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**GENRE AND STYLISTIC PECULIARITIES OF INSTAPOETRY: A CASE
STUDY OF RUPI KAUR'S "THE SUN AND HER FLOWERS"**

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**ЖАНРОВІ ТА СТИЛІСТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ІНСТАПОЕЗІЇ: НА
МАТЕРІАЛІ ЗБІРКИ РУПІ КАУР «СОНЦЕ ТА ЇЇ КВІТИ»**

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The paper examines the phenomenon of Instapoetry as a new form of contemporary digital literature, based on Rupī Kaur's collection The Sun and Her Flowers.

The aim of the research is to identify and analyze the genre, stylistic, and thematic structure of Instapoetry through the example of Rupī Kaur's collection The Sun and Her Flowers, as well as to assess their role in shaping contemporary digital poetic discourse.

Contemporary Instapoetry, particularly Rupī Kaur's work in The Sun and Her Flowers, forms a new poetic discourse due to its specific genre-stylistic, thematic, and compositional features, which ensure high emotional effectiveness, accessibility for a wide audience, and active interaction with readers in the digital environment.

The material of the study includes Rupī Kaur's collection The Sun and Her Flowers, as well as other contemporary Instapoetry texts published in digital environments and social media. Special attention is paid to the structure of poems,

linguistic and stylistic devices, thematic motifs, the use of visual elements, and short lines that define the specificity of Instapoetry as a literary phenomenon.

Keywords: *Instapoetry, digital literature, Rupi Kaur, genre-stylistic analysis, contemporary poetry, social media.*

У статті розглядається феномен «Інстапоезії» як нової форми сучасної цифрової літератури на прикладі збірки Рупі Каур «Сонце та її квіти».

Метою дослідження є виявлення та аналіз жанрових, стилістичних і тематичних особливостей «Інстапоезії» на прикладі збірки Рупі Каур «Сонце та її квіти», а також оцінка їхньої ролі у формуванні сучасного цифрового поетичного дискурсу.

Сучасна «Інстапоезія», зокрема твори Рупі Каур у збірці «Сонце та її квіти», формує новий поетичний дискурс завдяки своїм специфічним жанрово-стилістичним, тематичним та композиційним особливостям, що забезпечують високу емоційну ефективність, доступність для широкої аудиторії та активну взаємодію з читачами у цифровому середовищі.

Матеріал дослідження включає збірку Рупі Каур «Сонце та її квіти», а також інші сучасні тексти інстапоезії, опубліковані в цифрових середовищах та соціальних мережах. Особлива увага приділяється структурі віршів, лінгвістичним та стилістичним засобам, тематичним мотивам, використанню візуальних елементів та коротким рядкам, що визначають специфіку інстапоезії як літературного явища.

Ключові слова: *інстапоезія, цифрова література, Рупі Каур, жанрово-стилістичний аналіз, сучасна поезія, соціальні мережі.*

Introduction: The development of technology and digital platforms has significantly influenced the literature of the 21st century. Media such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have become not only an entertainment and communication space, but also a large platform for creativity. This is how a new genre in literature such as Instapoetry emerged, which removes the usual distance between the reader and the author, replacing the complex structure of the text with a simple, linear one, where the text is combined with visual elements - videos, photos, graphic details. One of the founders of this genre is Rupi Kaur, whose collections demonstrate how

digitalization is combined with poetry and texts in general. The work of this author combines global social problems, intimate reflections, love, self-searching, healing, acceptance of the world and feminist issues. Despite the fact that Instapoetry raises such important topics, it also raises a number of questions and controversies among researchers. Some emphasize that this genre is superficial and distorts art. Others, on the contrary, support this phenomenon, thanks to which young people are increasingly turning to literature, thanks to insta-authors. Therefore, the study and analysis of such a genre as instapoetry allows us to see how classical and traditional literature intersects with modern digital technologies.

