

Between ‘Share’ and ‘Like’: Rethinking Poetics and Aesthetics in Insta-Poetry

Dr. Lura Hadi Q. Alsaeed

Assistant Professor of English literature, Department of English Language, College of Arts, Jouf University

(Received: 14/4/2025, accepted for publication on 17/7/2025)

Abstract

This paper explores the development of poetic genes in social media landscape, specifically focusing on Instagram as a platform and readership domain. The aim is to analyze Insta-poetry redefines traditional concepts of authorship, literary value, and reader participation. The paper emphasizes the need to grasp how platform algorithms and visual legibility reshape poetic creation and reception. The paper adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach that combines literary criticism, media studies, and cultural theory to discuss how metrics of visibility, affective immediacy, and shareability shape aesthetic decisions. The discussion revolves around the ethical implications of algorithmic content, similarity, the commodification of vulnerability, and identity performance. Hopefully, the paper inspires revision in critical paradigms in an attempt to more effectively work with poetry that has been shared through similar digital platforms.

Keywords: Algorithmic visibility, Digital poetics, Aesthetic minimalism, Platform culture, Insta-poets.

بين «شارك» و«ابدي إعجاب»: إعادة التفكير في الجماليات والشاعريات في شعر الإنستغرام

د. لورا هادي قاسم السعيد

أستاذ الأدب الإنجليزي المساعد، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة الجوف

(أُرسل بتاريخ 14/4/2025 م، وقبل للنشر بتاريخ 17/7/2025 م)

المستخلص

تكشف هذه الدراسة عن تطور الشكل الشعري والجماليات الأدبية في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، مع التركيز على منصة إنستغرام كمجال للنشر والقراءة. الهدف من هذه الورقة هو تحليل الشعر الإنستغرامي؛ لإعادة تعريف المفاهيم التقليدية للكتابة الشعرية، والقيمة الأدبية لهذه المنصة للنشر والقراءة. تؤكد الدراسة على ضرورة فهم كيفية إعادة تشكيل الخوارزميات وقابلية القراءة البصرية للإنتاج والاستقبال الشعري. تعتمد هذه الورقة على نهج نوعي ومتعدد التخصصات يجمع بين النقد الأدبي ودراسات الإعلام والنظرية الثقافية، يناقش البحث الجماليات الشعرية من خلال مقاييس الرؤية الفورية العاطفية، والقابلية للمشاركة. تركز الدراسة حول التداعيات النقدية للمحتوى الخوارزمي مثل ضعف الإنتاج. ونأمل أن تحفز الدراسة إلى مراجعة النماذج النقدية في محاولة للعمل بشكل أكثر فعالية مع الشعر الذي تمت مشاركته عبر منصات رقمية مماثلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب الرقمي، التقليلية الجمالية، المنصات الرقمية، الكتابة الشعرية، شعراء الإنستغرام.

1. Introduction

In the past ten years, social media platforms such as Instagram have fundamentally transformed the processes of writing, consuming, and sharing poetry. A very specialized skill has evolved into a global literary phenomenon often referred to as ‘Insta-poetry.’ Characterized by brevity, emotional clarity, and stylized visual form, Insta-poetry embodies not just a shift in poetic aesthetics but recipient engagement as well. Poets like Nayyirah Waheed, Nikita Gill, Amanda Gorman, Rupi Kaur, and others have attracted audiences by distributing readable, visually arresting, and emotionally potent texts on Instagram’s scrolling, often photographic platform. These poets avoid the structures of traditional publishing, connecting with readers directly and building literary communities. (Kiernan 2020; Aman 2022).

This evolution of Instagram has recently facilitated poetry, often at the risk of sacrificing complexity, form, and canonical lineage for accessibility. Traditional poetry gains entrance into the public discourse through the perspective of editors; however, Insta-poetry finds its way to the readers through algorithmic elements. It is intended to be immediate, emotionally accessible, and visually potent. This accessibility has fueled debates in literary criticism. Proponents of Insta-poetry democratize literature as well as bring attention to marginalized poets. Traditionalists believe that it dilutes poetic form, making complex emotion a digestible brief token of sentiment. These tensions raise larger questions about how we should consider the literary value of the digital age.

Poets such as Rupi Kaur, Nayyirah Waheed, Nikita Gill, and Amanda Gorman have harnessed Instagram’s visual and algorithmic affordances—centered text, ample whitespace, minimalist imagery—to create scrollfriendly, emotionally resonant texts. However, this widespread popularity has drawn critical scrutiny around the literary depth and cultural legitimacy of Instapoetry. Watts (2018) denounced these poets in *The Cult of the Noble Amateur*, accusing them of employing a “cult of personality” that prizes “honesty” and “accessibility” at the expense of “complexity, subtlety, eloquence” (Watts, 2018, pp. 1–2). In contrast, Pâquet (2019) contends that while often labeled “lowbrow,”

Insta-poetry’s characteristic brevity and emotionally unmediated diction do more than revise the poetic genre; they recast the reader into a new relation with the work. Once spectators, audiences now inhabit the space of co-authors, aggregating meaning through likes, reposts, comments, and hashtags. Rupi Kaur’s simple, striking lines—“what is stronger / than the human heart / which shatters over and over / and still lives”—illustrate the phenomenon; the post has drawn millions of likes and a stream of testimonials, including “this saved me” and “I felt this in my bones,” whereby the metrics of digital reception fortify the lines’ emotional weight. Such a dynamic resonates with reader-response scholarship, which has long maintained that significance is a perishable resource, activated only through the intersection of a text and the contingent histories and affective states its audiences bring (Fish, 1980). Similarly, Amanda Gorman’s Instagram excerpt—“For there is always light/if only we’re brave enough to see it”—garnered thousands of captions, remixes, and story shares following her inauguration performance, suggesting how audience amplification becomes a poetic function in itself. Gill and Waheed’s comment sections often reflect therapeutic or communal readings, where users write personal stories in response, showing how their poems serve as emotional mirrors or collective affirmations.

