big pond are those who are successful authors who either publish through traditional publishing but stay heavily involved in the marketing and distribution process, or who launch a publishing venture themselves, as is the case with J.K. Rowling and her online platform *Pottermore*. Big fish in a small pond, on the other hand, refers to self-published authors who have succeeded in establishing their authority as authors in a niche market. They argue that niche markets are well-suited for self-publishing as specialist books are generally not appealing to large-scale publishers. Whereas these two categories might be a threat to traditional publishers, the last one is not. The 'small fish in the big pond' category, according to Carolan and Evain, contains most of the self-published authors. As Print-on-Demand becomes easier to navigate, the competition on the market

increases massively. Most of these authors do not find success (289). If one applies this categorisation to *Milk and Honey*, Kaur would fall into the ‘big fish in the small pond’ category first. That is if we can see poetry as a niche market. At the time, however, short, simple, ‘millennial’ poetry was certainly niche, and she managed to reach significant success by self-publishing.

After the menstruation awareness Instagram post, the book was picked up by Andrews McMeel Publishing, which re-released it under their brand on October 6th, 2015. The scope of its success was enormous. It has sold over 2.5 million copies worldwide, was on the New York Times bestseller list for over 77 weeks and has been translated into 25 languages. One could argue that this put Rupi Kaur into the ‘big fish in the big pond’ category. By the time she published her second collection, *The Sun and her Flowers*, in October 2017, her type of poetry was no longer niche. This collection, just like the rerelease of *Milk and Honey*, was published by Andrews McMeel, but she remained heavily involved in the design and marketing process. The publisher first wanted to publish the second collection in hardback, says Kaur in an interview with Jeneé Osterheldt from *The Kansas City Star*, because it would be more prestigious. Kaur quickly shot that down. She explained that paperbacks are seen as *too* accessible because they are cheaper, and not in tune with poetry:

I think it goes back to which class and race books and literature are for (...) Why publish in hardback just because that’s what they’ve always done just to be accepted by this literary community who is already not validating your work? When we are talking about art and poetry, everyone should get access to it and everyone should ignore the criticism and create” (Osterheldt).

She seems to acknowledge and accept that she operates outside of the traditional literary community and is aware of the class connotations in the literary world, as she has risen through that very same world herself.

Tour

One of the ways in which she stays involved in the marketing process is by touring. One could even argue it is part of her identity, seeing as her Twitter bio says: “performer of poems”. As we will see in the Instagram analysis, many of her posts revolve around her performances. In one of the captions that go along with a picture of her standing on a stage under a spotlight, she writes that that is “where I come to life” (Kaur, Dec. 7, 2018). It is not very surprising that she tours with her material. Success in the publishing industry nowadays requires content that is marketed creatively, in order to increase the shelf life of a book (Carolan & Evain 289). Her performances consist of, of course, her reading from her collections. In between, Kaur makes jokes and explains why she wrote certain poems.

Social Media

When we turn to her online activities, social media are naturally at the core of Rupi Kaur’s career. Starting out on Tumblr, she quickly moved to Instagram, which remains the medium where she publishes the most and has gathered the largest number of followers. Since she began putting her poems online, she steadily created an online community, which, if done correctly, is an economical yet time-consuming way of marketing her work. After all, it was her fans that requested she create a book from the poems she had thus far posted online. Her social media could essentially be seen as a place to test content, especially in the early days of her career. While her Tumblr page does not exist anymore, the other social mediums are still actively used. Instagram is where Kaur posts the bulk of her poetry. Twitter shows a more personal and politically active side of Kaur. Her public Facebook page is used sparingly, containing several professional photos and some of her longer poems accompanied by personal captions.

There is no way of knowing whether her social media posts are actually written by her, but this might not affect her aura of authenticity, which will be analysed in chapter 3. It is not visible how many people are part of her team but her website features job vacancies for a project manager, office assistant, and personal assistant. None of the job descriptions outright say that they will be tasked with writing social media posts. The reader will have to believe they are reading an authentic comment, whether illusory or not.

Website

While there is an abundance of social media websites around, there still appears to be a need to have an author website. Kaur's website contains several pages:

'about', 'books', 'art

direction', 'videos', 'tour', and 'shop' (see fig. 2). Most of the website has not been updated

in nearly two years, as can be seen on the homepage, where the release of Kaur's second

poetry collection is mentioned as a future release. Whilst still staying in touch with

recognisable characteristics (e.g. a minimalist aesthetic and lowercase text), the website seems

to feature a more artistic image of Kaur. The 'art directions' page contains several

photography series. Not only that page focuses on her image as an artist, but the 'about' page

does as well. Next to a brief overview of her career, it mentions that "she started drawing at

the age of five when her mother handed her a paintbrush and said—draw your heart out. Rupi

views her life as an exploration of that artistic journey", and "her photography and art

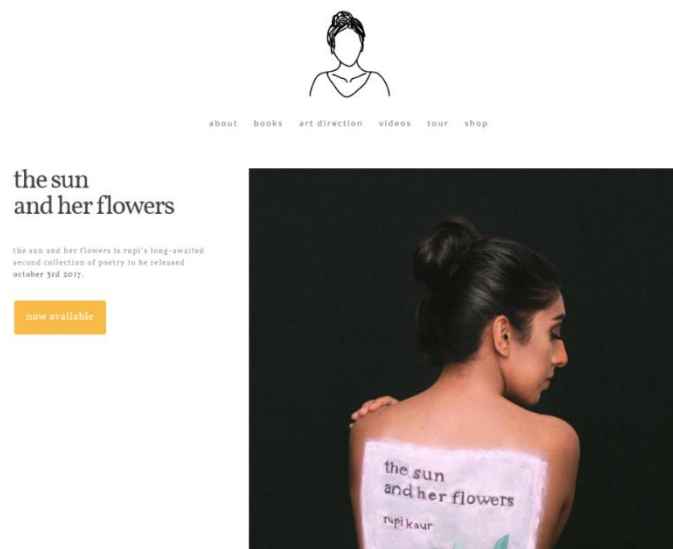


Figure 5: Screenshot of the homepage of Rupi Kaur's website on June 12, 2019, [rupikaur.com](http://www.rupikaur.com/), 2019. Retrieved June 12, 2019, from <http://www.rupikaur.com/>. Screenshot by author.

direction are warmly embraced[,] and she hopes to continue this expression for years to come” (*About*). Interestingly, this focus on visual art is not as present on Kaur’s social media. Still, for someone who built their career on social media, it seems that the website is more of a formality, rather than a means of communication with fans.

2.4 Quantitative Analysis

By publishing her poetry on Instagram, Rupi Kaur managed to bypass traditional gatekeepers such as publishing houses. It also gave her the chance to perhaps appear more authentic because of the ostensibly direct access followers think they have to the author. In order to get a clear idea of the way Rupi Kaur exploits the social media platform to spread her poetry, a quantitative analysis was performed. Within the scope of this thesis, it proved impossible to analyse her Instagram feed in-depth across nearly six years, so instead, I have opted for a comparison between 2014 and 2018. The year 2014 is relevant as this is the year in which she self-published *Milk and Honey* (Nov. 2014), but most of that year contains posts pre-publications. The year 2018, on the other hand, is the first full year after the publication of her second collection, *The Sun and her Flowers*. In order to explore the potential differences pre- and post-publication, all the pictures and accompanying captions posted in all of 2014 and 2018 were collected, which resulted in a data set of 380 entries. 121 posts from 2014, and 258 posts from 2018.

Photographs

If we must believe Kaur’s website, photography has always been a big part of her life. Her art direction series are introduced with the following text: “Rupi sees photography as her tool to tell the world how she envisions it. she mostly shoots in film, but polaroids are her camera of choice” (*Photography*).

Merely the descriptions and/or captions of the photographs as data would not clearly convey information, hence I ascribed one of the following categories to each photograph: audience, promo, art, poet, personal, writer, travel and other (see appendix 1). While most photographs fell into a single category, some photographs could be sorted into multiple ones. Some of the photos that promoted something also incorporated (Kaur's) art, for example, and a photo that showed Kaur discussing poetry with women in a workshop could have been sorted into both the 'poet' and 'audience' categories. In such cases, the photographs were categorised based on the primary goal or message of the photograph. The most prominent types of photographs were '*promo*' and '*other*', both appearing 46 times over the span of the two years. '*Promo*' pictures range from a picture or video from an interview that she would then promote in the caption, to her holding one of her books and telling people about the release, to promoting tour data. The '*other*' category is designated to posts that do not fit into any of the other categories. In most instances, these photos were of objects without clear relevance, photos of her in a nondescript place without a caption, or selfies. The '*audience*' category refers to all pictures that involved her audience. Often, these were pictures of her on stage or at the theatre or city in question, thanking the crowd in the caption. '*Art*' is used for photos involving art that is either created by her or features the artwork and artist. '*Writer*', which is only used once, has been ascribed to a photograph featuring her and a screenplay she wrote. This post felt too specific to put in the '*other*' category and does not fit into '*Poet*' either. The category '*poet*', then, refers to any post that clearly positions her as a poet, e.g. showing the place where she writes her poetry, the notebooks containing her poems, and a video of her performing one of her poems. '*Travel*' is assigned to any pictures that reference travelling or feature her as a tourist.

Lastly, the category of *'personal'* is used for any pictures with friends or family, anything related to her childhood, and posts that are accompanied by captions detailing personal experiences.

| 2014 | Amount | Percentage of total in 2014 |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Art | 1 | 1.6% |
| Writer | 1 | 1.6% |
| Travel | 2 | 3.3% |
| Audience | 8 | 13.1% |
| Personal | 9 | 14.8% |
| Poet | 10 | 16.4% |
| Promo | 13 | 21.3% |
| Other | 17 | 27.9% |
| | 61 | 100% |

Table 1: Data categorisation of photographs posted by Rupi Kaur in 2014

Table 1 shows the data collected for 2014. A total of 61 pictures were posted. Of those 61 posts, the biggest category was *'other'*, with 27.9%, followed by *'promo'* with 21.3%. The smallest categories were *'travel'*, *'art'* and *'writer'*, each taking up less than 5% of the total amount of photographs posted that year.

Table 2 shows the data collected for 2018. A total of 129 photographs were posted by Rupi Kaur in that year. The two biggest categories were *'audience'* and *'promo'*, with 27.9% and 25.6% respectively. As could be expected, *'other'* is relatively big as well, taking up 22.5% of the total. *'Art'* and *'poet'* are the smallest categories, and *'writer'*, interestingly, is entirely non-existent during 2018.

| 2018 | Amount | Percentage of total in 2018 |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Writer | 0 | 0% |
| Art | 2 | 1.5% |
| Poet | 4 | 3.1% |
| Travel | 10 | 7.8% |
| Personal | 15 | 11.6% |
| Other | 29 | 22.5% |
| Promo | 33 | 25.6% |
| Audience | 36 | 27.9% |
| | 129 | 100% |

Table 2: Data categorisation of photographs posted by Rupi Kaur in 2018

Poems

Rupi Kaur posted her first poem on November 18, 2013. This was the 19th post on her Instagram account (assuming no posts were deleted). That is when she started alternating between photos and poems as well. Most of the poems are accompanied by illustrations that she created. It is up to the reader to determine if these add any value to the poems. The majority of the poems have a title that is shown in the picture itself. The captions either mention or repeat the title, feature some emoticons, or a short comment, such as “hope 2k14 makes you weak in the knees” (Kaur, *january first*). In some cases, there will be no poem but rather promotion for a workshop or tour dates. These appear in the same minimalistic black-and-white format as her poems, so as to stay true to her layout.