Presentation of the Main Research Material: Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and others have become major channels for publishing and disseminating poetic texts, significantly influencing the form and genre of modern poetry. Within this context, a phenomenon known as Instapoetry has emerged, focusing on short, concise texts that quickly capture attention and evoke emotional responses. Poets employ storytelling in posts, combining text with visual elements – photographs, illustrations, videos, or graphic compositions – that enhance the artistic effect. This approach allows readers to instantly grasp the content and emotional charge of a work, making poetry responsive and aligned with the tempo of contemporary living (Barbosa & Sales, 2022) (Fig. 1.1)

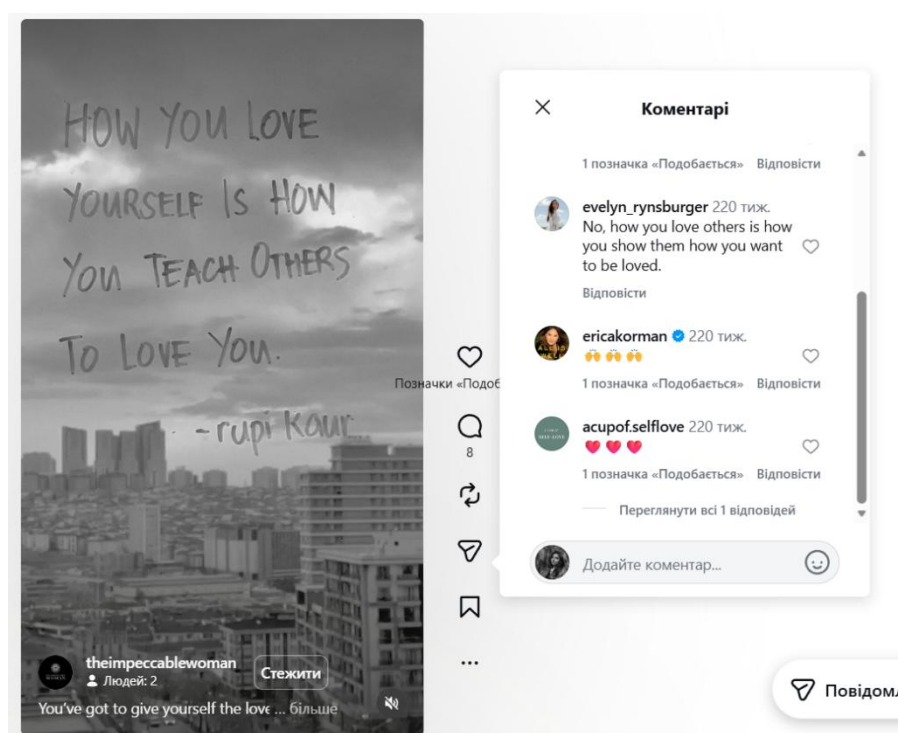


Fig. 1.1 An example of how text is combined with a visual element

The relevance of this focus is especially apparent in the works of Rupi Kaur, whose collections *Milk and Honey* and *The Sun and Her Flowers* have become international bestsellers and a true phenomenon in digital literature. Analysis of Rupi Kaur's poetry allows us to recognize the peculiar genre-specific features and compositional features of instapoetry, as well as analyze how contemporary poetry interacts with readers in the world of social networks, creating new cultural trends and methods of interpreting poetic language.

Technological development has significantly influenced not only the improvement of cultural customs and literary expression, but also significantly modified the manner of communication of society. The emergence and rapid growth of digital platforms have reshaped the interaction of people in the social sphere, creating new methods of relationships around the world.

Grubnic (2023) proposed a conditional classification of such platforms categorized into four groups based on their objectives and modes of engagement. He emphasizes that over time, the boundaries between categories are becoming more blurred. For example, the information platform TikTok now performs the functions of entertainment, marketing, and information search. This indicates a gradual the merging of boundaries between different types of social networking sites.

A prominent modern trend is the release of brief literary texts, especially poetry, in the form of images – a phenomenon known as instapoetry. Whereas Instagram was previously associated primarily with photos of personal life, food, or travel, it is now increasingly used as a platform for creative self-expression. The popularity of this direction continues to grow: under the hashtag #instapoetry over 4.5 million posts have been shared so far, and this number continues to increase (Fig. 1.2.)