This level of reader interaction transforms the poetic act from a solitary performance into a genuine dialogue. Lili Pâquet (2019) observes that “Insta-poetry operates not merely as verse but as a conversation between the poet and an emotionally engaged digital public” (p. 310).

Reader response does not only affirm the genre but also sustain its circulation. Within this dialogue, Insta-poetry ceases to be considered a passing trend and is instead recognized as an integral shift in composition and in the authorship of poetry. Certain studies redirect attention away from the therapeutic, feminist, or commercial implications of the genre and instead examine its influence in strictly literary terms. They interrogate how Insta-poetry reconfigures the notion of authorship, unsettles established aesthetic norms, and confronts challenges that the platform itself generates. This essay treats Insta-poetry as a deliberately unsophisticated digital literary form, irrevocably linked to the technologies that allow its circulation and to the readers who engage with it. The genre adopts an intentionally unadorned aesthetic, employing both lexical and visual elements. Most often, compositions appear in uncapitalized type, punctuated sparingly, and generously set apart from one another by expanses of blank space.

The decisions made by contemporary poets extend beyond aesthetic preference; they reveal a sophisticated alignment with the operational logics of digital platforms. Instagram functions not merely as a conduit for communication but as an active participant in the evolution of poetic form and reader interaction. The underlying algorithm privileges brevity, emotive resonance, and stark visual presentation, thereby shaping both the production and circulation of poetic texts. In this context, the vocation of the poet increasingly converges with that of the content creator, yielding a composite role in which literary merit is appraised according to metrics originally devised for commercial visibility: reach, interaction rates, and shareability.

The paper sheds light on Insta-poetry in the context of modern literary discourse; it examines how Insta-poetry will shape the trajectory of American poetry. This paper examines the authorship and authenticity of Instagram poems. Moreover, it gives insights about aesthetic minimalism within the style constraints and its poetics on the platform itself. Additionally, the elements of algorithmic influence and the digital economy challenge traditional notions of authenticity and commodification. Questions as to how these changes encourage reconsideration of literary criticism in the digital age are raised. The paper illuminates how Insta-poetry can be considered more than just a cultural phenomenon but also essentially an inventive and innovative genre of literature. The platform offers immediate feedback, fosters community resonance, and fosters emotional reciprocity.

1.2 Importance of the Study

This dispute matters for literary studies and for digital culture more broadly. It tracks a distinct reconfiguration of poetry-making and poetry-reading that has crystalized in the digital era. Instagram and similar platforms have become the venues of choice, and the resulting Insta-poetry reformulates inherited conventions of form, authorship, and aesthetic merit. By venturing a literary analysis of this phenomenon, the research feeds the sustained argument about how to define “legitimate” literature in a media environment that is in constant flux. The inquiry also illuminates how previously marginalized voices—women, writers of color, and queer poets—employ these digital spaces to skirt conventional publishing infrastructures and to reach a global constituency.

The result is a subtle yet real democratization of literary circulation, one that foregrounds pressing questions of representation and the politics of voice. By tracing these developments, the research reveals Insta-poetry as a mechanism for cultural articulation and for social empowerment. While media and cultural studies have begun to illuminate this dimension, literary scholarship has yet to fully reckon with how algorithmic logic shapes not only circulation but also the very aesthetic choices writers make. By looking at how algorithms and metrics like likes, shares, and engagement influence the creation and spread of poems, this research

enhances our understanding of how platform capitalism changes cultural output, showing the subtle ways that literary value gets mixed up with commercial interests in digital spaces.

Finally, the study carries significant pedagogical weight. As both instructors and students increasingly turn to digital platforms for literary engagement. A nuanced grasp of Insta-poetry can directly enhance curriculum design as well steer digital literacy initiatives. It can enrich conversations about the co-constitution of authorship, identity, and emergent expressive practices. Such an emphasis situates Insta-poetry not as a fleeting trend but as a dynamic and influential literary invention and critical interaction in the present century.

1.3 Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach that combines literary criticism with digital media studies. The adopted method investigates the aesthetic, cultural, and structural aspects of Insta-poetry. Based on modern poetry, platform studies, and digital cultural criticism, the analysis shows how the Instagram platform changes the relationship between poetic form, authorship, and audience participation.

1.3.1 Textual Selection and Analysis

The textual selection derives from a purposive sampling of prominent Insta-poets, specifically Rupi Kaur, Nayyirah Waheed, and Nikita Gill. These selections encompass a deliberately broad array of motifs—identity, feminism, trauma, empowerment, and love—and are examined with respect to form, diction, visual layout, and platform integration. The study foregrounds structural features of Insta-poetry to harmonize with Instagram’s visual grammar and the logics of its algorithms.

1.3.2 Platform-Specific Context

The analysis locates Instagram’s technical affordances as determinant of both poetic production and reception. Algorithmic visibility, digital virality, and metrics of reader engagement are thus reconceived as co-authors in the poetic encounter. Instagram is therefore reconceptualized, not as a mere conduit of circulation, but as a generative, co-constitutive agency that organizes poetic content and recalibrates its evolving significances.

2. Disrupting Literary Gatekeeping and Democratizing Authorship

The ground of American poetry has been shaped by critics, academics, and publishers who guard its literary credibility. However, academic gatekeepers in geographical settings prioritize particular genders, frequently white-male-germinated ones, and marginalize differing identities. Insta-poetry has revolutionized literary production by providing a digital counterpart to traditional poetry and non-fictional poems, rebelling against the constraints of institutional authority. The uniqueness of Insta-poetry lies not in its accessibility, but in its capacity to redefine the concepts of authorship and reading. Poets like Rupi Kaur, Nayyirah Waheed, Cleo Wade, Upile Chisala, and others have gained fame using slam language, through expression free of complex and stylized aesthetics. .

