



DOI: 10.17846/aa-2025-17-2-1-14

Achieving the therapeutic through the poetic in the Instapoems by Rupī

Kaur, Najwa Zebian, and Alexandra Vasiliu

Soumaya Guebla

Soumaya Guebla holds a PhD in English literature obtained from the Faculty of Letters and Languages of Badji Mokhtar, Annaba University, Algeria. She currently teaches at the department of English and Letters at Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba. Her research interests revolve around diasporic and postcolonial literature, Arab Anglophone or Muslim Anglophone literature, women's studies, psychotherapy, healing and literature, and digital literature.

Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4104-0601>

Abstract:

This article examines the relationship between poetry therapy and Instapoetry. Therefore, it highlights the vital role of the selective Instapoets in drawing a powerful roadmap for their readers toward self-understanding, self-esteem, and self-forgiveness. This research shows how the Instapoets Rupī Kaur, Najwa Zebian, and Alexandra Vasiliu help their followers to trace their path of reclaiming the self through teaching them to set healthy boundaries, find inner peace, and restore balance to their lives. As life savers, the three Instapoets daily publish poems also found in their published poetry collections The Sun and her Flowers (2017), Home Body (2020), Sparks of Phoenix (2019), and Dare to Let Go (2022) in order to keep up with their mission of seeding gardens of hope and enlightenment within the hearts of their readers. Therefore, the major theoretical work we draw from is Nicholas Mazza's theory of poetry therapy. We precisely focus on his RES model that strongly emphasizes the significance of writing and reading poetry in healing the self. This article proves that the act of writing and sharing poems on Instagram serves as a purging cathartic tool for Instapoets. This creative outlet allows Instapoets to confront overwhelming feelings such as pain and trauma. Reading Instapoetry is therapeutic for Insta-followers because it not only provides a gateway that profoundly dives into their inner selves, but also effectively gives voice to their buried feelings, and contributes to the betterment of their mental health and spiritual growth.

1. Introduction

Instapoetry is a style of writing that has recently sprung up with the advancement of Instagram. As part of wider digital poetry, this literary genre differs from classical poetry and has its own characteristics. In terms of form, Instapoets prefer to experiment with simple language, and direct, short lines that do not adhere to traditional rhyme constraints. They usually accompany their poems with pictures and videos that represent and further endorse their topics. Like any other commercial work, they found Instagram to be a successful source for advertising their poetry. Instapoets prolifically and constantly post, updating themselves to gain millions of followers. For instance, Najwa Zebian has 1.4m followers, while Rupi Kaur has 4.4m, and Alexandra Vasiliu has 14.2k. The likes and positive comments of their subscribers show the extent to which the audience is satisfied.

In terms of content, Instapoets deal with topics that revolve around the self, like self-love, self-healing, and self-development. In the form of short posts, they echo their Insta-readers' voices, fuel them with encouraging words to transcend the fire that burns them, and remind them of their souls' beauty and purity. Rebecca Charry Roje and Anamarija Vojnović note that, "Instapoets focus on what Paquet (2019) has called 'a self-help aesthetic' revolving around self-love, empowerment, trauma recovery, mental health and personal development generally" (2023, p. 65).

Examples of Instapoetry include Rupi Kaur's *The Sun and her Flowers*, *Home Body*, Najwa Zebian's *Sparks of Phoenix*, and Alexandra Vasiliu's *Dare to Let Go*. Instapoets rely on two major strategies in advertising their poetry: hashtags and algorithms. Thanks to hashtags, Instapoets have more chances to be found and followed on the platform by their audience. A hashtag focuses on a particular topic, which can bring together people with the same thought to form a community. Hashtags play on the validity and perceptibility of the content Instapoets share, and importantly allow them to connect with new followers and broaden their community members. In one of her posts, Kaur uses the hashtag #thesunandherflowers, which has earned her 74.5k likes. Alexandra Vasiliu relies heavily on more general hashtags, such as #poetrycommunity, #poetryofinsta, #lettinggo, #healingjourney, #bookaholics... to get a large number of followers. The more the readers react to the poet's new posts, the higher they will be ranked in the algorithm. Camilla Soelseth notes that, "This includes how to work with and through the algorithms of Instagram, where engagement leads to visibility. In other words, playing the visibility game" (2022, p. 101). Following a set of rules, the content of Instagram poets gets more visible. Based on the users' interactions with similar posts, Instagram expects