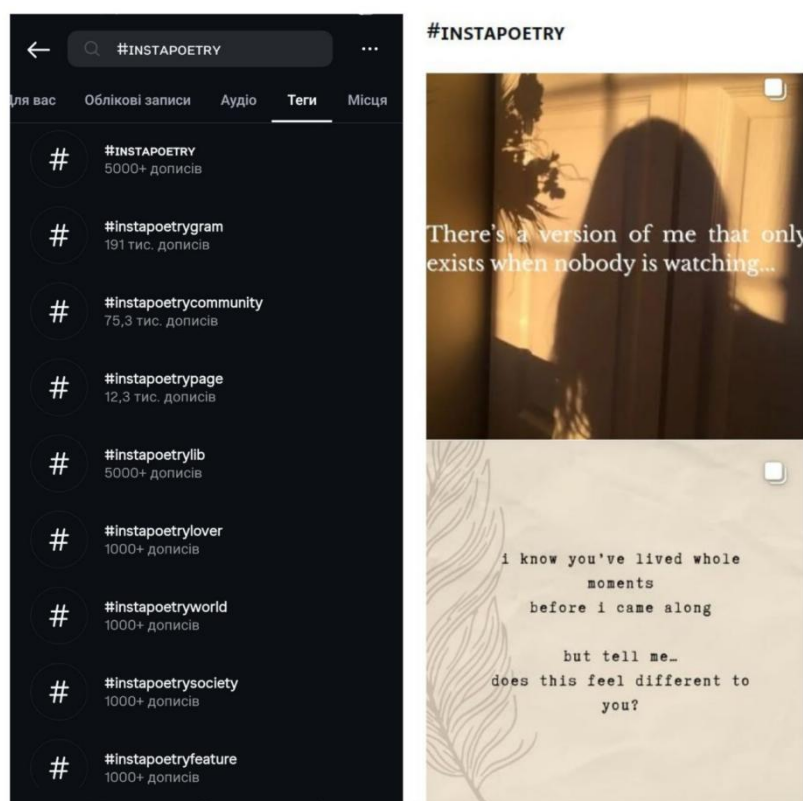


Fig. 1.2. Number of posts under different hashtags

The authors of this new phenomenon – Rupī Kaur, Cleo Wade, Nikita Gill, Tyler Knott Gregson – create short, simple, yet emotionally powerful poems that rapidly circulate through online platforms. Users read them enthusiastically, often perceiving these brief texts as full-fledged literature. However, critics do not hide their disapproval: they consider these works superficial, created not for the sake of art but for popularity and likes (Grubnic, 2023).

The popularity of Instapoetry is growing incredibly fast. Rupī Kaur, for example, published the collection *Milk and Honey* in 2014, which topped bestseller lists in less than a year, with translations available in dozens of languages. Her Instagram following exceeds 4 million, and her literary works have sold in the millions.

In the past, a writer had to work on a manuscript for a lengthy duration in pursuit of a publisher, and seek the approval of critics. Today, social media allows texts to be published instantly and to gain real-time input from the audience. This has completely changed the rules of the game: authors build their own brands, become media figures, and can quickly gain popularity.

In this new reality, literature becomes a commodity, and the writer is simultaneously both author and marketer. Books appear rapidly, reader interest is measured in likes and followers, and the question “what is real literature?” takes on a new meaning. Can a viral post or a short poem be considered a work? Does the democratization of publishing come at the expense of depth and textual quality? These questions are discussed today extending beyond literary spheres to social science disciplines, since new forms of writing reflect the values and morality of our time (Melnyk, Kyselova & Tereshchuk, 2025).