Their works reject classical literary forms and embrace a mode of cultural narrative that mixes the poetic with the personal, the political, and the visual. Insta-poets shift norms of authorship from being changing it from a solo creativity to reader-poet interrelated one. Authenticates. Chisala’s idea of inverse affirmation and identity is both a poetic and cultural act, declaring feminism as worthy of literary space (Boqo 2023). This acknowledgement is more

than ceremonial; her poetry lays claim to a literary tradition which has rendered Black female voices invisible. Insta-poetry is created for a digital space without an editorial board or a literary journal, allowing for a direct interaction between readers and poets.

This interaction redefines conventional anticipations of literary engagement. Comment sections transform into arenas for interpretation; reposts function as endorsements; #hashtags categorize poetry into thematic categories. These commands do more than promote accessibility; they embed readers into the very fabric of meaning-making. Thence, Instagram poetry embodies participatory poetics, in which reading becomes a collaborative act (Pianzola et al. 2020). This shifts the role of the reader from a passive consumer to an active co-creator, reinforcing the public and interactive nature of digital poetry.

Insta-Poetry's influence on the democratization of authorship is also of particular importance for diasporic, queer, and gender nonconforming writers who have been historically marginalized in mainstream literary spaces. Instagram democratizes the field and gives poets the tools to self-publish and distribute their work. The conventional criteria of literary legitimacy become less relevant in this new context. Instead, Insta-poets establish credibility through digital engagement, audience loyalty, and the emotional effect of their works (Knox 2023). This new rehearsal redefines the function of the poet. The Insta-poet has transcended the peripheries of academia and elite literary institutions, embodying a multifaceted role as a writer, editor, designer, and community architect. For the aesthetics of their posts, fonts, layouts, and spacing are part of their authorship (Salgaro 2022).

This expanded notion of poetic labor resists traditional theories of authorship. It embraces a poetics of visibility and immediacy that is attuned to the lived realities of online expression. At the same time, this accessibility may raise criticism about artistic merit. The rise of easy, short, and widely appealing Insta-poetry has been accused of flooding the literary landscape with content that is neither complex nor innovative. These anxieties hint at a more profound fear of the loss of editorial authority, which has been a longstanding fortification of literary standards. But such critiques may themselves be based on elitist assumptions about the reality of poetry. (Fathima 2025; Berlant & Edelman 2022)

Criticism of Insta-poetry tends to betray an entitlement disguised as a defense of literacy. In contrast, advocates argue that emotional clarity and accessibility make the genre less completely artful and an indication of cultural movement towards affect-driven and visually mediated storytelling. This reframes artistic value not as something earned through formal training or institutional approval, but through resonance, reach, and relevance in digital culture (Khilnani 2021). In addition, the global reach of Instagram has also allowed for the diversification of poetic voices; poets from non-Western contexts can enter into the shaping of contemporary literary culture through Instagram. Poems in various languages, incorporating idioms and local metaphors, intertwine with poems that garner international attention and excitement.

This global poetics is indifferent to the geographic and institutional boundaries that have historically constructed the American literary canon. In this light, Insta-poetry is not only democratizing access. It is globalizing authorship, creating a literary commons in which diverse identities and linguistic traditions can live side by side (Puzzo 2024). This signals a move away from centralized literary authority, inviting global voices to participate without needing validation from the elite traditional publishing gatekeepers. Therefore, Insta-poetry subverts conventional literary gatekeeping by creating new avenues for poetic expression. It expands the scope of potential poets and the definitions, appearances, and significance of poetry. This emergence represents a shift in medium and a reconfiguration of the practice, audience, and ethics of authorship. Aesthetic minimalism and platform-specific design will be expanded fur-

ther, exploring how the Insta-poetry movement itself is informed by what the digital media can afford or constrain as a result.

3. Aesthetic Minimalism and Platform Influence

Insta-poetry is as concerned with its visibility as it is with the textual content. This genre is defined by a minimalist aesthetic. Poems are often written in lowercase letters, centered alignment, and a buffer of white space. This sparse design complements the economy of the verses themselves—brief, densely charged lines that go for immediacy over dexterity. This visual and textual simplicity is not incidental; it is a direct response to the limits and affordances of the Instagram platform. These brief poems aim for swift consumption and wide-scale distribution. (Salgaro 2022). Insta-poets designed their format for scrolling, which attracts instantaneous resonance instead of gradual reflection. This structure aligns with the platform impact which is measured by immediacy and shareability rather than depth developed over time.

It is a minimalist approach that has become one of Insta-poetry's most distinguished aspects. For critics, the desire for simplicity comes at the expense of depth and nuance, turning poetry into platitudes and quick inspiration bites. Critics argue that the pursuit of accessibility comes at the expense of a defined poetic form. Short lines and aphoristics often show an absence of metaphorical or syntactic complexity, criticizing Instagram poetry for being more aligned with lifestyle trends than with literary art (Kiernan, 2020). Yet these critiques tend toward the neglect of how the platform, in turn, shapes poetic creation. Instagram rewards immediacy, emotional directness, and visual clarity, virtues that inform the formal decisions of digital poets.

Rather than accusing aesthetics of being superficial, it is more useful to consider platform-specific dynamics. These Insta-poets are not merely writing poems; they are crafting content for a visual medium in which visibility and engagement come from clarity, power, and scrollability. The medium dictates a certain set of expectations, which poets work around. It's a hybrid aesthetic. Part poem, part graphic artifact, it reads outside traditional genre distinctions. In this sense, the poem isn't an object to be consumed; it's a performative act existing in the digital commands as 'likes,' 'Shares,' 'Comments,' and 'Re-posts' (Khilnani 2021). Commands that reframe poetry as interaction rather than inscription shape its meaning not only through the author's intent but also through the audience's engagement and platform dynamics. Besides, aesthetic minimalism has its own cultural and generational significance. Insta-poets who are used to reading for the structured lines and pithy words of Insta-poetry echo the media environment by creating content that is quick and visually profuse.