Interestingly, there is a significant lack of hashtags. Seeing as hashtags are the main way to discover new accounts and posts it is surprising to see that Kaur does not feel the need for hashtags like “#Instapoetry”, perhaps relying on word-of-mouth marketing instead. Instead, after the publication of her poetry collections, she begins using the hashtags “#milkandhoney” and “#thesunandherflowers”, but there is no clear pattern distinguishable as she does not add these hashtags to every poetry post. Only a handful of poems were featured in both years. Of course, it is possible that poems reappeared in 2015-2017. Kaur often links particular poems to days like Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Earth Day and International Women’s Day.

Results

There are clear differences between Kaur’s Instagram posts of 2014 and 2018. If we take a look at the photographs, one notices that not all of them had Kaur herself as the subject in 2014. Often, the central point of the pictures was an object or nature scenery, suggesting that she took the photos herself. In 2018, most photos were *of* her, having been taken by someone else. We can only speculate as to why, it could be a sign of professionalisation, but it may

also stem from the fact that pictures that include a face generally receive more comments, as well as the similarities those pictures have to those of other celebrities and influencers (Bakhshi et al. 973).

There is a significant growth in posts concerning audience: posts in that category more than doubled (13.1% to 27.9%). This is most likely due to the fact that, with two poetry collections, she tours more than before. This is not surprising, as her having a bigger audience results in her being able to add more tour data. Relatively, there are slightly more promotional posts in 2018. The ‘*other*’ category has shrunk by 5.4%, which suggests that more pictures had a clear message or purpose in 2018 as opposed to 2014. The number of travel photos has grown, which can be linked to her career flourishing, in turn resulting in more money, as well as her going on tour across the world. There is a significant reduction in ‘*poet*’ posts, which raises an interesting question. Has it become less necessary to position herself in that field?

Changes have been less dramatic when it comes to Kaur’s poetry posts. One noteworthy difference is the fact that she uses hashtags with most poetry posts in 2018. However, it makes sense that she did not do that in 2014 because *Milk and Honey* was only released near the end of that year. Her poetry posts in 2018 were also accompanied by more personal captions, as well as heavily political ones. This is quite a stark contrast with her poetry posts from 2014 in which she refrained from politics.

2.5 Qualitative Analysis

To present a better overview of the kind of posts that Kaur puts online several will be highlighted and walked through.

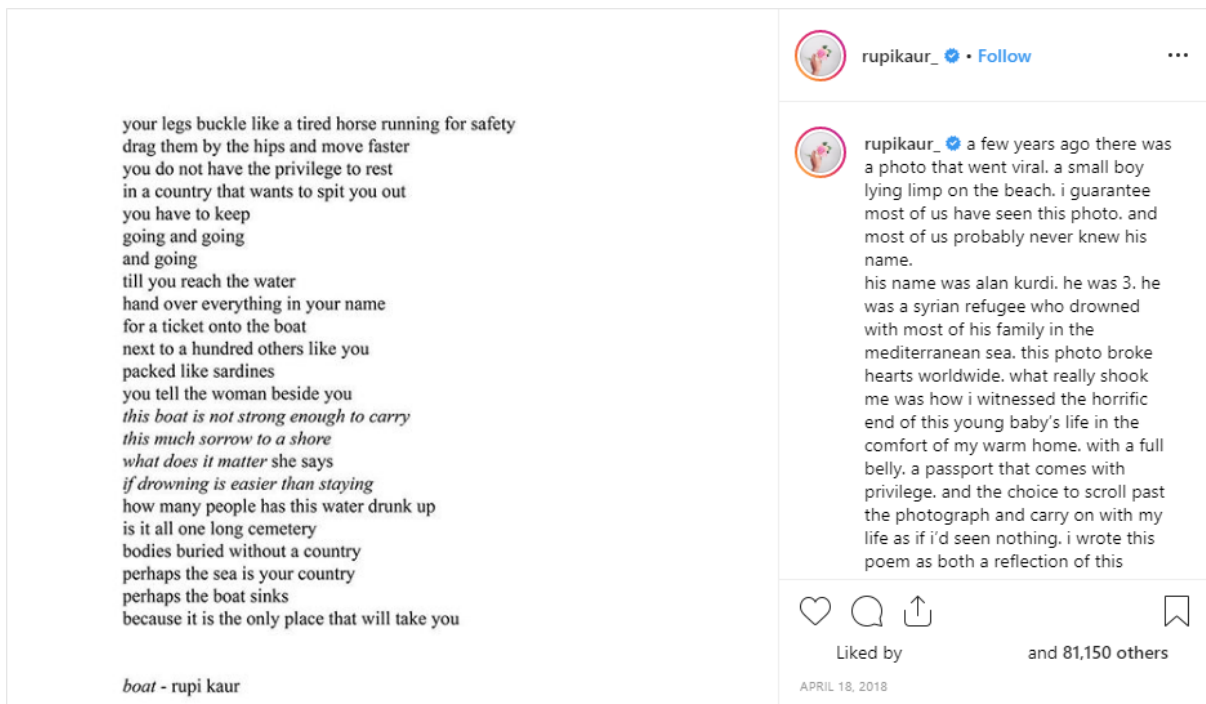


Figure 6: (above and right) Screenshot of Rupi Kaur's Instagram post on April 18, 2018, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved June 13, 2019, from https://www.instagram.com/p/BhsgGv_gcw5/. Screenshot by author.

All usernames and comments by other people have been redacted from the screenshots, as they are not relevant here.

tragedy and the prevailing apathy that comes with privilege. and today it is published in 'boy on the beach' a book that humanizes the boy we witnessed in that famous photo. the book is written by alan's aunt — tima kurdi. alan kurdi and his family were hoping to eventually reach canada and join aunt tima. the aftermath of alan's passing deeply affected us here in canada. forcing us to confront the callous ways our political infrastructure had failed this family. i think it spoke to something deeper as well — the dehumanizing ways those of us with resources and means interact with those who need help.

tima kurdi and alan's father (the only family member who survived that day) now work passionately to bring awareness to the global refugee crisis. i want to congratulate tima on the release of this beautiful book. get it. read it. she has given us alan's story. painted life back into her family's lives. thank you tima for humanizing alan for us. thank you for including the poem 'boat' from #thesunandherflowers in your book. i am thankful for you and your fight.

60w



Fig. 3 shows the poem 'boat', that Kaur posted on April 18th, 2018. This post is accompanied by a long caption, in which Kaur explains what caused her to write this poem. Simultaneously, however, it is a promotional post. Further down the long caption, it becomes apparent that the poem appears in another book. Here, we can see that a post can have multiple functions. On the one hand, this post simply offers the followers a poem to read, on the other hand, the caption is personal, political, promotional and aims to raise awareness.

As mentioned earlier, sometimes the posts that stylistically are part of the 'poem side' of the page layout are not poems. Fig. 4 shows a post that appears stylistically similar to Kaur's poems, i.e. black and white and with an illustration. This post, however, is meant

to promote a new project. The caption does not offer any additional information on the project.



Figure 7: Screenshot of Rupi Kaur's Instagram post on December 12, 2018, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved June 13, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BrRCuoEHNfC/>. Screenshot by author.

Of course, some posts will be purely promotional. Kaur's status in current popular culture has grown to be big enough to warrant her being on the cover of magazines, and naturally, those are then promoted in a post (see fig. 5). When it comes to media appearances, Kaur tends to mention (using the @ symbol followed by someone's account name) the people and the media outlet involved.



Figure 8: Screenshot of Rupi Kaur's Instagram post on October 9, 2018, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved June 13, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BosZcmNH00m/>. Screenshot by author.

As we could see in the quantitative analysis, fourteen (photograph) posts across the two years that were analysed belonged to the 'poet' category. Fig. 6 and 7 are two examples of such posts. One presumably shows one of Kaur's notebooks in which she writes her poems. At least, that is what the photo

suggests: handwritten, almost stream-of-consciousness, a ‘true’ poet (see fig. 6). The other one



Figure 9: Screenshot of Rupi Kaur's Instagram post on June 1, 2014, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved June 13, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/or-ow9nA9b>. Screenshot by author.

that seeing as most of the ‘poet’ posts across the two years are from 2014, Kaur felt more of a need to position herself as a poet before the publication.

shows Kaur herself, sitting on a bed surrounded by note- and sketchbooks and staring directly into the camera. The caption says: “you taste like the poetry i wish i could write”. This photo depicts her in a semi-writing state; even the caption mentions writing poetry (see fig. 7). It could be argued



Figure 10: Screenshot of Rupi Kaur's Instagram post on September 29, 2014, Instagram.com, 2019. Retrieved June 13, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/tguUQ0nAzy/>. Screenshot by author.

2.6 Form and Themes

Now that we have focused on Kaur as a person, it is time to take a closer look at the form and themes of the poems. On a surface level, it may seem like she opted for a simple look for the sake of simplicity: all lowercase letters, and the period as the only interpunction that is used. In fact, these are all features of Gurmukhi script, which is used for Punjabi, Kaur’s mother tongue. She can read and understand the language but does not have the skills to write poetry in it as well, so instead, she decided to use the features, appreciating how “all letters are treated the same” (*faq*).

“so in order to preserve these small details of my mother language I include them within this language. no case distinction and only periods. a world within a world. which is what i am as an immigrant. as a diasporic punjabi sikh woman. it is less about bthis eaking the rules of english (although that’s pretty fun) but more about tying in my own history and heritage within my work.” (*faq*)

There is a more conscious decision behind the technique she applies to her poetry. In fact, details in her writing could even be linked to her South Asian posture, discussed earlier on in this chapter. However, while she states it is a homage to her mother tongue on her website, she has sometimes presented another reason to other audiences, suggesting that she carefully selects what information she shares where. Instead of mentioning the Gurmukhi script or Punjabi in the interview with *HelloGiggles*, she demonstrates a love for branding, symmetry and “visual experience” as the reason for her writing style. Although this could still be read as truthful, it is important to note that she omitted her South Asian background in an interview for a predominantly white audience, instead expressing her love for symmetry.

Most of her poems are also accompanied by an illustration, each of which is drawn by herself. This too was a conscious choice, intending to create a juxtaposition with the words, says Kaur in an interview with *HuffPost* (Spencer). She wanted the poems that dealt with serious and mature topics to be depicted next to a “child-like, and semi-scribbled” (Spencer) illustration in order to leave the reader feeling somewhat uncomfortable.

Kaur’s fame and poetry are subjected to a variety of opinions, as we will see in chapter four, but the form is addressed too. Sadaf Ahsan, for example, links the motifs, line breaks and lower-case letters to the simplicity of writing that is usually found on social networks. She argues that, because its simplicity is easy to imitate, Kaur’s writing style has therefore become practically synonymous with Instagram poets (Ahsan, qtd. in Pâquet 302). Agatha French likens

Kaur's poetry to "an image of a friend's face or a beautiful sunset" and uses the term "affirmation".

It should be noted that Kaur has been accused of plagiarising another poet, Nayyirah Waheed, in the past (Dabiero). Several similar metaphors were found, as well as similarities in style: short poems, line breaks, lowercase letters, and their tendency to end poems with a dash, followed by the title and/or their name. This accusation never really gained traction. Waheed published her collection *Salt* before Kaur published anything and was one of Kaur's "[women of colour] writing inspirations" (Dabiero). The issue was never addressed by Kaur herself. The accusation was made several years after Kaur gained popularity, so it might have had to do with the subsequent power imbalance, as well as the audience simply not caring enough. Of course, we can only wonder, but it appears that there was not enough incentive for Kaur (e.g. the risk of losing followers) to address the accusation.