the content to be interesting to users, and decides to show more of that content in the form of reels, feeds, stories, and explore pages. Writing about the algorithmic model, Arvin Narayan notes, “the posts a user sees are those that the algorithm predicts they are most likely to engage with” (2023, para.16). Nevertheless, Soelseth points out that although hashtags play an essential role in making content more visible, “it should be noted that subverting the afforded ways of working the platform is another necessary practice.” Soelseth argues that sometimes a hashtag may not always be the best way of playing on the content’s visibility. She thus continues that, “Not tagging your content can be a way of getting noticed, if other ways of playing the visibility game are deployed, because you can signal that you are someone who can afford *not* to make your content findable in the traditional way.” (2022, p. 101) Soeldeth adds another advertising strategy called “affective labour”. Here the content creator works on evoking emotions of “connection between themselves as a creator and the audience” (Sujon, 2021 p. 221, qtd. In Soelseth, 2022, p. 101).

The popularity that Instagram poets have gained throughout the last few years has imposed upon them the tendency to promulgate a noble message. This message lies in teaching their followers how to create a better version of the self through being kind, patient, and forgiving with themselves. This research answers the following questions: How do readers relate to the chunks of poems frequently posted on Instagram? How does the act of sharing poems affect both poets and readers? How do they interact with each other and form a sense of community together? What is the role of the act of writing, and how does it help Instapoets in the process of self-understanding, healing, and discovery?

Engaging in direct interactions with their audience through their inspirational and compassionate posts, the Instapoets chosen for this article make their readers feel that they are not alone in their challenges. Their success as poets-cum-therapists lies in addressing issues of therapy, where they consequently have won a massive number of followers on Instagram, and have received thousands of likes, shares, and comments. The content of poetry collections is self-help poems, where Alexandra Vasiliu’s *Dare to Let Go* reveals that letting go of the toxic past is the key to healing the wounded self, while in *Sparks of Phoenix* Najwa Zebian engages her readers in an inspirational journey from burning to healing. Rupi Kaur’s *The Sun and her Flowers* addresses loss, emptiness, despair, hope, and growth. She compares life to the cycle of a flower from wilting to blooming. In *Home Body*, Kaur empowers her readers to embrace their identities and see the truth in their unique existence.

Given the brief soul-reaching posts of the Instapoets and the positive feedback from their readers, we can then argue that Instapoetry turns into a digital space for accommodating

the therapeutic purpose. It is also worth mentioning that the platform not only serves as a site that implicitly guarantees therapy sessions, but also has become a marketing tool, as we significantly notice that users who react to the constant posts comment that they have bought the whole printed version of the book because of its resonating and lasting effect on their emotions.

It is important to clarify that Instapoetry gives birth to multidimensional effects on both the author and the readers. The pieces of poetry that the Instapoets under consideration post on Instagram have a healing impact on the poets in the first place. The act of writing helps them purge themselves from negative feelings and get a better understanding of their inner selves. Additionally, sharing their experiences with others promotes community bonding where common experiences of pain and rising make the author and the reader feel connected together. This generates a sense of empathy for the readers who tend to be more compassionate with the Instapoet whom they consider their idol. Instead of rejecting their situations, both Instapoets and their subscribers will accept their experiences and work on their self-growth.

A few works have been conducted on the three poets' Instapoetry. Starting with Kaur, most of these studies focus on re-visioning women's identity and feminism in her poetry. For instance, both Selfika Turan's "Finding a voice in 21st century popular culture: Rupi Kaur and her insta-poetry", and Danne Marieke's "Becoming a New Voice of Feminism: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rupi Kaur's Feminist Instapoetry" deal with Kaur as a digital feminist and focus on the destruction of traditional gender roles and male oppression. Valerio Guido Massini's "Rupi Kaur's Poetry: Trauma and Healing" concentrates on the traumatic question in Kaur's poetry collection. Sasha Kruger's "The Technopo(e)litics of Rupi Kaur: (de)Colonial Aesthetics and Spatial Narrations in the DigiFemme Age" examines different notions of home, diaspora, and space in "Milk and Honey". For Najwa Zebian, only an article has been found. It is entitled "Value of Words and Self-Love: An Analysis of Najwa Zebian's Interview" by Ayesha Shoaib, Khozaima Danish, and Sadia Nazeer and tackles the theme of self-love and acknowledgement.