This property is particularly effective in addressing topics like grief, empowerment, and healing, which resonate deeply with online users seeking brief yet impactful interactions. Yet this aesthetic convergence with the expectations of platforms raises questions about artistic autonomy. Poets obscure their artistic autonomy when they conform to algorithmic demands. The algorithm obviously favors poems about heartbreak, resilience, and empowerment more so than they deserve (Bucher 2020; Knox 2023) and more than others, which are likely equal in literary importance. That leads poets to self-select for subject matter and form that align with what works on the platform. It allows for a feedback loop in which success is measured not by how new or adventurous your literary work is but by how high its performance metrics are. But, with the emergence of Insta-poetry, poets do not adhere to the value of the work. Their behavior is a sign of a new literary craft that looks completely unique in a digital context.

The Insta-poets' choices around formatting, word choice, and lineation reflect a larger negotiation between creative discourse and technological mediation. That evolving relationship

requires new critical tools to measure value, not only in meter or metaphor but in text-image-interface permutation (Srnicek 2020). Instead of dismissing Insta-poetry's minimalist style as superficial, scholars need to figure out how it embodies the pressures and possibilities of its moment. It speaks to a poetics of adaptation to a world suffused by images, velocity, and emotional discontinuity. Thus, algorithms and platform economics influence the poetic visibility and content that define the ethics of self-expression in digital literary environments.

4. Algorithmic commodification and the ethics of vulnerability

Despite providing a digitally accessible mode of literary interaction, platform capitalism still dominates Insta-poetry. In contrast to the majority of poetry, which exists in printed anthologies or selected periodicals, Insta-poetry is composed, formatted, and consumed in digitally controlled frameworks. Algorithms dominate these platforms, amplifying what users 'like' and 'share.' The success of a poem is therefore frequently the result of its adherence to platform-centric measures of success, specifically, emotional immediacy, visual clarity, and shareability (Bucher 2020; Knox 2023).

The system of algorithms rewards popular content, pressuring poets to write lines the algorithm will promote with 'likes,' 'comments,' or 'reposts.' This mechanism creates a specific mode of poetry reproduction that relies on engagement metrics. Additionally, poets figure out which themes their audience responds to—heartbreak, healing, and empowerment—and they start replicating those themes to increase visibility. This practice creates a feedback loop where content optimizes for algorithmic metrics, potentially compromising artistic complexity (Soelseth, 2023). This dynamic comes down to the commodification of vulnerability.

A signature quality of Insta-poetry is its confessional tone, often traumatic, showing feelings of identity, loss, anxiety, and recovery. While it undoubtedly creates spaces of empathy and solidarity, it also raises questions about the capitalist exploitation of emotional labor. Poems that reveal personal pain bring more engagement and, in turn, more platform visibility. Over time, they can encourage a performative mode of writing, one in which expressions of suffering are rounded up and packaged ready for consumption.

The commodification of pain as content introduces complex ethical concerns. Expecting poets to mine their personal histories for trauma redirects the creative process into an insistent, archaeological mode of suffering. This mode increases the risk of becoming confined within a public persona constructed around perpetual vulnerability. For many, the expectation of continually performing pain becomes worrying, especially as audiences begin to equate a poet's value with their capacity to articulate distress rather than with their holistic humanity. Such dynamics raise a crucial question regarding the shift from vulnerability to authentic connection to spectacle.

However, they hold equal significance when considered in conjunction with the actions of the poets themselves. Many people use Instagram not only to express their pain but also to fight silence and affirm resilience.. Sharing the works of marginalized poets-- individual historically been excluded from mainstream publication-- is a significant gesture. This practice commodifies vulnerability and reclaims it. The aim of this practice is to enhance visibility and gain cultural validation. According to Salgaro (2022) and Puzzo (2024), this technique aims to increase visibility and cultural validation.

The interplay between vulnerability and commercialization is intricate. The commodification of emotional expression via publishing agreements, branded merchandise, and endorsements obscures the distinction between genuineness and theatricality. While this process is sometimes criticized as inauthentic or exploitative, it may be more useful to explore matters

of platform constraints that enable and limit expression in distinct ways. As poets working in the digital spaces, there is a tension between writing for an audience, writing for oneself, and writing for a platform.

Vitality, moreover, influences lyrical structure. Concise poems that are emotionally evocative and visually clear outperform those that are intricate. This process often results in a stylistic convergence that prioritizes emotional resonance over literary experimentation. As a result, content has a tendency to cluster around specific affective registers—longing, heartbreak, and empowerment—while other experiences and styles are underrepresented. The pressure to stay visible in the feed discourages aesthetics that deviate from the norm, and as a result, Insta-poetry arguably becomes self-limiting in its scope of shareable content (Fathima 2025). The conclusion suggests that while the platform encourages easy access, it can also lead to repeated content—favoring what is familiar and lively instead of trying new styles or deeper themes.

Yet, Insta-poetry's investment in vulnerability is one of its biggest contributions. It emphasizes the emotional element of literary creation, engaging readers in experiences of emotional vulnerability. It also confronts its detractors to refine their perspectives, acknowledging the emotional and ethical aspects of Insta-poetry. Instead of narrowly viewing vulnerability as just a marketing tactic, scholars might explore how it acts as a resistance and identity assertion or a form of community building. These complexities require us to rethink literary criticism so that it sees poetry not just as a form of artistic expression but as something shaped by the rules of platforms, the pressures of algorithms, and the emotional aspects of digital buying and selling.