Themes of feminism, woman- and motherhood, abuse and immigration are all addressed by Kaur in her poetry. *Milk and Honey* is divided into four parts: 'The hurting', 'the loving', 'the breaking', and 'the healing'. The description on her website says that the book "is the experience of violence. abuse. love. loss. femininity. the book is divided into four chapters. each chapter serves a different purpose. deals with a different pain. heals a different heartache. milk and honey takes readers through a journey of the most bitter moments in life and finds sweetness in them because there is sweetness everywhere if you are just willing to look" (*Books*). This corresponds to her statement in an interview with *PBS NewsHour*, explaining how she thinks "people just want to feel understood and feel seen. It's what I want growing up. And so that's why I think the poetry works so well". *The Sun and Her Flowers*, written several years after Kaur's first collection, deals with more delicate themes, particularly the process of grieving and healing. Most of her poems are so simplistic and general in their nature (see figure 8, 9) that they are likely relatable to anyone reading them, which is arguably at the core of her

quiet down i begged my mind
your overthinking is
robbing us of joy

- rupi kaur



there is a conversation
happening inside you
pay deep attention
to what your inner world
is saying

- rupi kaur

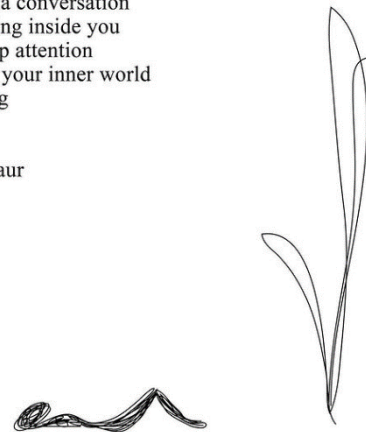


Figure 11: Screenshot of Rupi Kaur's Instagram post on April 27, 2021, Instagram.com, 2021. Retrieved May 9, 2021, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/COJZkFTheep/>. Screenshot by author. Figure 12: Screenshot of Rupi Kaur's Instagram post on February 23, 2021, Instagram.com, 2021. Retrieved May 9, 2021, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CLnR6r1hyg4/>. Screenshot by author.

success. Figure 8 and 9 are examples of such simplistic Kaur poems. Note that I do not intend to use simplistic as a synonym for bad. These examples showcase a technique that Kaur tends to use often, which is a seemingly straightforward affirmation or 'relatable' phrase with any punctuation removed and line breaks added (especially the latter is a commonly known poetic technique).

Chapter 3: The followers

What makes social media different from other media, as the name gives away, is the social aspect. Media forms that prioritise the dimension of interactivity not only provide a bigger connection to others; “they also provide a greater sense of control and ownership of the cultural form. New media forms are thus modelled on providing the possibility of exchange and interplay” (Marshall 15). Interactivity, according to J.D. Bolter and R. Grusin, is basically how new media non-stop engages people in making decisions regarding what and how they see things (29). Although that definition of interactivity could be applied to many media forms, it seems particularly apt for social media because one can consciously choose to follow and unfollow people, therefore it is inherently interactive whether you also comment on posts or not.

Communication on Instagram (and communication on most, if not all social media) is by its very nature at a physical distance and often not synchronous. The communication between the sender’s production (e.g. Rupi Kaur posting an Instagram post) and the receiver’s reception (e.g. a follower seeing the post on their feed) is a turn in the conversation. The comment that the follower may then post is the start of a new turn. Interaction does not need to be between only two people, of course. Interaction can occur in many variations but on social media, it will usually be one-to-one communication or one-to-many communication. Both turns in the aforementioned communication will thus be understood as one-to-many communications (one-to-one *is* possible with private reply/messaging function on the app) (Bou-Franch et al., qtd. In Dynel 38).

The aim of this chapter is to find out what followers/readers of an instapoet focus on. One way to do this would be to conduct interviews, but I decided to look at the communication

as that is at the base of social media. It would be impossible to look at thousands of comments on hundreds of posts, so to comply with the scope of this thesis, I collected all of the comments from the five most-liked Rupi Kaur Instagram poems from 2014 and 2018 (see figures 8 and 9).



Figure 13: Screenshots of Rupi Kaur's most-liked poetry posts in 2014, Instagram.com, 2014. Retrieved August 5, 2020. Screenshot by author.

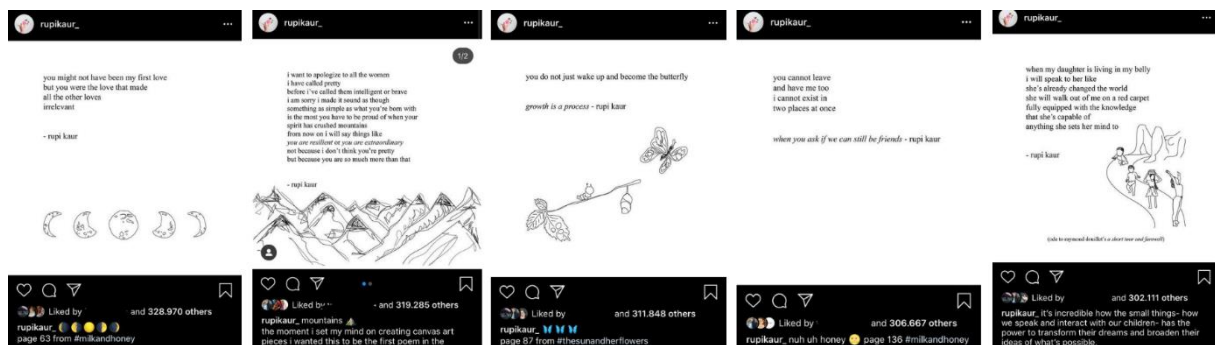


Figure 14: Screenshots of Rupi Kaur's most-liked poetry posts in 2018, Instagram.com, 2018. Retrieved August 5, 2020. Screenshot by author.

Take note that there is a big difference in the number of likes, and thus comments, on posts between 2014 and 2018. This could potentially impact the kind of comments Kaur got on her posts as well. From the thousands of (English) comments that were analysed, ones that only consisted of tags (a person mentioning another person: @[username]) and comments that only consisted of emojis (emoticons) were left out of the data.

The three categories I placed comments in were *visual* (e.g. ‘Feeling this illustration a lot personally,’) *text* (e.g. ‘Such beautiful words’) and *emotion* (e.g. ‘It touched me’). The first

two were chosen because those are the two aspects that every single poetry post from Rupi Kaur consists of. Based on my hypothesis that commenters would mainly look for an emotional link I chose to add the category *emotion*. It is important to note that I also highlighted comments that were noteworthy but did not fit into these three categories, otherwise I would simply be looking for anything to confirm the hypothesis posed.

Results

Multiple comments, especially in 2014, mentioned sales. Several people commented on her posts, regardless of what the poem was about, asking where they could buy her book or simply stating that they were. User *ashleyking.j*, for example, commented “@crazyblossoms that's it I'm buying her book”. Similarly, user *leeyummi* said, “@looburnabee3 this girl is amazing I'm buying her book. I'm all up in my feels”.

One of the first things I noticed after collecting the thousands of comments was that the majority of comments were merely tags. While most of those had no additional text, some seemed to use the post to continue a conversation with someone, for example, user *humaira_oxox* who commented “@_azzz1 me and Fatz atm”, or user *ruby_boyle* who commented “Also this re my question the other day @caitlindove”. The shareability is an inherent part of Instagram and can be done by tagging people or sharing the posts to someone’s ‘story’ (a post that disappears after 24 hours). Research has shown that users share posts (in this case poems) that they feel emotionally connected to (Waterloo et al 1814). Relatability plays a significant role in this shareability. This becomes apparent with the large number of comments saying things along the lines of “truth!” and “me”, as well as people saying the poem inspired them (to write or to take action in some other way). An example of this is a comment by user *ivysouthernbelle89*, who commented “You’ve inspired me to write my #MeToo Memoir. Thank you @rupikaur_ Your work has helped healed my soul to do the work of feminism—speaking, writing, performing and validating my own TRUTH. God bless you And thank you”. This

corresponds with Felski's argument regarding the reception of poetry, particularly by marginalised women, and the important role relatability plays in this (47). She distinguishes two different kinds of relatability, or recognition: the first is to want to be accepted and included in social life (29-30). The other "revolves around a moment of personal illumination and heightened selfunderstanding" (30). The relatability that instapoets show, or at least Rupi Kaur, might be a combination of the two. The user, like those just mentioned, recognises themselves in a poem, thus relating to it and experiencing "a cognitive insight, a moment of knowing or knowing again (Felski 29). The relatability of the poet and/or the poem along with the community function that Instagram can provide can lead to that user finding others who feel the same and offer public acceptance. We can see this in the following comment by user *Mschristinao*: "It's like all the feelings and thoughts I had during my breakup with my first love, you have so beautifully put down on paper. It's a bittersweet knowledge to know that we are connected through heartbreak. Thank you @rupikaur_ #sisterhood."

Another interesting finding is that while the texts were called 'poems' for the most part, a significant amount of commenters called Kaur's writing 'quote', e.g. a comment by user *thatgirllbellaa*: "one of my favorite quotes from milk and honey," "this quote really gets me," from user *tor.sim*, or "Perfect timing for this quote. Thank you @rupikaur_," from *desiderata_lesueur*.

Of course, there were negative comments as well, like one from user *srishtea.madaan*, who said "Yeah it's true and all, but it ain't poetry, honey!," and "This is. The blandest. Fake deep thing. I have read @aybida," from user *xhesikag*, though it should be mentioned that these were few and far between. To illustrate this we can look at, for example, the fourth most-liked poetry post from 2018. Out of the 1692 comments Kaur has received, only six of those comments have negative undertones. Overall there were much fewer negative comments than I anticipated. The 2018 data does show more negative comments than the 2014 data, but that

makes sense with Kaur having a much larger audience and having had much more media attention as well as having published a book. One has to wonder whether these comments are the users' own opinions based on the text. As of yet there is no measurable way for a follower to figure out whether an instapoem has any literary merit. We can see here that there is a need for a kind of 'digital capital' (e.g. follows and likes), as followers and amount of likes cannot, in reality, represent symbolic capital the way it has been used in the literary field.

Visual

I was surprised by the lack of comments that focused on the visual aspect. For some reason, even though Instagram is a primarily visual platform, most reactions focused on text (though, of course, Rupi Kaur is known for her poems, not her drawings). There were a few pretty straightforward comments, such as “@gracemoore97 feelin this illustration a lot personally” by user *lwagner48*, and “That sketch is a masterpiece” by user *seekadi*. However, one comment by user *fervent_fictographer* actually analysed the drawing as opposed to the poem: “This is really the perfect illustration to go with these words. As well as the message I love the simplicity of the visuals. So much white space, black lines. Reminds me of a Japanese ink painting and the words, haiku”.

Text

Most comments that contained more than just a tag focused on Kaur's poems. Again, the majority was pretty straightforward. User *caity_francis* commented “Love love love your work! Such beautiful words to read x,” *jackie_p__* said “@nechellemybelle right?!? Guh. Her poetry is profound in so many ways!,” and *maneetkhera_* complimented Kaur, exclaiming that “Your writing is a gift to read. The truth in the most simplest form. You're so inspiring”.

A smaller group of commenters seemed to engage differently with the poems. It is not necessarily literary criticism or a thorough analysis, but people reflecting on the content of the

poem on a deeper level. User *_sweetasssara*, for example, commented that “This one constantly breaks my heart . I understand this so muchwhy start the fire if you won't stay around to appreciate the glaring burn...?”. We can also once again see the relatability aspect in this comment. Another user, *Rrrrrlllljjjjllllrrrr*, commented on a different post:

“This is my philosophy about relationships. Friendship, lovers, family. When it's done, let yourself mourn. Like any good funeral, remember the good/the bad/everything in between and weep until you've given credence enough to take away what you've learned and move on.”

Others did not shy away from showing their enthusiasm and appreciation. User *Kfossatron* noted the important role one of Kaur's poems had had in her life: “When I was nervous to bring a daughter into this world, this poem was my everything. Thank you @rupikaur_ for your words.” User *Sweetradical* was deeply enthusiastic about Kaur's writing, arguing that “You are truly the greatest poet of our time, Rupi. You are a legend. You need to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.”