Today, the debate surrounding the literary value of Instapoetry is only intensifying. Academic critics often dismiss these texts as “pseudo-poetry,” accusing their authors of superficiality and the commercialization of art. They view such works as cheap entertainment content, lacking genuine poetic mastery and contributing nothing to cultural heritage. An author’s influence is determined evaluated not on the merit or depth of their writing, but on follower numbers – which are often purchased. With increasing followers, an author tends to more actively algorithms promote their content, regardless of its significance.

For Instapoets, this reality translates into a constant race for attention. To remain visible, they must post multiple times a day and write simple, quickly consumable poems readable in moments as one swipes through. Digital marketers recommend posting at least five stories per day to retain over 70% of the audience (Trajković & Anđelković, 2023).

Consequently, social media does not fit neatly into the category of literary utopia nor a “free space for creativity.” It serves as a platform offering new constraints for authors: limitations on time, text length, audience age, presentation format, brand maintenance, and visual appeal.

User demographics provide valuable evidence. According to such research centers as Digital Global Overview Report, Pew Research Center and Sprout Social, the largest portion of Instagram, Tik-Tok and Facebook the platform’s users are primarily individuals between 18 and 34 years old (Fig. 1.4.) Simply stated, social media is essentially a “country of youth,” and its tastes largely determine which

content goes viral. Social media, therefore, primarily targets the younger generation, shaping its values, ideas, and consumer habits (Paul & Barari, 2022).

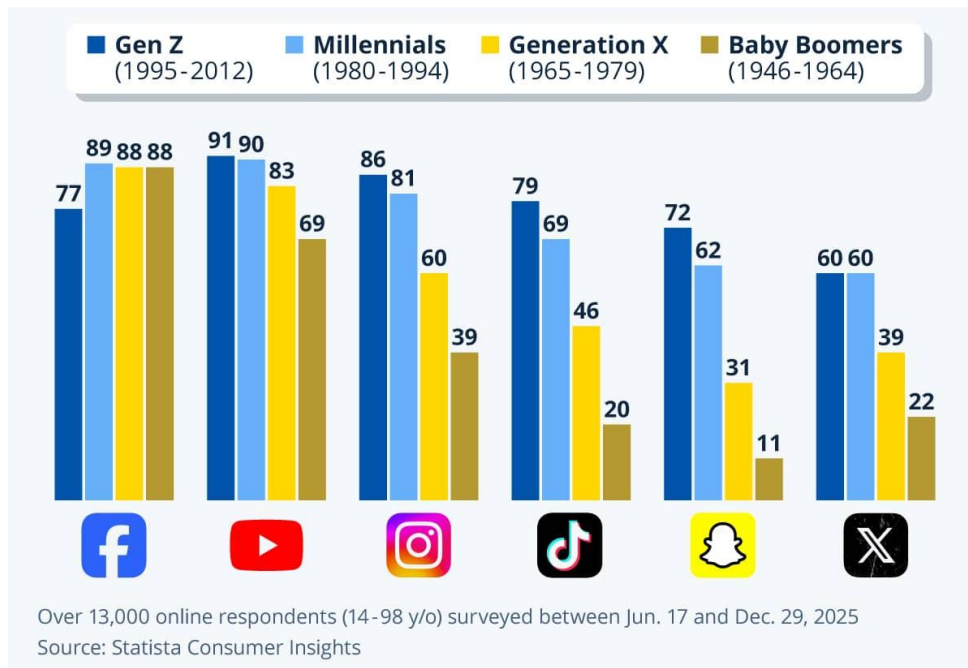


Fig 1.4 Use of social networks by users of different ages

Platforms support and promote texts that keep young users online, directing traffic to advertisements and products that generate revenue. Consequently, literature appearing online is often adapted to the needs and the tastes of the younger generation. For this reason unsurprising that Instapoetry primarily explores themes of love, heartbreak, loneliness, daily joys, travel, romantic uncertainty, the search for identity, feminist topics, and LGBTQ+ rights. At least some examples would be nice

In the era of Instapoetry, the focus is not solely on what you write that matters, but how you present it. Presentation becomes the defining factor in a work's value, while the author's brand and audience engagement become key measures of success. The prominence of Instapoetry extends far beyond the Instagram platform itself and has clearly demonstrated on a global scale of print publishing. A major commercial breakthrough occurred in 2015, when Rupi Kaur's debut collection *Milk and Honey* sold approximately three million copies worldwide and reached readers in twenty-five different languages. Her next work, *The Sun and Her Flowers* (2017), consolidated her success, placing her among the top three bestselling poets in the United States (Priyadarshini & Goswami, 2025).