5. Outstanding Insta-poets

Significant revolution in Insta-poetry shifts the process of creation and the consumption of poetic works. The recent shift towards video content by Instagram suggests a redefinition not only in poets' artistic expressions but also in audience engagement with their messages (Salsbery, 2021). This evolution may raise an enriched narrative framework that interweaves visual elements, facilitating enhanced emotional connections and wider accessibility. Nevertheless, this raises critical inquiries about authenticity and depth within a medium frequently critiqued for its perceived simplicity; specifically, if poetry's essence can be negotiated in its quest for viral appeal. Ultimately, artists face the challenge of maintaining their creative reliability while adapting to an ever-changing digital environment—ensuring that increased inclusivity does not come at the expense of vital poetic values.

Insta-poets traverse this dynamic ground, they confront obstacles regarding their distinct voices amidst overwhelming content created for mass consumption. Such circumstances can lead to a homogenization of poetic expression wherein pursuits as 'likes' and 'shares' overshadow intricate thematic explorations traditionally allied with poetry. Poets such as Rupi Kaur @rupikaur in her collection like *Milk and Honey*, and Amanda Gorman @amandascgorman, known for her powerful induction poem "The Hill We Climb," exemplify this landscape. Their contributions show how concise and emotional verses attract audiences. They spark important discussions around love, healing, and social justice (Kruger 2017).

However, being tied to such discussions, poets are empowered to utilize the visual capabilities of digital platforms to construct multi-dimensional narratives resonating on both emotional and intellectual spectrums. Furthermore, Insta-poets serve as vital conduits for amplifying poetic engagement. Such engagement invites varied contributors around singular themes to diversify perspectives among participants alike, increasingly leveraging online spaces for discussions concerning social justice issues during pivotal moments. During COVID-19, 81% engaged

with topics surrounding equity (Salsbery 2021.). For example, the #BlackoutPoetry movement has brought together diverse voices, allowing poets like J. Ivy (@j_ivy) to share experiences that reflect societal challenges and triumphs.

Consequently, collective creativity emerges as a counterbalance to the viral tendencies of individualism, thereby igniting deeper discussions that are firmly rooted in the preservation of artistry amidst the ongoing digitization that is transforming the fabric of modern society. Such a change expands horizons past aesthetics alone, deepening engagement between producers and consumers, nurturing empathy through understanding, and ultimately promoting mutual understanding between divergent worldviews. Publications that authentically convey human experiences profoundly connect with individuals who are collaboratively traversing the inherent complexities involved (Gao 2021). Furthermore, they highlight the potential embedded within the evolving dynamics that define contemporary cultural interactions enabled by technological progress.

The algorithmic logic that governs the use of popular platforms forces poets to balance between seeking self-expression and marketability, which in turn affects the interactions that shape nature. This requires a keen awareness to avoid oversimplification, which could lead to a loss of the richness that is otherwise distinctively conveyed. Yet, in working within the introduced complexities is the potential for innovative avenues of artistic expression, particularly so in the merging of multimedia formats, including soundscapes and interactive graphics, which provide the possibility for in-depth exploration of pressing issues, for example, mental health and issues of race. Poets such as Cleo Wade @cleowade have already effectively used this multimedia concept in her collection of poetry *Where to Begin*, coupling graphic art with her evocative poetry to craft an immersive narrative experience (kruger 2017).

Furthermore, the utilization of immersive features enables artists to create communities that prioritize authenticity over popularity, thereby redefining artistry in contemporary times. Such resistance to commodification is usually a result of the increasing influence of algorithms that favor temporary trends over meaningful efforts. A notable example is seen in the work of Lang Leav @langleav, whose poetry and prose works are thematically exploring love and the idea of healing (kruger 2017). These pieces truly resonate with her audience while maintaining an intimate feel that exceeds the usually superficial nature associated with social media.

As poets persist in pushing boundaries of expression on platforms like Instagram, they disrupt traditional hierarchies across literary canons and give voice to marginalized voices. By creating spaces replete with varied stories existing in consonant relation to one another. Insta-poets challenge traditional hierarchies across literary canons while amplifying marginalized voices by way of response. For instance, poets such as Nayyyirah Waheed @nayyyirahwaheed, Nikita Gill @nikita_gill, Amanda Gorman @amandascgorman, and Rupī Kuar @rupikaur whose poetry is rewriting contemporary literature, as they navigate the intersectionality of race and identity, forging conversations that echo deeply throughout their communities.

Nayyyirah Waheed's Instagram account features strength- and empowerment-based poetry that encourages readers to find strength in vulnerability. Her books, *Salt* and *Nejma*, are considered seminal works of modern poetry, delving deep into the human condition. Nayyyirah Waheed has carved out a place for herself on social media, particularly Instagram, where her brief but potent rhymes resonate with a global audience. With a follower count over 250,000, Waheed stands out as perhaps the leading contemporary poet on the Internet; her plainspoken, unsparing precision in capturing complex emotion has won her a great deal of admiration and a dedicated audience. Waheed mines her own experience as a Black woman to address issues of

identity and ancestry, bolstering marginalized voices. She addresses issues like racism and the conflict between personal narratives on community struggle and memory, which can inspire listeners to embrace their identities.

Nikita Gill @nikita_gill is an Insta-poet who has engaged over 600,000 followers on Instagram. Gill started rising to fame on the platforms when she shared her poetry accompanied by illustrations. *Maleficent's Daughter*, one of her early collection, received broad exposure and set the stage for her feminist and empowering themes. Nikita Gill's work has been instrumental in the democratization of poetry and has brought poetry and words close to the global audience. Gill has turned to Instagram instead of using literary journals or academic platforms, which are traditional poets' primary means of dissemination. This method has enabled her to avoid conventional gatekeeping in the publishing industry and reach a more diverse and often younger audience. In 2025, she has more than 641,000 followers on Instagram (Euronews 2025). Gill's innovative use of social media and her focus on themes like feminism, mental health, and identity have inspired a new generation of poets and writers. Her approach has demonstrated that poetry can thrive outside traditional publishing avenues, encouraging emerging artists to explore alternative platforms as Kuar and Gorman.