Emotion

The highest amount of comments focused on the emotion it elicited. This is not surprising seeing as this is an important factor of relatability. User *childofdestinyxox* tagged a friend and wrote “@lalo_5577 please get into her. She breaks me all the time,”, while *leonietustin* commented on another post that “This touched a part of my heart I thought i had killed”.

Whether that second comment was meant for Rupi (one-to-one communication) or the rest of the community (one-to-many communication) is unclear. Another user tagged someone mentioning the high sense of relatability she felt, suggesting the other person might too. Here we see shareability and relatability in one:

“@m00ntoast_ I just saw her poetry as beautiful. You should read them. I find connection to every single one of them, even if they don't apply to my life. It's saying that how they leave shows you who they are. If they leave screaming at you rather than peacefully, they have a lot of inner turmoil. If they leave with good and calm intentions, then they are at peace with themselves. And everything in between, etc. Look through her poetry. You might find connection with it!” (@lolmariam)

Looking at these comments one can conclude that followers say nothing about poetic form or the literary status of the work but the majority focuses on sharing or the emotional impact of the poems.

Chapter 4: The critics

Along with the rise of Instapoetry came more media attention, both positive and negative. Poet Rebecca Watts published the harsh critique ‘The cult of the noble amateur’, exclaiming that:

“the new poets are products of a cult of personality, which demands from its heroes only that they be ‘honest’ and ‘accessible’, where honesty is defined as the constant expression of what one feels, and accessibility means the complete rejection of complexity, subtlety, eloquence and the aspiration to do anything well.” (PN Review)

She expressed disdain for the “rise of a cohort of young female poets”, and characterised their work as “the open denigration of intellectual engagement and rejection of craft”. So is ‘real’ poetry a craft with the purpose of intellectual engagement? Perhaps, but Watts fails to mention what this craft would entail and how one would acquire it. Nevertheless, the opinion piece led to a great deal of support to Watts, as well as rebuttals. Dr. Eleanor Spencer-Regan, for example, accused those belittling Instapoetry of ‘mislabelling’, of looking at emerging poetry the wrong way (Byager). In the article by Byager, published on digital media website Mashable, she argued that:

“the emergence of this new kind of poetry can really make us question what poetry is and what makes it good. But these poets do reach large audiences, and their work clearly resonates with a lot of people — though it may not be to the personal taste of many academics and literary critics.” (Byager)

The article goes on to say that Instagram poets have “succeeded at securing more diversity in a genre traditionally perceived to be dominated by white, straight people (both when it comes to both readers and writers).” Byager argued that the Instapoets’s strategic use of social media has actually reinvigorated and democratised the poetry world.

It has evidently been hard to avoid Rupi Kaur, both in traditional and digital media. However, does that mean she has been reviewed the way traditional poets have? Or has the focus been predominantly on Instapoetry as a phenomenon? To analyse the attitude of critics and journalists towards Instapoetry, in particular Rupi Kaur, I will analyse 20 English articles in this section. When collecting the data Kaur's name garnered plenty of results, but the majority of appearances of her name were in bestseller lists, so for the purpose of this research I have left those out of my selection, as well as articles that only focused on the debate surrounding Kaur's menstruation photo. I found that mentions of Kaur in articles predominantly led to interviews. Those that did not contain any evaluative statements (outside of the actual interview) were also left out of the corpus.

The categorisation model that I will be using is Linders and Op de Beek's model for quantitative and qualitative analysis of literary criticism. Their model consists of a list of evaluation categories and is based on previous categorisation models from Mooij (1973), Boonstra (1979), Praamstra (1984), Verhoeven (1988) and Zhong (1995). Linders and Op de Beek's model offers twelve different aspects that can be linked to 15 properties evaluative statements can relate to, as shown in chapter 1. While their corpus consists of literary reviews published in newspapers, my corpus is slightly different due to the topic. Because articles concerning the phenomenon of Instapoetry (that do discuss Rupi Kaur) were also selected as a result of the lack of literary reviews of her poetry, I have decided to adjust Op de Beek's model. First, I will only look at the aspects that are discussed by the critics and journalists. This again has to do with the fact that a large part of the corpus is about the phenomenon, hence why I have also eliminated several aspects and added a few sub-aspects (see [...] on the left. The aspects 'plot', 'dialogues', 'characters' and 'whole/part' have been taken out, as those are not relevant to Instapoetry. I have added the categories 'typography' and 'impact'.

Aspects

- A** Style
- B** Structure
- C** Setting
- ~~**D** Plot~~
- ~~**E** Dialogues~~
- ~~**F** Characters~~
- G** Themes/Ideas
- H** Symbolism
- I** Appearance & presentation
- J** Author/Intention
- ~~**K** Whole/part~~
- L** Other

Aspects

- A** Style
- B** Structure
- C** Setting
- D** Themes/Ideas
- E** Symbolism
- F** Appearance & presentation
- G** Typography
- H** Author/Intention
- I** Impact
- J** Other

4.1 Results Instapoetry phenomenon

Out of the 20 articles analysed, 15 focused on the phenomenon. This means that Rupi Kaur was still mentioned in these articles, but they focused more on Instapoetry as a whole. Kaur's poetry collections were not specifically discussed. There were hardly any newspaper articles, but those that exist focus on the phenomenon (or consist of interviews). Two articles were placed in the literary section, one in the 'news' section, and one in the 'fashion' section. The others were online articles and were either assigned to the 'book' category of that website or were not assigned to any category. Nearly half of the articles focused on the phenomenon were found to

have at least one statement to which the ‘author/intention’ aspect could be assigned (7 out of 15). ‘Style’ was a popular aspect as well (6 out of 15), as well as ‘themes/ideas’ (8 out of 15), both of which are not surprising since both the inherent style and similar themes are what make Instapoetry ‘Instapoetry’.

Style

Evaluations about ‘style’ are understood as comments about language use, tone, choice of words and sentence structure (Op de Beek 114). Most evaluative statements regarding this had a negative tone. *The Guardian*, for example, published an article called ‘The inevitable backlash against Instagram’s favourite poet’, which included the following statement:

“Even if you like her writing, these little jabs at her plaintive voice are spot on: one of Kaur's actual poems muses "If you are not enough for yourself / you will never be good enough / for someone else" and, while that gained 175,000 likes on Instagram, it has the air of the slurred advice you might overhear at the back of a Wetherspoons.” (Khaira-Hanks)

Later in the article, it is said that “Kaur treads a fine line between accessibility and oversimplicity, and often stumbles into the latter”, again pointing at her style. An article in *The Times* was even less subtle at their attempt at gatekeeping, the writer noting that “there’s also something disturbing about the fact that Instapoetry at its most popular is Instapoetry at its worst: non-rhyming, non-scanning self-help truisms delivered in randomly broken-up lines to resemble our conventional idea of poetry” (Hodgkinson). Not all evaluative statements on ‘style’ were negative, though. E. Ce Miller, in an article published on *Bustle* called ‘We need to talk about why people hate ‘Instapoets’ so much – and why they’re wrong,’ concluded that “perhaps it’s not that one is any more or less ‘poetry’ than the other, but rather that different kinds of poetry appeal to readers at different times, for different reasons”.

Themes/Ideas

The majority of the articles focused on the phenomenon discussed themes. Interestingly these evaluative statements were more positive than those regarding 'style'. An article in the *New York Times* called 'Rupi Kaur is kicking down the doors of publishing' did argue that "her themes don't vary too much", but that statement was as negative as it got. Another *New York Times* article called 'Why Rupi Kaur and her peers are the most popular poets' combined a statement on style and themes:

"Kaur's work is often called 'greeting-card verse,' but it would be a mistake to reduce her to that. Kaur writes movingly about immigration, domestic violence, sexual assault and other substantial subjects, though she follows quickly with self-empowerment affirmations to alleviate the sting." (Wilson)

Wilson does admit that it is not necessarily the themes that cause Instapoetry to be dismissed as 'not real poetry', but its style. Then again, he admits he is most likely not the intended audience. A similar statement to Wilson's was made in the article 'Instagram poets society: selfie age gives new life and following into poetry' in *The Guardian*, stating that "it would be too easy to lump the popularity of Instagram poetry as soft-focus, sentimental nonsense. But there is some appeal beyond greeting-card quotability for Kaur, in particular. She chooses harsh subject matter" (Dean). Overall, the attitude regarding the themes Kaur tends to write about seems to be rather positive. People praise the fact that she writes about progressive and relevant themes such as immigration, race and feminism.

Author/Intention

Because the author is responsible for the text one could say that any evaluative statement about the text is also an evaluative statement about the author's decisions. Still, the 'author/intention' code has been given to statements about the author: their personal qualities, methods or (supposed) intentions regarding their work (Op de Beek 117).

Opinions on Kaur as an author varied, though again, they were predominantly positive.

An example of this is:

“As a young woman of colour in a world where white, male delectations are treated as the definitive barometer of taste, Kaur speaks a truth that the literary establishment is unlikely to understand. (...) but to read Kaur's success as an omen of the death of poetry would be to unfairly dismiss writing that contains bravery, beauty and wisdom. Frankly, the literary world is saturated with white male voices of dubious quality. Kaur's poetry should be given the same freedom to be flawed.” (Khaira-Hanks)

The writer places Rupi Kaur in the literary field, both opposite the “literary establishment” and alongside the “white male voices of dubious quality”. Her success and her background, as well as the status quo, are mentioned as factors that one needs to take into account when looking at her poetry. The article ‘On brand, Rupi Kaur’ on *Livemint* included a similar argument in which the writer said that “to dismiss Kaur’s impact on this vast majority is to view culture from a vantage of extreme arrogance. The problem lies precisely in judging her through those constructs. Rupi Kaur is her own brand with her own narrative of success. If you rate those poets by the parameters that define Kaur, it is they who will fail” (Ghose). Both articles argue that one should not judge Kaur and her poetry by traditional standards, but rather by the new standard she has set. Kaur’s success appears to be a common theme in evaluative ‘author/intention’ statements. *The Spectator* published the article “‘Instapoetry’ may be popular, but most of it is terrible’ which was mostly negative, as the title suggests, but the author also wrote: “call me superficial, but I find the degree of Kaur’s success incredibly exciting” (Hodgkinson). This article appeared in late 2019, long after the pinnacle of ridiculing Kaur’s poetry. Still, this quote suggests like he is almost ashamed to admit to having some positive sentiment towards Instapoetry and/or Rupi Kaur. The tension in the literary field surfaces here. On one side of the literary field, we have the intellectual ‘bourgeois’ critic looking at the

phenomenon of Instapoetry. On the other side of the literary field, we have Instapoetry, poetry on a digital medium catering to a mass audience. The space in which the critic moves attaches value to symbolic capital, and to culture as a status symbol. The sensation of shame is then not entirely out of place. The ‘intellectual’ audience is not meant to appreciate mass audiences and economic capital, no, it should reject them. But Hodgkinson does have some degree of appreciation for Instapoetry/Rupi Kaur. Part of the reason for this may be that instapoets, as opposed to most other mass-market artists, possess a high level of autonomy, which before was predominantly linked to having a small audience and/or no economic profit. Kaur proves otherwise, and thus shakes up the existing literary field.