Stylistic Features: Instapoetry has unique characteristics that set it apart even in print. Most texts are short—typically no more than ten lines. Authors often avoid capitalization and minimize punctuation. The texts are generally penned in free verse, absent of strict rhyme, and the language is simple and accessible, making the content understandable to a broad audience.

In a printed book, readers experience the poems in a linear sequence, but this interaction is largely passive, lacking direct engagement with the author. On platforms like Instagram, however, poets frequently supplement their posts with comments, insights into their creative process, or personal reflections, creating a more dynamic and interactive reading experience.

Instagram provides a space for experimenting with visual layout, text arrangement, and multimedia presentation, enabling authors to blend poetry with images, videos, and other digital elements. Poets can post handwritten verses, layer text over photos or videos, and even pair their work with music. This approach transforms the restrained, conventional aesthetics of the printed page into a rich, multimedia artistic experience.

On platforms like Instagram authors address the audience with questions, stimulating discussion in the comments (Fig. 1.5.)

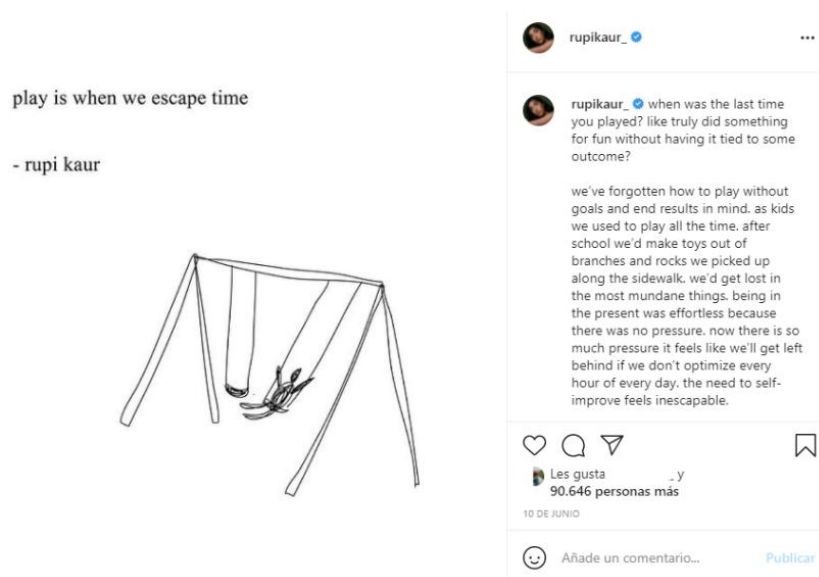


Fig.1.5. Dialogic interaction of the author with the audience within an instapoetic post

Although much of their work is freely accessible online, instapoets typically share only selected excerpts, reserving full collections for print. In this way, Instagram functions as a showcase, encouraging devoted readers to purchase books. The expectation of maintaining an active online presence has turned authors' profiles into highly effective, cost-free marketing tools. Observing their pages also reveals how poets use Instagram to announce tours and events (Fig. 1.6.)



Fig.1.6. Using Instagram as a tool to announce and promote an author's creative tours

The Instagram feed itself profoundly influences the style, form, and perception of instapoetry. Psychologically, such content is highly accessible, particularly to younger audiences accustomed to fast-moving digital environments. The combination of interactivity and instantaneous audience response transforms instapoetry into a dynamic, living narrative, where author and readers together construct a shared space of emotional and meaningful engagement.