Among the most prominent Insta-poet, Amanda Gorman @amandasgorman, and Rupi Kaur @rupikaur are expanding poetry's frontiers in the contemporary moment. Although their styles and themes could not be more different, they have both helmed the poetic mainstream at different times, and both are responsible for bringing poetry back to a place of usefulness, relevance, and power in today's society. Both Gorman, and Kaur with lyrical and socially aware verse have captivated the world and ushered in a new generation of poets (XTalkies 2024; *Vanity Fair* 2025). Gorman's posts often speak to issues like racial inequality, environmental sustainability, and gender equity. She urges us to take action against climate change with lines such as (*Read Poetry* 2025).

On the other hand, Kaur's poetry explores subjects such as love, trauma, healing, and femininity. She is exploration of taboo subjects like menstruation, sexual violence, and body image, sparking discussions around these topics and inspiring others to embrace self-acceptance. Rupi Kaur's collection *Milk and Honey* (2014), originally shared on Instagram, has sold millions of copies worldwide, playing a key role in both the commercial and cultural legitimization of the genre (*Read Poetry* 2025).

The development of Instagram poetry demonstrates the form's malleability and how technology can enhance literary form. However, it also prompts us to critically examine the medium, as poets navigate a delicate balance between creativity and commerciality Gao (2021) thinks. that the pressure to meet the demands of vitality can lead to oversimplification, sacrificing the richness and nuance that poetry has traditionally been capable of communicating.

Thus, the very essence of Insta poetry lies in its ability to bring unrelated individuals together, forge connections, and initiate conversations beyond geographical as well as cultural boundaries. The platform acts as a virtual common space, allowing poets to share their experiences, opinions, and creative outputs with people across the globe. Poetry's democratization promotes inclusivity and challenges the traditional notion of whose voice matters in the literary realm. Their convergence of diverse voices implies that there is a more intricate tapestry to reflect the intricacies of modern life;

In short, the rise of Instagram poetry marks a tremendous shift in the literary world while embracing the potential for greater inclusivity and engagement. Insta-poets like Nayyirah

Waheed, Rupi Kaur, Amanda Gorman, and Kiatti Gomini provide insights about re-evaluating the Instagram's literary value. Navigating this changing era creates an environment that upholds artistic integrity, nurtures a diversity of perspectives, and honors the transformative potential of poetry in our common human experience.

6. Criticism and Challenges

: Instagram poetry has increasingly become a mainstream platform for artistic expression but, in the process, raises profound questions about the commodification of poetic value. Numerous critics argue that the site's emphasis on producing visually appealing and shareable content leads to a dilution of complexity and depth in poetry. For authors writing in the terms that Instagram sets out, there will often be pressure for straightforward emotional writing to be paramount over other literary devices; these artists will be led by algorithmic considerations and user metric engagement.

A good example can be borrowed from Rupi Kaur's *Milk and Honey*, which has ignited controversies about whether such pieces compromise artistic value for the sake of commercial success. Critics as Mapes (2025) points out that while these pieces are consumable, their brevity might overrule rich, intricate forms of poetry with more substance. This ongoing battle between accessibility—often promoted in virtual spaces—and artistic integrity poses significant obstacles for those navigating the landscape of contemporary Instagram literature.

Moreover, Insta-poetry prompts debates about what constitutes "authentic" poetic expression. Traditionalists claim that many pieces lack essential qualities such as linguistic creativity or structural sophistication typically associated with elite verse. On the other hand, discussions suggest that this movement is a natural change that responds to the limits of modern platforms and the new chances they provide—an idea seen in new styles like micro-poetry, which express deep feelings in short formats.

These concise pieces fit perfectly into Instagram's format in which economy of language is necessary to capture users' transient attention. The growing popularity of spoken-word performances further stretches poetic frontiers through its synthesis with multimedia features across platforms such as TikTok, thereby validating poetry's contemporaneity in the face of accelerated culture change (Hassan 2025). Criticisms, however, continue to be made about perceived lacks in literary craft among artists in this genre.

Critics claim that emotive resonance tends to outweigh intellectual rigour traditionally associated with classical poetics in assessing Insta-poets' work. Rebecca Watts puts into words concerns over a dominant trend she depicts as "a celebration of amateurism," indicating some practitioners overlook traditional devices such as intricate wordplay or metaphorical sophistication (qtd. in Mandes 2024). Such claims are corroborated by minimalist leanings demonstrated especially among noted figures such as Rupi Kaur and Lang Leav @angleav, whose stylistically simple lines use direct language instead of ornate structures (Szkutak 2017). While appealing to readers, the tendency to over-simplify dwindling interpretative richness typically found in traditionally appreciated works. Criticism of Leav's *Love & Misadventure*, founded primarily on its simplicity and absence of formal innovation, lends credence to this (Sharma 2025).

Additionally, the reliance upon social media mechanisms presents substantial hurdles specifically tailored toward artists engaging via platforms, namely—with algorithms prioritizing interactive engagements measured against 'likes,' 'shares,' 'comments'. Consequently, these pressures compel Insta-poets to produce aesthetically captivating narratives, thereby sacrificing potential layers of deeper meaning intrinsic literature (Yu 2019). In fact, incorporating visual

aesthetics ranging from typography to design imagery becomes instrumental in defining aesthetic choices, guiding the Insta-verse and shifting focus away from written material towards display visuals. Yu notes how poet Atticus, alongside R.M. Drake @rmdrk, amassed considerable followings, integrating stunning graphics contrasting criticisms claiming undue preference from overrides substance (Yu 2019).