Impact

I found that several articles discussed the impact of Kaur’s popularity, but these were not necessarily statements that primarily fit the ‘author/intention’ category, nor ‘drawings’, ‘themes/ideas’ or ‘style’, hence they were coded as ‘other’. An article in *The Economist*, for example, mentioned that “though some have criticised her work as formulaic or flimsy, Ms Kaur is undeniably equipped with the poet's ability to articulate emotions that readers struggle to make sense of. That, more than striking line drawings or social-friendly graphics, explains her soaring popularity,” as well as the following statement: “although it is decidedly a product of the zeitgeist, Ms Kaur’s poetry is powered by something more enduring” (I.T.). Hodgkinson wrote how “in accumulative form, [Kaur’s] poems seemed to have a rare honesty,” also pointing at the emotional impact. E. Ce Miller, who defended Kaur’s style in a *Bustle* article, noted the impact Kaur’s poems had on herself:

“Do I wring my hands and furrow my brow over Rupri Kaur’s latest Instagram post in the same way I would over, say, Shakespeare’s 107th Sonnet? No. But also, maybe? While the brow-furrowing inspired by Shakespeare has everything to do with the poet's actual words on the physical page, the thought that goes into digesting Kaur’s

(and others') work has to do with the issues her verse makes me consider in my own life and the lives that exist around me. Where Kaur's poem acts as the jumping off point for considering universal experiences of love and loss and pain and redemption, Shakespeare's 107th sonnet is the whole point." (E. Ce Miller)

It appears that not just Kaur's followers, but critics as well, recognise the value of the emotional impact Kaur's poetry can and does have, and are unsurprised by its subsequent popularity.

Other

The 'other' aspect was given only to evaluative statements that did not fit into any other category. Either no other category was applicable, or the critic's phrasing was too vague to be able to classify it (Op de Beek 118).

4.2 Results Rupi Kaur reviews

Out of the 20 articles analysed, only 5 could be seen as a review of Rupi Kaur's poetry (collections). At first glance Instapoetry, at least Rupi Kaur's poetry, does not seem to be taken that seriously, hence the low amount of actual reviews. The reviews are, more often than not, disparaging. One critic has trouble calling Kaur's work 'poems', rather than 'verses', the other is noticeably jealous of Kaur's successes, yet another is outright annoyed that Kaur's work is called poetry.

Style

A scathing review of *The sun and her flowers* in a *Deadspin* article with the scornful title 'Instagram poet Rupi Kaur seems utterly uninterested in reading books' did not shy away from criticising the style: "The "poems" contained [in *The sun and her flowers*] are pitiful, vapid, exploitative, and possibly plagiarized" (Adler). Note the air quotes around the word 'poems', suggesting that the author is reluctant to even call Kaur's work poetry.

Others also had trouble calling it poetry. A critic on *The Poetry Foundation* said the following:

“Is it interesting as poetry? Not to me (...). Kaur's verses - okay, *okay*, her poems - are simple and, yes, I would say, simplistic, but they are obviously resonating with a wide and deep audience. (...) Things go viral for a reason - there was an audience just *waiting* for verse like Kaur's.” (Ali par. 3)

He does acknowledge that many people seem to appreciate Kaur's poems, but he hesitates to call it poetry and then calls it ‘verse’ again in a subtly sarcastic manner. Ali argues that the criticism Rupi Kaur has received is no different to previous poets, or, in his words, “actual” poets. After this, he returns to critiquing the style: “When I say the poems are “superficial,” I mean that the language is plain, the observations are not stunning or surprising,” (par. 5) and that he “would tell her to stop putting those summarizing phrases or words at the close of her verses” (par. 6).

Ali is not the only critic inclined to give Rupi Kaur advice of some sort. In ‘On Rupi Kaur's Insta-poetry’ on *The Varsity*, the authors suggest that:

“Literary forms and genres should be challenged. They should evolve and be made accessible to contemporary audiences – but in a way that follows at least some structural elements of its traditional form (...). But accessibility does not mean eliminating poetic devices from the genre.” (Park & Abdelmeguid par. 6)

The question remains: what are those poetic devices? It is hard to find one poetic device that every poet uses. And why should one stick to structural elements of poetry's ‘traditional form’ (whatever that form may look like)? This is gatekeeping at its finest.

These authors, similarly to Ali, acknowledge her “ability to connect with readers”, yet “cannot shake the annoyance and frustration [they] have with her works being labelled ‘poetry’” (par 5).

Symbolism

The label of ‘symbolism’ is attributed to evaluative statements regarding the use of imagery, e.g. metaphors. Statements varied from being very straightforward, like “I find the metaphor impenetrable,” (Alam par. 2), to statements hinting at a lack of symbolism, a lack of anything to uncover:

“Maybe it is in this quality that the real problem lies. Kaur's verses touch the surface of situations. They identify: they do not interrogate. They provide moments of recognition; they allow the reader to notice something in their own perception through the voice of Kaur, but they do not uncover new moments of perception. To me, in a poem the writer reaches for the reader and the reader reaches back - in this moment of contact the unknowable or unthought is illuminated. There's no such transaction yet in these or in other kinds of instant poems, or "pop poetry" - they are more texts for consumption, they are a one-way ticket.” (Ali par. 10)

This quote could have been coded with other aspects as well, but I found the accusation of a lack of anything to uncover hint mostly towards a lack of symbolism, as if Kaur’s poems are too literal, too simplistic. We can spot another implicit definition of poetic quality here: poetry, according to Alam, is supposed to interrogate, not merely identify. Instapoetry is purely for consumption, commercial literature, which is apparently a one-way communication (as opposed to traditional poetry?).

Author/Intention

Whilst evaluative statements about Rupi Kaur in articles about the phenomenon of Instapoetry were generally positive, those made in the reviews were significantly harsher.

The aforementioned article published on *Deadspin* was not only critical of Kaur's style but also her as an author. Referring to a profile published on Rupi Kaur, Adler writes: "I don't have much disdain for her readership, but after reading Fisher's profile this afternoon, I have a whole lot of disdain for the artist herself," and "Kaur is the portrait of pseudo-intellectualism". It is important to mention that Kaur does not seem to pose as an intellectual (unless, of course, writing poetry is in itself an intellectual act). It did not end there, though. If anyone can separate the art from the artist, it is not this critic. She condemns Kaur's supposed intentions:

"This person, who by all means seems well-intentioned, is making a shit-ton of money on the merits of simplicity and ignorance. Kaur is, in industry parlance, a hack. And while most of us who write for a living believe ourselves to be hacks, at least most of us don't run around saying the ultimate goal of our work is to be blown up to poster size." (Adler)

Here, we can see clearly that the criticism is based on whatever the critic assumes Kaur's intentions are, and that that does not fit the norms of how a poet should behave. The norm is to never talk about financial gain, nor to strive for financial gain. Kaur, according to Adler, is a 'hack' merely because she has found a way to make a lot of money writing poetry for a mass audience. Adler explicitly denotes striving towards economic capital, which disqualifies Kaur as a poet. Nowhere, however, does Kaur say that it is her 'ultimate goal (...) to be blown up to poster size'. There is a lot of implicit sexism and class arrogance in this and several other articles. Other evaluative statements regarding the 'author/intentions', while not as extreme as the previous statement, also give off a sense of jealousy combined with a set idea of how a poet should be:

"What do I think of Rupi Kaur? Well on the surface of it I'm mildly annoyed that I gave so many years to learning craft, reading deeply, doing everything I could to become a better poet, because it seems that all it takes is some superficial musings, some pretty

okay (honestly) drawings, and one (admitted awesome) photo to go viral and make you the most famous poet in the world, and maybe of all time.” (Ali par. 2)

In the article ‘Rupi Kaur is the writer of the decade’, published on *The New Republic*, it is said that “the mantle of poet accords Kaur a kind of legitimacy,” (Alam par. 5) which implies she is not deserving of that title according to the writer. The legitimacy mentioned here is the same as symbolic capital, which according to the tone of the quote, Kaur is not deserving of. However, he continues on a more positive note:

“Readers who know about poetry might think Kaur’s work is dumb; those for whom Kaur is their first exposure to the medium think it profound. It doesn’t matter if you believe that the title of poet belongs only to the likes of Wallace Stevens or Gwendolyn Brooks. Kaur has seized it for herself (...). She uses her verse, her drawings, her photographs, to give us persona, which is the next best thing, and also an age-old poetic technique.” (Alam par. 6)

It is interesting to see that where Ali thinks of the drawings, photographs and ideas as something average, something not necessarily worth the amount of fame it has received, Alam considers the same things part of Kaur’s strength and inherent to the poetic tradition.

Other

One evaluative statement in *The New Republic* article could not be placed in other categories, thus was given the ‘other’ aspect. This one, similar to ‘other’ aspect statements in articles about the phenomenon, focused on impact. Rumaan Alam concludes that “popularity does not generally correlate to artistic significance, but Kaur’s is an unusual case. That her work crumbles under traditional critical scrutiny is not really the point”. He notes that “there are readers who will forever think of Kaur as the first poet they loved” (par. 4). Alam seems to accept Kaur’s place in the field because of her role as an ambassador for poetry.

Conclusion

Contrary to my expectations, no article contained any evaluative statements that could be put in the 'setting' category (statements regarding the point of view, for example). No evaluative statements about spatial elements (part of the 'appearance & presentation' aspect) were found either. The latter is particularly surprising since that is a big part of Rupi Kaur's visual style (combination of drawing and text in one square post), and of Instagram in general.

Several critics attempt to claim Instapoets are not 'actual' poets or just write bad poetry, but these claims are difficult to substantiate, just like claims that Instapoets are amateurs as opposed to traditional poets. Rupi Kaur's Instapoetry is not taken seriously compared to traditional poetry. Whereas the latter is often reviewed in the book or poetry section in a newspaper, Kaur's poetry collections were only reviewed online, and the majority of attention was on the phenomenon or Kaur as a person.

There is no consensus over whether Instapoetry is accepted into the tradition or not, but it seems fair to say that the standard of 'what is culture/poetry' is slowly shifting. Jay David Bolter noticed a similar trend concerning new media. Bolter observes the decline of "culture with a capital C" starting at the end of the twentieth century (1). The emergence of new media such as video games, YouTube, and the growing popularity of cinema, photography and other things resulted in the loss of the cultural centre that previously existed around literature and the traditional arts (13). As the cultural centre fades, the standard of quality and understanding of culture shifts, and the conversations around Instapoetry seem a perfect illustration of this.

Conclusion

I started this thesis with a quote from a scathing review of Instapoetry. Rebecca Watts, with a passionate dislike of the phenomenon, criticized several instapoets such as Hollie McNish and Rupi Kaur. “Artless poetry sells,” Watts wrote. “The reader is dead: Long live consumer-driven content and the ‘instant gratification’ this affords’ (*PN Review*). This quote immediately set the tone, showing the tension that exists between Instapoetry and the literary field. Hence, the purpose of this research was to map the interaction and negotiation between Instapoetry and the literary field. To narrow down the scope of the research, I focused on the most popular instapoet to this day: Rupi Kaur. Using her writing and career, I focused on the position-takings of her as instapoet, her followers, and her critics.

Several concepts that would help me conduct the research were expanded on in chapter one, the theoretical framework. Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of the literary field and capital are essential to understand the phenomenon of Instapoetry. I deemed Meizoz’s concept of posture necessary to properly analyse Rupi Kaur’s position. To form a basis on which I could study a digital literary phenomenon, I of course also had to define social media, Instagram and the existing tradition of E-literature.

Several methods were used for this thesis. Due to the lack of research about Instapoetry I had to develop my own coding system in order to get the data I wanted to look at Rupi Kaur’s posture in chapter two and three. My intention was not to find out the (lack of) authenticity of Kaur, since that is impossible for me to verify. Instead, my analysis gives us an idea of what postures Kaur chooses to perform, navigating the digital world. I concluded that there are four different sides to Kaur’s posture: the ‘influencer’; the politically engaged poet; the South Asian poet; and the private poet. A quantitative analysis was performed on all of Kaur’s Instagram posts in 2014 and 2018, separating photos and poetry posts. I distinguished fewer personal posts

in 2018 (from 14.8% in 2014 to 11.6%) but more promotional photos (21.3% in 2014 as opposed to 25.6% in 2018), and a significant rise in ‘audience’ photo’s (13.1% in 2014 and 27.9% in 2018!). There was no significant change in Kaur’s poetry posts between the two selected years, other than the addition of several political poems in 2018 as opposed to 2014. This could be due to the fact that Kaur, during those years in between, rose to fame partly because she dared to tackle taboos. It became profitable.