Genre Features: In her poems, Kaur eschews complex meter or archaic literary conventions, and her poetry is typically concise, short, heartfelt, and intimate. This approach evokes a rapid emotional response in the reader, evoking empathy, inspiration, or reflection. She often addresses herself as well as the reader, creating the feeling of an intimate conversation (Fig. 1.7)

you are waiting for someone
who is not coming back
meaning
you are living your life
hoping that someone will realize
they can't live theirs without you

- realizations don't work like that



Fig. 1.7. An example of how the author addresses and interacts with the reader through a poem

The poems are presented as conversational musings rather than abstract literary constructs, translating her intimate experiences into everyday language.

Another important feature of the collection is its motivational nature. Kaur encourages readers to be resilient, heal, and accept themselves (Fig. 1.8.)

let it go
let it leave
let it happen
nothing
in this world
was promised or
belonged to you anyway

- all you own is yourself

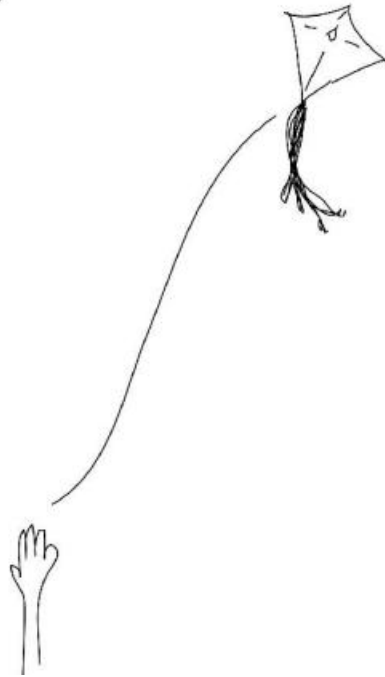


Fig. 1.8. An example of a poem where Kaur addresses the reader

As we can see, the author reinforces the text with illustrations, which creates exactly that important emotional connection with the reader. This combination corresponds to the aesthetic principles of instapoetry, where brevity, clarity and visual appeal are combined into one whole.

Kaur also frequently uses short, aphoristic statements that could serve as photo captions or social media captions. This creates a so-called bridge between traditional poetic language and everyday phrases, which significantly defines the style of the collection (Fig. 1.9.)

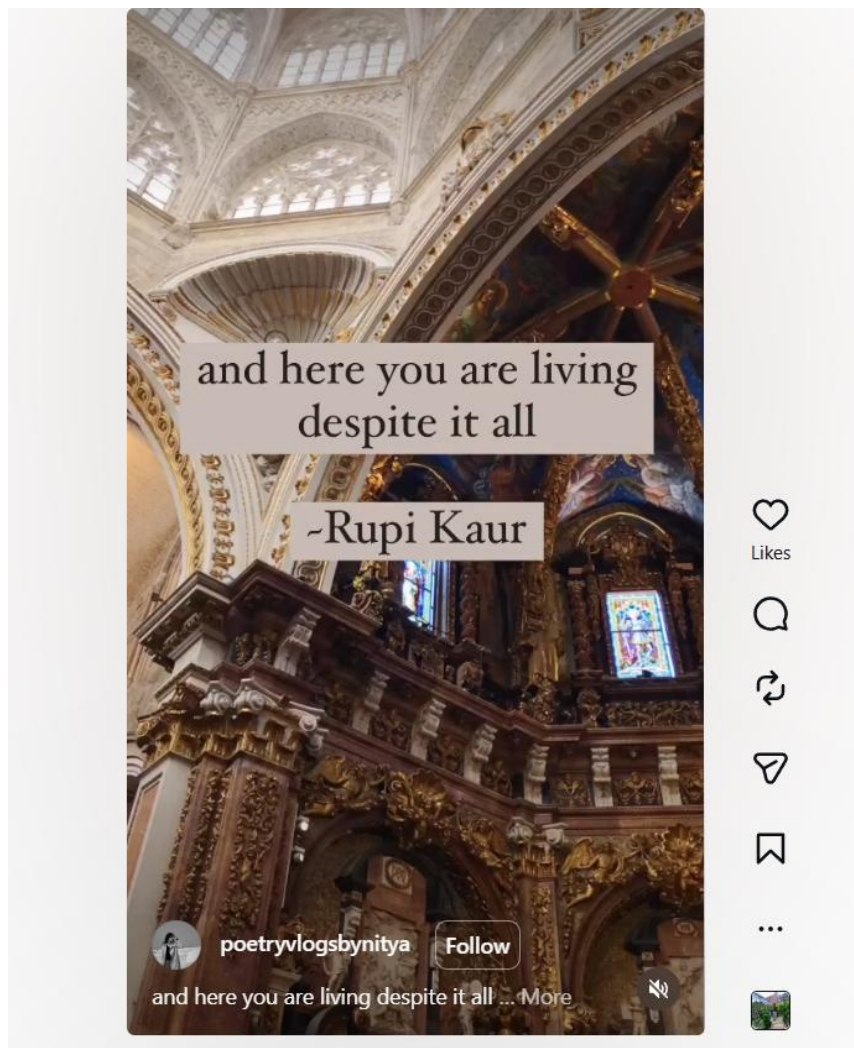
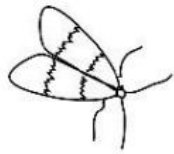