Furthermore, the phenomenon surrounding monetization remains contentious amid growing debates concerning the commodification of art itself. Instagram poets have successfully leveraged their craft, converting it into lucrative enterprises encompassing book sales, merchandise, and sponsorships. Critics caution, however, that financial success could lead to compromising authentic creative pursuits by emphasizing revenue generation (Mandes 2024). For instance, Rupi Kaur 's bestseller *Milk and Honey* has faced scrutiny being accused pandering market trends instead advancing original expressions. The ongoing debates balancing aspirations against commercial inclinations surfaces regularly throughout discourse focused on Insta-literature (Mapes 2025) .

Simultaneously, this meteoric rise Insta-poetry casts shadows traditional practices risking obscurity established methods structures. As dominant presence spreads across social networks toppling conventional voices less visibility emerges consequently raising apprehensions homogenized culture eroding unique heritage (Shrama 2025) . Poet experimenting intricately woven formats esoteric themes might struggle competing relevancy immediacy cultivated online spheres highlighting dissonance distinguishing 'high low 'forms wherein former freely dismissed latter altogether. Acknowledgement necessity foster diverse ecosystems nurturing multifaceted representation various genres epitomizes vital critiques underpinning current narrative surrounding evolving dynamics evidenced today

Ultimately, in order adapt evolving expectations, present-day audience M. Zul (2024) emphasizes originality as crucial to thriving upon mediums requiring frequent recalibrations to keep pace with relevance. Poetic community finds themselves focusing participation rather exploration yielding risks stifling individuality resulting homogeneity permeating creations. Notably, rising emotions embracing micro-form short, impactful segments, although conforming limitations imposed context diminishes spectrum available modes self-expression champions longer, richer, explorative endeavors Cultivating truly expansive dialogues is essential to enriching the tapestry of human experience. Forms may find it difficult to gain adhesion in a culture that favors concise, shareable content (Mandes 2024).

Conclusion

In a sense, Insta-poetry serves as a significant challenge to conventional conceptions of literary merit, poetic structure, and authorship. Leveraging the allure and interactivity of digital platforms, it engages a broader and more varied audience in the discourse about literature. The genre, via its stark imagery, candid language, and active reader engagement, expands the boundaries of poetry activity beyond traditional publishing venues and esteemed audiences. A shift that is at least as new as insta-poetry itself is the new way that poetry is produced, disseminated, and appreciated. Insta-poets have brought poetry into the hands of folks outside of colleges and universities and traditional literary spheres, contesting long-held ideas about who has authority to speak about the craft while also allowing for voices that have been historically excluded to find space. Instead of seeing its popularity and accessibility as threats, this study celebrates how Insta-poetry reimagines what poetry can be in a digital age.

The economy, emotionally resonant and visually vivid, reflects a generation shaped by the rapid pace of internet contact. One of the significant accomplishments of the genre is its capacity to foster an inclusive, participatory literary culture. Readers are not passive consumers anymore but active participants, interacting with poems through likes, comments and shares. This interactivity is what makes poetry into an experience shared by others with this shared experience not just being the voice of the poet, but the reception of the audience. This interactivity is not only a social one; it is also an aesthetic one, since the way people affect each other can change the content, voice, and even the form. People who have to live in a busy digital world also discover that the emotional immediacy and visual friendliness of Instagram poetry speak to them very well. The meaning of insta-poetry is thus co-compared, thus subverting traditional hierarchies of interpretation. It resonates with wider literary movements that focus on decentralization and peripheries but comes with ethical ramifications. Algorithms shape perception, emotional immediacy reigns, and vulnerability has become performance art, making it difficult to tell where expressive honesty ends and strategic self-revelation begins.

When the metrics of poetry become digital ones likes, shares, eyeballs poetry, the experience of emotion, becomes commoditized. And yet, despite the tensions between authenticity and commercialization, Insta-poetry continues to do important cultural work. It provides a means of platforming oneself, especially for those who are often marginalized in traditional literary spaces. For many readers, notably younger and marginalized readers, it offers validation and visibility. Its availability has also sparked public interest in poetry, helping drive the genre's renewed presence in modern culture. As American poetry continues to evolve alongside the technologies that shape it, so too must literary criticism. Measuring Insta-poetry with these criteria does not account for its form and function as a heterogeneous, digital creature. Such a firmly expanded sense of poetic value accounting for platform as well as audience interaction and multimodal expression has become necessary.

Current ways of judging works that put too much emphasis on traditional standards may miss important details in new and unique ones. This study shows that we need to make new rules that recognize different contributions and help us understand how things are changing, which can lead to new discoveries. Therefore, to solve the problems of world-centered inquiry, we need academic research that looks at how the definitions of aesthetics are changing in the digital age. Researchers at the forefront of this emerging field will uncover a complex network of interpersonal relationships. This web is a living mix of old and new ideas, and it goes deep into the meaning of movement and emotion in poetry.

As more people join Insta-poetic communities, scholars should compare Insta-poetic poetry to traditional poetry and point out differences that challenge what we think makes outstanding writing. This will help them see how these changes are affecting the way people do things in general. These comparisons might help us figure out what makes a poem outstanding now that we can read, write, and share poetry in new ways. Studying multimodal expressions is another fascinating area. Many online works incorporate a blend of text, graphics, typography, layouts, and designs.

Future research could build on the existing literature by exploring comparative aspects of Insta-poetry with other digital poetic genres, such as TikTok poetry or spoken word shared on platforms like YouTube. Further interrogation could explore how the multilingual and transnational aspects of Insta-poetry engage with postcolonial and diasporic literary traditions. Intended for academic audiences, scholars could also follow Insta-poetry's engagement and re-drafting of literary traditions, specifically in the domains of genre making, poetic arbitrainment, and the ways digital platforms shape form and voice. In the end, Insta-poetry requires critical

frameworks accounting for digital media as bound up in the production of poetry, its dissemination, and its reception. Instead of debating whether it counts as real literature, Consider how it enables fresh reading, writing, and literary involvement. This allows us to see how literature changes and evolves in the digital age.