The aim of chapter three was to find out what followers of an instapoet focus on. Since comments and likes, ‘social media capital’ are at the base of communication on Instagram, I decided to analyse all the comments on the five most-liked Rupi Kaur poems from 2014 and 2018. The results showed no significant differences between the two years. Followers commented next to nothing about poetic form or the literary status of the work. Instead, the majority focuses on sharing the poems with friends or on the emotional impact of the poems.

To analyse the professional reception of Instapoetry I used a modified version of Linders and Op de Beeks model for quantitative and qualitative analysis of literary criticism. This content analysis showed varied results. No evaluative statements were found regarding spatial elements, for example, which is surprising because Instagram is a predominantly visual medium, and Rupi Kaur has quite a visual style of Instapoetry. No consensus was found over whether Instapoetry is ‘accepted’ into the literary tradition or not. Whether critics’ opinions, i.e. their gatekeeping, still have an effect on instapoets remains to be seen.

In order to place Instapoetry in the current literary field, I needed to delve deeper into what poetry on social media is. Is everything on social media mass-production by default, or can a post be seen as small-scale production because it only takes one person to create and upload it, without the guarantee that someone will see it? There is no clear answer to this, but let us reflect on Bourdieu’s theory on capital. The critics’ reviews in chapter four showed that thus far there is not much, if any, symbolic or cultural capital surrounding Instapoetry.

Instapoetry does have economic capital if we have to believe the critics. What they fail to acknowledge is that economic capital, as with any genre of literature, is only in play for a select few, predominantly for those instapoets that (self-)published a poetry collection.

It seems that Instapoetry finds itself at the intersection of internet culture and the literary field, although it is hard to map out the current literary field. We are far from Bourdieu's original literary field in nineteenth-century France. Newcomers in the field, the avant-garde, will always have to fight against dominant styles to take up a place, and the dominant producers in the field will try to make sure to keep the field as it is. In that regard, Instapoetry is mostly like any newcomer. They restructure the field, question the concept of literature and whether that is even relevant still.

Newcomers, the avant-garde, have to fight against dominant styles to take up a place in the field, and the dominant producers, the conservatives, fight against newcomers to ensure they keep their place and keep the field as it is. This is done by position-takings (*prises de position*) and enables newcomers to restructure the sub-field and field (Bourdieu 1991 p. 5). As the cultural centre as we know it fades, our understanding of quality and definition of culture will shift. The interaction and negotiation between Instapoetry and the literary field illustrate this. Questions regarding poetic quality, something which most critics seemed to focus on (next to economic capital), may not be as relevant anymore as before the rise of Instapoetry. According to some, Instapoetry might fall short of poetic quality when compared to conventional poetry. The issue is that 'poetic quality' remains hard to define. Besides, Instapoetry seems to offer a whole lot to the literary field as a newcomer, if anything else, it has shaken and woken up everyone in the field.

As the phenomenon grows, it will be interesting to observe to what extent Instapoetry will unfold. The current concern that traditional poets and critics have with Instapoetry is the 'low' level of quality. Perhaps traditional poets will start engaging with Instapoetry themselves,

embedding themselves in the new corner of the literary field. Future research could look into the different paths instapoets take, especially the self-publishing path when an instapoet has an existing audience. The effects that limitations Instagram squares have on Instapoetry could also be interesting to map out. I briefly delved into Rupi Kaur breaking taboos, but future research could look into the way Instapoetry may or may not be breaking taboos and benefiting social issue movements such as feminism and anti-racism movements. Much remains to be discovered about this recent phenomenon, and that is extremely exciting.

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Appendix

Appendix A: quantitative analysis 2014

Photography

| Link | What can you see?/Caption | Code | Likes |
|---|--|----------|-------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/i47MkCHA1I/ | photo of her new camera | other | 761 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jFdeTDHAyy/ | photo of her performing with somebody, thanks Ottawa | audience | 782 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jQFLPKHA48/ | selfie on a bed | other | 756 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jc88CmnA6U/ | polaroid photo of herself | other | 720 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jkQbAbnAzY/ | promo for 'lohri for her' event, caption about daughters | promo | 756 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jqPC2PnAze/ | photo of her in a silver dress | other | 1.578 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/j0kAk6nA2M/ | two artists with a piece of artwork | art | 1.013 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/j-NN4oHAzx/ | photo of place she goes to think of poems | poet | 877 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/kTGC8OHAzj/ | grandfather's brother and friend drinking tea | personal | 954 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/kaCHf1nA60/ | photo of her writing | poet | 1.098 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/k5tgXzHA4c/ | photo of her and a microphone | other | 559 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/IOFTwEHA-v/ | her as a child | personal | 735 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/IYwXftHA1G/ | selfie before going on stage | audience | 938 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/lsmo-8HA1k/ | picture with her sister | personal | 592 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/lyo9bcnA4z/ | showing what she does before bed | personal | 1.022 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/mBrK3xnA_r/ | selfie, exhausted | other | 870 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/mI3rowHA-W/ | a screenplay she wrote | writer | 701 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/mX5wzwHAz-/ | photo of a train station | other | 568 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/mqkgdEHA6r/ | picture of the sky, no face | other | 722 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/m3WbDnnA2o/ | selfie on bed | other | 1.153 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/nByCtlnAwp/ | photo of her organising paper for workshop, thanks followers | audience | 752 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/niqmiDHA8A/ | photo of her legs on bed | other | 773 |

| | | | |
|---|---|----------|-------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/ny0ke-nA5s/ | promo for short film 'kirpa' | promo | 406 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/n6OG-XnAwc/ | photo of herself, promo for interview with wild spice magazine | promo | 1.558 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/oKL6_gnA8A/ | photo of her with kiran rai at an event | other | 1.869 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/oWWM8YnA-p/ | collection of poems laid out | poet | 1.028 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/ohVMs8HA8X/ | photo of a tree, no face | Travel | 1.561 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/or-ow9nA9b/ | photo of notebook full of poems | poet | 1.281 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/ozxSjFnA5H/ | photo of a piece of artwork somebody made based off of her poem | audience | 2.695 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/pKgxlGHA1f/ | her as a child | personal | 2.038 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/putwnsHA2u/ | photo of her sewing, no face | personal | 540 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/qAeBJJnA69/ | promo for a performance in Vancouver | promo | 670 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/qSram6nA01/ | rehearsal photo, promo for Vancouver performance | audience | 1.457 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/qpPCqYnA-4/ | watching a movie | personal | 573 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/rGVEmNnA04/ | Vancouver performance | audience | 1.450 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/r3MClwnAyJ/ | promo for california performance | promo | 879 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/s1BP8uHA5_/ | pre-performance photo, meditation | other | 2.189 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/s_XZGGHA_d/ | photo at eaten canyon falls | travel | 1.499 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/tMN9DZHA5G/ | photo of flowers, poem about being mistreated | other | 2.384 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/tguUQ0nAzy/ | photo in front of poems | poet | 3.766 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/ty0VaoHAx_/ | photo of writing | poet | 2.664 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uJ3Y95nAyh/ | photo of her in gold dress | other | 3.802 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uW0iELnAwp/ | photo of arms, no face | other | 2.138 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uhHFpHnA6d/ | photo of illustrated book of her poems somebody made | poet | 2.123 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/urd9vpHA2v/ | photo of flower, likened to vulva in caption | other | 3.150 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uzQLVBnA_L/ | photo of mother, caption about appreciating her | personal | 4.741 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/u9cq-3nAzr/ | photo of her holding 'milk and honey' | poet | 2.509 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vCq9heHAzz/ | promo for 'milk and honey' with release date | promo | 3.019 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vM_66RnAxP/ | photo of rose, poem in caption likening somebody to a rose | other | 3.551 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vVDLNzHA20/ | promo video for 'milk and honey' | promo | 3.137 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vZIoV4nA9S/ | photo holding 'milk and honey', thanking people who bought it | audience | 2.986 |

| | | | |
|---|---|----------|-------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vhuTDCnA8w/ | promo for 'milk and honey' | promo | 2.449 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vmpGU5nA7k/ | promo for North California performance and workshop | promo | 1.566 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vw3F-knA5M/ | promo for interview about 'milk and honey' | promo | 2.074 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/v4W0pXHA5E/ | photo of legs, caption about accepting stretch marks | personal | 5.454 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wXR3XRHA-H/ | photo of performance in bay area, thanks audience | audience | 4.066 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wcaBnWHA0T/ | photo of her writing lovenotes in San Francisco | poet | 3.227 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wiC7gNnAwR/ | photo of her speaking with women about poetry | poet | 2.461 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wp4gIKHA6g/ | photo of her holding 'milk and honey', caption with discount code | promo | 3.844 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/w5OB0xHA62/ | promo poster for 'milk and honey' launch in brampton | promo | 1.778 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/xNq9GXHA0N/ | photo of her with copies of 'milk and honey', promo for launch | promo | 4.384 |

Poetry

| link | poems/caption | Likes |
|---|---|-------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/iogOmFHAXZ/ | poem 'january first' | 3.360 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/i9sRXwnAx8/ | poem 'for him' | 6.351 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jKxbb5HA-o/ | poem 'fingers' | 3.982 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jX1w-KHA5Z/ | poem 'to do list (after the breakup)' | 3.428 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jibwe8nA9E/ | poem 'welcome', in the shape of a female body | 5.423 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jnYF_eHAyk/ | poem about new partner of ex | 3.202 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/jsn-wSnA7y/ | poem 'hopefully' | 1.797 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/j7w4elnA_Q/ | poem about how love can be destructive | 3.186 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/kN44GHHA3V/ | poem about what drives someone | 2.394 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/kYEPeAHA3f/ | poem about feeling not beautiful enough | 4.702 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/ka8ry5nAzU/ | poem for valentine's day | 3.130 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/IJDsCNHAzM/ | poem about relationship being a 'mistake' | 2.448 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/IQdkeqHA_v/ | poem for international women's day | 7.545 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/lnTOoPHA4C/ | poem 'my best friend was always the prettier one' | 2.842 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/lvQ_b-HA6X/ | poem about not being ashamed of body | 3.960 |

| | | |
|---|--|--------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/l5oAbanA9n/ | poem 'the art of being empty' | 2.929 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/mGKZlbnA6Z/ | poem about breakups | 4.127 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/mOBVG5nA2Q/ | poem 'the power of your name' | 4.228 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/mlgTwWHA-U/ | <i>no</i> poem, promo for a writing workshop 'trauma and poetry' | 913 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/myMuZHHA8z/ | poem about flirting | 5.197 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/m8j7mXnA9y/ | poem about body hair | 8.166 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/nbobAOHA_N/ | poem about periods | 5.277 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/nmNq6bnAzA/ | poem about feeling complete on your own | 6.960 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/n3YauOnA_u/ | poem for mother's day | 5.384 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/oCu0uKnAwW/ | poem about getting parts of her personality from her mother vs. her father | 3.934 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/oPIDBvnAxZ/ | poem about love | 8.778 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/oe2PAbnA1S/ | poem about leaving somebody | 9.201 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/omqhSnnA00/ | poem about celebrating one another | 4.964 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/ouU_acHA45/ | poem about liking somebody | 4.579 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/pFtAGlHAXR/ | poem about success | 4.561 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/pSa2RvnA_6/ | poem about being distant | 4.974 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/p2Zhc2nA6g/ | poem about thinking of someone | 4.486 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/qIcWWgHA0r/ | poem 'if you want to know the type of man he is' | 3.981 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/qdGBd1HA3A/ | poem about being kept down | 3.589 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/qreRHcnA6k/ | poem 'gaza' | 4.592 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/rtFm7AnA1s/ | poem about domestic abuse | 4.731 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/sS6TJrnA5R/ | poem about parents | 3.666 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/s8st70HAzP/ | poem about not being appreciated | 7.736 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/tHB_kFHA5b/ | poem 'shedding' | 4.638 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/tWfHVBnAyJ/ | poem 'balance' | 7.472 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/tl5wXznA9a/ | poem 'answers' | 11.781 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/t3IICNnA7K/ | poem about sex | 5.529 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uMhtXTnA2Q/ | poem about strong women | 5.967 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uZbkp7HA_r/ | poem about being touched, without being physically touched | 5.523 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uo6QiZHA_Y/ | poem about gratitude | 9.602 |