Fig. 1.9. Example of a video on the social network Instagram with a quote from a poet

The visual design distinguishes Kaur's work from traditional poetry and is characteristic of instapoetry. The intentional "formlessness" of the text makes it accessible, unobtrusive and expressive, even without complex structures, rhyme or meter.

Kaur's poems lack clear boundaries, there are significant gaps, and the varying line lengths create a sense of visual breathing, allowing readers to set their own pace. (Fig. 2.1.)



representation
is vital
otherwise the butterfly
surrounded by a group of moths
unable to see itself
will keep trying to become the moth

- *representation*

it was when i stopped searching for home within others
and lifted the foundations of home within myself
i found there were no roots more intimate
than those between a mind and body
that have decided to be whole



Fig. 2.1. Examples of different poem structures

Thematic Structure: The structure of the composition of the book resembles the progression of a flower's life and is divided into five sections: Wilting, Falling, Rooting, Rising, and Blooming. This organization reflects a journey of internal transformation, moving from suffering and loss toward self-acceptance and spiritual renewal. Central motifs—love, loss, pain, healing, self-discovery, and the pursuit of inner harmony—form the thematic backbone of the work and are developed consistently across each section (Fig. 2.2.)

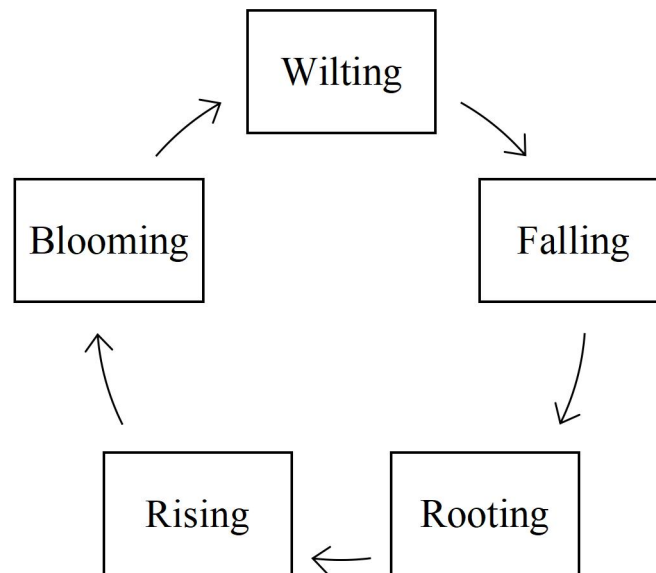


Fig. 2.2. A cyclical structure of emotional growth transformation in the collection

In the first two sections of *The Sun and Her Flowers*, *Wilting* and *Falling*, the dominant motifs are pain, disappointment, and emotional exhaustion. Kaur reflects regarding the dissolution of romantic relationships, loneliness, and the experience of loss. Love is portrayed as a complex, multifaceted force—capable of inspiring profound joy yet also of inflicting deep emotional trauma.