References

- Aman, Y. K. R. (2022). The importance of Instapoetry in light of dominant forms, with special reference to Rupi Kaur's *Milk and Honey*. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 12(2), 46–53. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ells.v12n2p46>
- Berlant, L., & Edelman, L. (2022). *Sex, or the unbearable*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.12>
- Boqo, B. (2023). Let Black girls be: The (Insta)poetry of Upile Chisala and its resistance to coloniality of being. *European Journal of English Studies*, 27(1), 81–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825577.2023.2200431>
- Bucher, T. (2020). The algorithmic imaginary: Exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(1), 30–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1154086>
- Fathima, R. (2025). The rise of Instapoetry in the contemporary world. *International Journal of Creative Writing and Literary Studies*, 11, Article 224. <https://doi.org/10.26524/224.11>
- Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Harvard University Press.
- Gao, Y., Xie, Z., Sun, L., Xu, C., & Li, D. (2021). Characteristics of and user engagement with antivaping posts on Instagram: Observational study. *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*, 7(1), e29600. <https://doi.org/10.2196/29600>
- Hassan, A. (2025). The influence of social media on contemporary poetry: A deep dive. *Piyari Shayari*. <https://piyarishayari.com/social-media-influence-contemporary-poetry/>
- Khilnani, S. (2021). Moving poetry: Affect and aesthetic in Instapoetry. In *Decolonizing the lyric* (pp. 135–142). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9934-7_14
- Kiernan, A. (2020). Insta poetry and the politics of emotion. *The Literary Platform*. <https://theliteraryplatform.com/stories/insta-poetry-and-the-politics-of-emotion/>
- Knox, J. (2023). Hooked on access: Examining the voice of accessibility in Instapoetry. In *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3609429.3609434>
- Kruger, S. (2017). The technopo(e)litics of Rupi Kaur: (De)colonial aesthetics and spatial narrations in the DigiFemme age [Undergraduate honors thesis, Butler University]. *Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection*, 574. <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses/574>
- Mandes, R. (2024, January 31). Instapoetry is successful, and there's nothing wrong with that. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/instapoetry-is-successful-and-theres-nothing-wrong-with-that-222012>
- Mapes, M. (2025). Vice versa. *Culture Crush*. <https://www.theculturecrush.com/feature/vice-versa>
- Pâquet, L. (2019). Selfie-help: The multimodal appeal of Instagram poetry. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 52(2), 296–314. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12780>
- Pianzola, F., Rebora, S., & Lauer, G. (2020). Wattpad as a resource for literary studies: Quantitative and qualitative examples. *PLOS ONE*, 15(1), e0226708. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0226708>
- Puzzo, M. B. (2024). Poemas nas redes sociais. *EntreLetras*, 10(1), Article e18717. <https://doi.org/10.70860/ufnt.entreletras.e18717>

- Read Poetry. (2025). Eco-poems by women to come back to. <https://www.readpoetry.com/3-eco-poems-by-women-to-come-back-to/>
- Salgaro, M. (2022). Literary value in the era of big data: Operationalizing critical distance in professional and non-professional reviews. *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.22148/001c.36446>
- Salsbery, H. (2021). Reshaping the canon: How "Insta-Poets" are creating a new literary space for readers using social media [Undergraduate honors thesis, Butler University]. *Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection*, 574. <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses/574>
- Sharma, E. (2025). From page to screen: The role of digital media in shaping contemporary poetic expressions on Insta poetry of Rupī Kaur. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*. https://www.academia.edu/128754903/From_Page_to_Screen
- Soelseth, C. H. (2023). The media ecologies of Norwegian Instapoet Trygve Skaug. *European Journal of English Studies*, 27(2), 168–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825577.2023.2200423>
- Srnicek, N. (2020). *Platform capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Stanojević, A., Goossens, J., & Keymolen, E. (Eds.). (2025). Algorithmic governance and social vulnerability: A value analysis of equality and trust. In *Public governance and emerging technologies* (pp. 235–252). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-84748-6_15
- Szkutak, R. (2017). How Rupī Kaur used Instagram to transform poetry. *Interview Magazine*. <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/how-rupi-kaur-used-instagram-to-transform-poetry>
- Vanity Fair. (2025). Amanda Gorman, Rupī Kaur... La nouvelle génération de poétesses qui font bouger les lignes. <https://www.vanityfair.fr/culture/voir-lire/story/amanda-gorman-rupi-kaur-la-nouvelle-generation-de-poetesses-qui-font-bouger-les-lignes/13466>
- Wikipedia contributors. (2025, July). Instapoetry. In *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instapoetry>
- XTalkies. (2024, November 2). Amanda Gorman: A rising voice in poetry and activism. <https://xtalkies.com/amanda-gorman-a-rising-voice-in-poetry-and-activism/>
- Yu, T. (2019). Instagram poetry and our poetry worlds. *Poetry Foundation*. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/featured-blogger/81555/instagram-poetry-and-our-poetry-worlds>
- Zul, M. (2024). Publishing outlook in 2025: Trends, technologies, and challenges. *Publishing State*. <https://publishingstate.com/publishing-outlook-in-2025-trends/2024/>

Researcher data:	بيانات الباحث:
Dr. Lura Hadi Qassim AlSaeed, Assistant Professor of English, Literature, College of Arts, Jouf University, Saudi Arabia. She holds a PhD in English Literature from the University of Abdulazeez Hes research interests revolve around issues as post-colonial literature, Afro-American modern literature and literary platforms.	د. لورا هادي قاسم السعيد، أستاذ الأدب الإنجليزي المساعد، قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية الآداب، جامعة الجوف، في المملكة العربية السعودية. حاصلة على درجة الدكتوراة في الأدب الإنجليزي، من جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز، تدور اهتماماتها البحثية حول قضايا مابعد الاستعمار والشعر الأفرو أمريكي، والمنصات الرقمية الأدبية.

Email: nora.h.alsaeid@Ju.edu.sa