| | | |
|---|--|--------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/uwkudlnA24/ | poem about having five more minutes with somebody | 7.971 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/u4iIb5nA57/ | poem about selfish people | 8.072 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vACcGOHA8A/ | poem about grieving someone 'who's still living'/heartbreak/loss | 12.826 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vFbL37nA3d/ | poem 'women like you drown oceans' | 9.314 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vPwlBEHA9Q/ | poem 'you should have known that I was a fire' | 10.715 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vXMeiTHA1J/ | p.1 'milk and honey' | 7.968 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vfOylHHA5K/ | poem about finding herself after a bad relationship | 9.882 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vkCz9fnA-Q/ | poem about fate | 8.817 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vpOypvnA7l/ | poem about accepting yourself | 9.394 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/vznogsHAw_/ | poem about human heart | 14.652 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/v7dPC7HAwo/ | poem 'a show for two' | 4.984 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wZxUMOHA_Y/ | poem about deserving better | 7.762 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wfb8gYHAXZ/ | poem about her mother leaving her home | 5.992 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wnMwDrHA0i/ | poem 'women of colour' | 10.658 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/wuuGbjnAyl/ | poem about grief | 9.057 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/xLIifuHA0c/ | poem 'the greatest lies we tell ourselves' excerpt | 8.933 |

Appendix B: quantitative analysis 2018

Photography

| Link | What can you see?/caption | Code | Likes |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BddzZnzALHC/ | b/w picture in gala dress | other | 147.109 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bdgz6uZgxzZ/ | india tour promo | promo | 167.339 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bds7Ti2AKcj/ | golden globes outfit | other | 161.416 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bd9FJssA3Kw/ | promovideo for interview pbs | promo | 516.423 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeCHp72gQ9I/ | selfie, poem about flowers in caption | other | 245.280 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeHRqHig1JG/ | herself, caption about cbs interview | promo | 93.906 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeMLFN1A8Gc/ | herself on stage, excited for tour | audience | 78.933 |

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| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeV354xg5EC/ | pic with her dad | personal | 100.096 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeZjDi0g_WB/ | pic of outfit, caption about performance | audience | 122.769 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bef8fErg24Y/ | outfit in kolkata, caption about performance | audience | 91.605 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bej1NEBgrHs/ | pic with friends | personal | 50.792 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BerqVGRgmb2/ | pic with 'readers' before show | audience | 76.256 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeuF9sJA2Xp/ | pic of herself in dress | other | 202.310 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Be2GymfAoNI/ | pic of her posing, caption thanking people | audience | 94.195 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Be78dKlAbMX/ | herself, emotional thanks to crowd | audience | 115.589 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfD3xm7AGmk/ | personal travel story, almost diary-like | personal | 114.740 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfLc_tkAHQ8/ | video, apologising for a canceled show | audience | 376.330 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfM92A6gr14/ | pic w taj mahal, 'you a sight for sore eyes' | travel | 165.050 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfjSXUfAPW0/ | personal, thanking sister | personal | 103.437 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bfm0UWtgiqg/ | pic with sisters | personal | 95.914 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfqPKvZgxQg/ | uk tour promo | promo | 93.208 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BftM42PAGPt/ | cbs interview snippet | promo | 554.487 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfxQEm5A0Y1/ | pic with temple, caption about motherland | personal | 181.781 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf0vyx7AReA/ | video from Holi | travel | 540.557 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf6mUhrgd6u/ | pic in dress | other | 110.138 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf_mU8lAKFX/ | pic in dress, emoji caption | other | 154.213 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgC1V2OAKli/ | pic of her, not sure where | other | 150.594 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgFjcjTA-ap/ | pic in white dress, caption about performance | audience | 146.399 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgMYfRRg2Hk/ | pic of herself in dress | travel | 73.099 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgR1bqPAIkJ/ | video saying goodbye to india | audience | 533.782 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgUn0Kvgolo/ | artistic pic, caption is poem about loneliness | art | 157.876 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgZ5nOaAvRw/ | pic in dress, caption about tour | audience | 138.487 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BglrMkPAc8e/ | pic in dress, thanking tour and designers | audience | 193.917 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgr7DY2gs2z/ | pic in dress, thanking audience | audience | 114.400 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgw07mBAFer/ | pic of her in birmingham before show | other | 197.543 |

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| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg09Tt2gny4/ | pic in dress in glasgow | audience | 163.373 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg6Ll6mg1n-/ | pic in hotel room | promo | 88.419 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg9sx-RgRT/ | pic in dress, wrap on uk tour | other | 146.575 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhJ3N5MgyN5/ | condé nast magazine cover | promo | 47.327 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhN1YS7gB5-/ | videospippet from podcast interview | promo | 490.209 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhS11OOAFvA/ | selfie with audience | audience | 94.187 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhZQg2KAZWJ/ | promo for hometown show | promo | 62.912 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhhzEKEArTp/ | behind the scenes from cover shoot | promo | 98.395 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bhp9XvcACep/ | pic with her grandparent | personal | 195.979 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh0KVhfA6W4/ | pic on bed in her mom's childhood home | personal | 142.583 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiBAA-Ugpf6/ | pic of her, not sure where | other | 92.764 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiGUOWPAcgl/ | pic on stage, long note about hometown | personal | 76.567 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiQhdmTgDtc/ | pic of her in metro | other | 149.340 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiV-nbMgli6/ | pic in stadium | other | 101.976 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiabgY2g-WZ/ | b/w portrait pic, 'deep' oneliner | other | 127.583 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BigFt4WAbKX/ | b/w pic from interview + 1 q and a in caption | promo | 126.072 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bik5TQA4fp/ | b/w pic from interview + 1 q and a in caption | promo | 127.242 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bis2EVaAcUR/ | b/w pic from interview + 1 q and a in caption | promo | 86.941 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiuUdqZgHHx/ | two pics, her and her mom in same place | personal | 194.090 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjA_09OAcxS/ | pic of her in garage | other | 108.027 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjN6pH6lncT/ | pic of her in italy | travel | 107.343 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjS7MrUlv3l/ | pic of her writing | poet | 131.879 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjYE1wNFfa-/ | pic of her, not sure where | other | 70.493 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjiVTepgyMJ/ | pic of her, poem #thesun in caption | other | 146.857 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bj8tT34A1kN/ | orange-y pic of her somewhere | other | 100.223 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkB1eujAXcO/ | video snippet of interview | promo | 325.806 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkL_Me4gAi2/ | close-up pic, caption about elleuk | promo | 98.509 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkQuBslg_Ck/ | professional photograph | other | 99.165 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bkd9mZCguiK/ | pic of her, not sure where, jimmy fallon promo | promo | 181.998 |

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|---|--|----------|-----------------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkgonWMAEr7/ | video snippet jimmy fallon | promo | 1.291.869 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bkyl0jhAlRo/ | b/w artistic pic, caption is poem about curtain | other | 143.878 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bk85OhSgkYN/ | b/w portrait pic | other | 131.937 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BIJz5s5ggSd/ | b/w artistic pic | other | 125.590 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BIYs5yIHdx4/ | artsy video releasing hardcover #thesun | promo | 704.178 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BIYvlM7AwfF/ | pic in front of painting, promo hardcover | promo | 211.101 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BljoEh0gwZj/ | pic of her, not sure where | other | 74.859 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BlrSwfiASdP/ | pic of her, summery outfit | other | 139.552 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BI1o9UEAgkt/ | pic of her, not sure where | other | 108.508 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BI5uagIgCIJ/ | American tour announcement | promo | 199.611 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BI9Vi3WgNd2/ | pic of her, tour sold out | promo | 132.058 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmE2MEkAsG3/ | pic with Dua Lipa | personal | 245.756 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmMvxC4gdSR/ | personal post about her last name and Sikh women | personal | 188.359 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmTX1H2gHij/ | new shows added to tour | promo | 83.933 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmcMCGsgewJ/ | pic of her, not sure where | other | 121.439 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bmhhr2kAUlU/ | pic of her and friend having fun | personal | 117.275 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bmme1qaAfp/ | pic of her in Manchester before show | audience | 111.235 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmtOsO3g39s/ | gif with Emma Watson | promo | 1.412.577 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmzO8ViAr0S/ | pic of her, not sure where | travel | 121.056 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnC47OGgrWO/ | pic of hardback Milk and Honey | poet | 283.147 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnH5PcAAUnQ/ | recreating painting with sisters | personal | 201.592 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnXOc82gCgr/ | snippet of interview with Emma Watson | promo | 721.510 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bncb_Esg1u1/ | US tour schedule | promo | 102.816 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnkMkkKgLwE/ | pic of her at event | other | 130.884 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnpP_fqgG_P/ | pic of her going to event | other | 119.096 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bnui8akjxRi/ | promo pic vogue spain | promo | 97.748 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bn2OS79A6ZM/ | pic of her, giving tickets away in caption | audience | 163.897 |

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| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bn7V6oFHMhw/ | promo pic vogue spain | promo | 83.529 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoAyBtdnSn0/ | pic of her on stage, caption about preparing for tour | audience | 85.476 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoN8_YsH3kh/ | pic in theater, thanking audience | audience | 187.612 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoRhZF1HfxZ/ | pic in dress in town hall NYC | audience | 117.581 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoVceNXHmBO/ | pic of her, not sure where | audience | 106.429 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoasHpBnmcO/ | pic of her, thanking chicago | audience | 204.239 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BohIIRHB7F/ | portrait pic, birthday post | personal | 228.315 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BosZcmNH00m/ | her on cover of Cosmopolitan India | promo | 227.786 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoxZwHiHDY7/ | pic of her before show | audience | 85.172 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bo3OObPnnwq/ | pic in theater, thanking audience | audience | 92.509 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bo8bW4jnm_q/ | pic of her, thanking san francisco | audience | 132.910 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpAFfyYnd_B/ | cover Arcadia magazine | promo | 151.659 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpH9ORDHdWA/ | pic in dress, thanking LA audience | audience | 116.877 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpOTHzGHcKr/ | pic of her, thanking Dallas audience | audience | 164.437 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpQwN_BHAo5/ | pic of her, thanking Austin audience | audience | 91.813 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpSf5koHe-K/ | artistic pic of hardback release #thesunandherflowers | poet | 110.820 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpVvtOGHPTu/ | pic in Atlanta, thanking audience | audience | 136.980 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpbCpiqlwV/ | pic of her thanking Miami audience | audience | 116.189 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpkNNHCHTwy/ | pic of her, thanking DC audience | audience | 135.346 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BplWIWaHlgY/ | pic of her, thanking DC audience | audience | 107.641 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bpsr34FHUvx/ | pic in dress, reminiscing about tour | audience | 121.179 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bp95CCpnaBI/ | canada tour presale poster | promo | 97.743 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqIToocHETn/ | canada tour presale poster | promo | 79.740 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqOgI0pn25O/ | pic of her in japan | travel | 99.868 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqTYfUWHXK5/ | pic of her in japan | travel | 55.628 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqYnRQHnPbI/ | pic of her in japan | travel | 107.826 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bqd9X4OnAWr/ | pic of her in japan, no caption | travel | 62.937 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqlajsxHfyS/ | pic of her in japan, no caption | travel | 95.848 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqxV2Icn_tb/ | pic of her at fashion show | other | 69.757 |