*“I didn’t leave because I stopped loving you
I left because the longer I stayed
the less I loved myself.”*(Kaur, 2017).

The focus is on the psychological complexity of the work: love extends beyond the romantic, encompassing a force that tests and shapes the self.

In the central sections, *Rooting* and *Rising*, the tonality of the work shifts. While the opening sections emphasized sadness and despair, these sections focus on internal grounding—a return to personal identity, historical experience, and familial and cultural context roots.

*“what is the greatest lesson a woman should learn
that since day one
she’s already had everything she needs within herself...”*(Kaur, 2017).

In the final chapter (*Blooming*), the motif of healing and self-acceptance dominates. *Blooming* serves as a metaphor for the complete revelation of an

individual who has experienced a difficult path of self-knowledge. Healing for Kaur does not mean the not the total elimination of suffering, but the acknowledgment of personal experiences as essential elements of one’s life journey.

“and here you are living despite it all.” (Kaur, 2017).

The quote emphasizes the significance of acquired insights and the growth that occurs despite difficulties.

*“how you love yourself is
how you teach others
to love you.”* (Kaur, 2017).

Nature symbolism plays a significant role in articulating these themes. Motifs such as the sun, flowers, roots, water, and light create a cohesive artistic system that mirrors the heroine’s inner journey (Fig.2.3.)

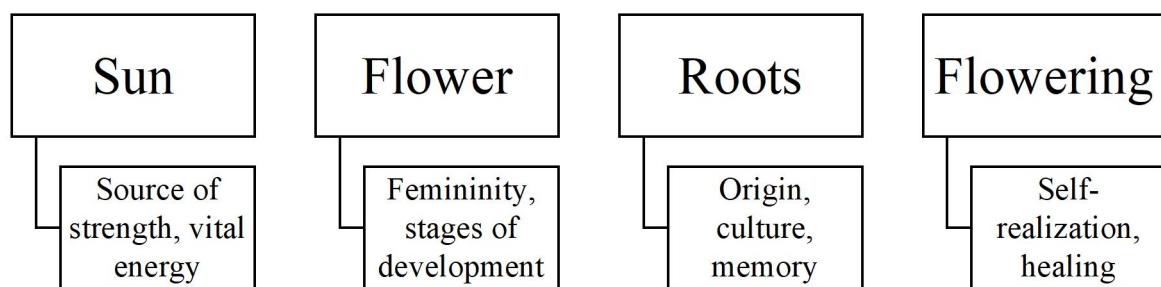


Figure 2.3. Main assembly symbols and their meaning

The structure of *The Sun and Her Flowers* enables the reader to witness the organic development of the emotional narrative, which mirrors the human life cycle. While the narrative is not although not linear in the traditional sense, it creates a cyclical structure in which each emotional stage—loss, reflection, restoration, growth, and self-realization—is interconnected.

Conclusion: Instapoetry demonstrates how poetry adapts to digital culture while retaining its emotional and artistic essence. Its short forms, interactive features and visually conscious layouts make it accessible, engaging, and culturally relevant. Contemporary instapoets illustrate that, even in a fast-paced digital world, poetry continues to convey human experiences, shape emotional understanding, and foster meaningful interaction. Their work shows that lyric poetry can evolve with technology, maintaining its depth and imagery while creating innovative ways to connect with readers in a digital age. Rupi Kaur’s *The Sun and Her Flowers* presents

a cohesive narrative of inner transformation, structured around the metaphorical life cycle of a flower—from wilting to blooming. Through its symbolism of nature, carefully organized composition, and concise, emotionally charged language, the work guides readers toward understanding self-acceptance and spiritual renewal, affirming the importance of personal experience, self-love, and inner strength as foundations for a harmonious life.

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