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| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq3XOzUnw6I/ | video of her performing a poem during US tour | poet | 727.877 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrEjTG-HB20/ | pic of her on stage | audience | 80.469 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrPHcN-nlAz/ | pic of her in theater in Edmonton | audience | 242.913 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrRDCoMBI_0/ | video announcing the canvas art | promo | 397.409 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrRDd7sHj1m/ | pic of her with the canvas art | promo | 237.115 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrVm7T5H1CY/ | pic in dress, thanking Vancouver audience | audience | 151.727 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Brbv0MhHTuV/ | pic in dress in Toronto, thanking audience | audience | 284.304 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrgwRH6hu2Y/ | another video about the canvas art process | art | 250.710 views |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Br82EZEHaoW/ | casual smiling picture of her | other | 161.544 |

Poems

| link | poems/caption | Likes |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BdgQ8uTgn2-/ | p. 156 #thesunandherflowers | 144.113 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BdoZFEVAD-o/ | p. 43 #thesunandherflowers | 164.250 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BdwTGcKA96T/ | <i>no poem, date of lit. festival</i> | 67.131 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bd_5vnVAUIp/ | <i>no poem, date of lit. festival</i> | 52.042 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeCcX-wgEW9/ | <i>no poem, date of lit. festival</i> | 40.337 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeKRT12AUVK/ | p. 167 #thesunandherflowers | 148.754 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeUthQKgdvY/ | <i>no poem, date of lit. festival</i> | 40.098 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BeXjaHjA93k/ | <i>no poem, date of lit. festival</i> | 36.714 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BecKjCeAObs/ | p. 244 #thesunandherflowers | 91.045 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BehF9ChAO0I/ | p. 53 #thesunandherflowers | 256.915 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BemfyLrgY_z/ | p. 30 | 170.955 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bet8ZxmgPzQ/ | p. 160 #thesunandherflowers | 136.579 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BezuNLTA348/ | <i>no poem, date of performance</i> | 32.572 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Be4Zd_QAePF/ | p. 79 #thesunandherflowers | 254.046 |

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| https://www.instagram.com/p/Be9_2ekgIax/ | p. 94 #thesunandherflowers, explaining emotional effects | 147.489 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfFDnqJg0Pi/ | p. 74 #thesunandherflowers | 182.444 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfLo61mgv1_/ | happy love day', blossoming flowers poem | 212.510 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bff4iUCgoD6/ | no poem, date of lit. festival | 37.107 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfkMGIggiEd/ | poem about ancestors | 158.836 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfoOHhYAQTt/ | poem about living 'despite it all' | 271.169 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfsCO7xA8FK/ | poem 'acceptance', caption about self-care | 252.544 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BfufNR8AAB0/ | poem 'closure' | 162.155 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bfzmm0Vgr8R/ | poem about female body | 237.312 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf2T2R9AJ7t/ | poem 'progress', caption about activism | 146.663 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf7UHU3AuFB/ | poem about women, emoji caption | 265.084 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgAd769A-26/ | poem 'women of colour' | 231.516 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgEfnCeA8C2/ | poem 'timeless' international women's day | 171.172 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgIMBeFAXKK/ | poem about lesson for women | 267.032 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgPLehagFBg/ | poem about the right one | 237.699 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgSXODQA-yb/ | poem 'thank you', starting uk tour | 218.552 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgUn0Kvgolo/ | poem about kindness, personal story in caption | 129.950 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bge0mR_gB-4/ | poem 'competition', caption personal story | 206.529 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BgrSgDXgRoZ/ | poem 'rest in peace' | 141.546 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgtv63TgQwA/ | poem 'representation' | 180.819 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgy1d0IA6e1/ | poem about time and room | 140.592 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg4DJRbARaE/ | excerpt 3 again, about performing it | 137.518 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg7l5pSjIyQ/ | p. 107 #thesunandherflowers | 222.524 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhFwwUHgSTJ/ | poem 'sunflowers' | 221.231 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhLCi9MgFFD/ | introvert' from #thesunandherflowers | 241.305 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhQE_y3g-a/ | poem 'forward', ch. 4 #thesun | 175.940 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhXus3vgMWX/ | p. 103 #thesunandherflowers | 238.273 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhfXnI6A8CZ/ | poem 'a fresh love is a gift' | 214.410 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhnWhw6ARMI/ | poem 'realizations don't work like that' | 215.518 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BhsgGv_gcw5/ | boat' + explanation (immigrant boy that drowned) | 80.320 |

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| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh4PFfeHA470/ | green and blue' + caption about earthday | 187.360 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiF0Uf2AdE7/ | poem 'community' | 183.338 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiLZ7jbAdd0/ | poem about abuse, caption too | 163.652 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiStAvxgu52/ | poem about sex, pun caption | 193.675 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiYBOF4AhTM/ | poem 'unibrow' #thesunandherflowers | 184.844 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bidgkiug1tM/ | poem 'numbness' #thesunandherflowers | 153.944 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiihOh9AlyT/ | p. 111 #thesunandherflowers | 200.412 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BinwqCHg76e/ | poem mother advice + explanation | 118.289 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BiuNdGAAxaE/ | mother's day poem #thesunandherflowers | 210.090 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bi5hhK8B7dO/ | poem 'not your hobby' #thesunandherflowers | 206.342 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjDjyBxgkxz/ | poem about dandelions, caption repeats part #thesunandherflowers | 175.553 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjQXvcUIFuM/ | poem about compliments #thesunandherflowers | 202.592 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjYEleiF81-/ | p. 191 italian version Milk and Honey | 63.794 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bjf3wZIFh7R/ | p. 104 #thesunandherflowers | 158.622 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BjycriGgzNo/ | long caption about depression | 251.118 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bj_alleAWF_/ | long caption about Sikh murders | 159.564 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkIhDk4gnDO/ | father's day poem | 172.905 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkOyGTxlAWf/ | caption about inhumanity at US border | 166.609 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkROhtsgJHg/ | #worldrefugeeday, long caption | 110.423 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bkfs4i3AsS2/ | poem #milkandhoney | 188.895 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BkoIkq9gD1s/ | poem 'the one' #thesunandherflowers | 203.643 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bk3w73nA-HR/ | p. 18 #thesunandherflowers | 115.683 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BIEyDSHgakz/ | p. 50 #thesunandherflowers | 260.007 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BIUMvakAr-P/ | poem about ex's new partner | 227.415 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BIYuj-9gZy2/ | hardcover the sun and her flowers | 198.077 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Blgg2-qAtWw/ | ch. 4 #thesunandherflowers | 224.759 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BlmF9UEA0D6/ | poem about love, caption toronto violence | 276.351 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BlwZBO7gJ8d/ | p. 203 #thesunandherflowers | 183.799 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bl35ptoAsTs/ | p. 161 #thesunandherflowers | 146.819 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bl8aXrVA6qT/ | US tour data and tickets on sale | 111.349 |

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|---|--|---------|
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BI-yTv5gy6z/ | tour update | 43.521 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmKMCIsAWyK/ | p. 237 #thesunandherflowers | 303.457 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmPSzxYgEPG/ | p. 165 #milkandhoney | 300.868 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmZmAxA77W/ | p. 245 #thesunandherflowers | 109.577 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmeviMfg2V6/ | p. 186 #thesunandherflowers | 238.926 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmjyB2BAfIE/ | afterword #thesunandherflowers | 155.661 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bmrmu3Pg3Uv/ | p. 177 #milkandhoney | 186.523 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BmwqGFyAL91/ | p. 208 #thesunandherflowers | 142.169 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnALTfWAqFQ/ | p. 30 #milkandhoney | 193.130 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnFYbgBg_WP/ | p. 146 #thesunandherflowers | 98.065 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnUuiCOAGn4/ | p. 77 #thesunandherflowers | 256.529 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnZ23TKgcFn/ | p. 74 #milkandhoney | 229.649 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnhnAS0gu5o/ | p. 37 #thesunandherflowers | 167.455 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bnm19gvH8-b/ | p. 235 #thesunandherflowers | 253.811 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bnr4VPOHwNQ/ | p. 63 #milkandhoney | 329.934 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BnzoCMMAjut/ | p. 225 #thesunandherflowers | 181.511 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bn4wUv1gcVw/ | p. 127 #milkandhoney | 221.016 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bn-EimKHyeI/ | p. 229 #thesunandherflowers | 242.592 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoC8DQ9ntfB/ | poem about autumn | 276.650 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoPcbc1Hvga/ | poem about writing poems | 89.068 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoSGXyeH_18/ | poem about believing rape survivors | 242.776 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoX0H8bnsjE/ | p. 228 #thesunandherflowers | 296.190 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BoflSioHpc6/ | the sun and her flowers' 1 year anniversary | 173.851 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BonTbECHOOpW/ | poem about #nolongerstayingquiet | 215.377 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bow1jNwn4Sz/ | poem 'lift them', caption about voting | 131.471 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Boxx_WsH_ws/ | caption about #worldmentalhealthday, poem 'depression is a shadow' | 206.955 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bo7iqw8naxX/ | p. 205 #thesunandherflowers | 179.372 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bo-cvllnwP8/ | p. 67 #milkandhoney | 175.123 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpFnm5znolS/ | p. 168 #thesunandherflowers | 147.029 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpLcXrknjiT/ | p. 212 #thesunandherflowers | 225.433 |

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| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpQDa1oHce8/ | p. 72 #milkandhoney | 221.753 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpSeBejH3AN/ | poem 'the second birth', announcing hardback #thesun | 123.450 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpVFx5hHMtB/ | p. 191 #thesunandherflowers | 197.194 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpYJ0-PHefz/ | poem 'lift them' again, different caption (about trans- and nonbinary laws) | 118.630 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpdBu3JnDGs/ | Portuguese translation of a poem, sending love to Brazil | 78.968 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bpk1kMKH_3f/ | one-line poem, caption about last show of tour | 199.572 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BpspWq-HxWu/ | p. 68 #milkandhoney | 187.648 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bp3U0UhHGc9/ | p. 32 #milkandhoney | 129.248 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqFaNoEHyTF/ | <i>no</i> poem, dates of canada tour | 53.065 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqLvWucAzEc/ | poem from japanese edition Milk and Honey | 164.833 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqQxhYTglW4/ | p. 21 #thesunandherflowers | 218.319 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqWCZRqnhvz/ | p. 87 #thesunandherflowers | 312.593 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bqa5LsFHejx/ | p. 163 #milkandhoney | 292.158 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bqi93BAHxVv/ | poem about sex, her fave from #milkandhoney | 265.604 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqoLfrXncEw/ | p. 136 #milkandhoney | 307.632 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BqyNVYgH8pe/ | one of her earliest poems, in #milkandhoney | 237.140 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq_O2esH7xI/ | p. 197 #thesunandherflowers | 186.484 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrHCx06H7ep/ | p. 61 #milkandhoney | 223.832 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrRCuoEHNfC/ | Announcement canvas art pieces | 43.266 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrRDSstPHZbf/ | Poem about women again, part of canvas art | 320.088 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrTqSRWH8Hd/ | poem 'all you own is yourself', part of canvas art | 291.874 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BrY23sZnjbz/ | poem about water, part of canvas art | 225.561 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BreSOlxn5_T/ | poem 'stronger' about breakups | 243.945 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/Br198mAHi69/ | poem about light #thesunandherflowers | 210.124 |
| https://www.instagram.com/p/BsEBX4LnUxp/ | poem about loving yourself | 207.262 |