However, studies linking Kaur's Instapoetry and self-healing are scarce. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, research that combines the three Instapoets under study with the theme of self-healing and applying Nicholas Mazza's RES model has never been conducted. This research paper crucially brings forth the notion of Instapoetry therapy and sheds light on the pertinence of Instagram poetry in curing the shattered selfhood of both authors and readers. Additionally, this research foregrounds the prominence of sharing healing and powerful words of empowerment that help Instagram followers transcend trauma and pain. This study further

spotlights the relevance of forming sisterhood connections through digital spaces, which support the growth of wounded women within a healthy community.

2. Poetry therapy and Nicholas Mazza's RES model

Solid theoretical studies linking the aforementioned notion of Instapoetry and psychotherapy are scant. Nevertheless, *Instagram Poetry for Everyday* (2020), the first anthology of Instagram poetry, edited by Jessica Atkinson and Chris McCabe, deals with mental health and Instapoetry themes. Moreover, a number of studies have been conducted on bibliotherapy or poetry therapy in a broad sense. Ackerson et al., for example, have examined the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in the treatment of moderately depressed adolescents. (1988, p. 685) Moreover, Molly Harrower in *The Therapy of Poetry* has analysed how people use poetry to cope with their life crises (1977).

In analysing the poems under study, we have relied on Nicholas Mazza's notion of poetry therapy, and we have precisely focused on his RES model of poetry therapy discussed in his book *Poetry Therapy: Theory and Practice* (2016). Mazza's theoretical foundations can be flexibly applied to our research that analyses the important role of reading and writing Instapoetry in healing the fragmented selves of the authors, transforming the readers' lives, and rescuing them from self-destruction. Accordingly, the RES is used as a twofold concept. First, as a lens to understand the poets and second, as a lens to understand the readers' use of Instapoetry. Poetry therapy is a subtype of bibliotherapy. While bibliotherapy refers to the employment of words, narrative, and figures from fiction and non-fiction materials, poetry therapy involves using poetry as a form of healing the self through expressive therapy. This latter is a wider form of therapy that uses different arts such as digital media, dance, music, drama, art, storytelling, and poetry, which allows humans to grow and heal.

Writing about poetry therapy, Nicholas Mazza states that "poetry therapy reflects the classic issues in literary analysis and psychological practice: the romantic aspects of empathy and subjectivity versus reason and observation" (2016, p. 4). Poetry therapy, then, offers a window toward self-awakening and self-awareness. Writing, reading, and sharing poetry can work as a safe space not only for expressing the self, but also as a catalyst for resonating with others' poems through community building. Mazza further suggests that, "in poetry therapy the focus is on the person, not the poem. Clients are not asked to identify the 'true' meaning of a poem, but rather the personal meaning" (2016, p. 4). Here, the focal point is the extent to which individuals relate to the poem on a personal level and how they react to it in an empathic manner. This spurs a cathartic experience where verse reading becomes a kind of therapy for

patients who suffer from feelings of pity, fear, pain, and grief. Similar to the Ancient Greek Aristotelian catharsis, reading poetry allows the readers to be discharged and emotionally purified from the negative feelings they suffer from in their daily life.

Nicholas Mazza's RES model can work as a theoretical framework for analysing the poems under examination. The R suggests the receptive/prescriptive component. It involves reading a preexisting poem to an individual or a group in clinical therapy. The therapist examines the clients' reactions to the poem, who may alternate reading the poem with conversations. Patients can emotionally identify with the poem, which incites them to express feelings that spring from reading it. Highlighting the extent to which clients significantly associate with the poem, Mazza points out that, "questions relating to the poem should be directed in the manner of 'what does it mean for you?' Reactions may focus on the poem as a whole or on a particular line or image" (2016, p. 18). If the therapist aims to touch his/her patients' hearts, he/she must focus on the topic that reaches them and echoes their aspirations.

The choice of the poem is a crucial step in the recovery process. The therapist scrupulously picks the poem based on the patient's needs and aims. Hence, Mazza provides a table of poems that serve as solutions to diverse problems. Examples include "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost as an antidote to decision-making, and "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" by Emily Dickinson as a solution to despair. Mazza adds, "in poetry therapy, the poem serves as an external object that allows clients an element of protection by an ability to engage or distance themselves from the content with which they emotionally identify" (2016, p. 445). Here, poetry is intertwined with mental health assistance, and the poet unites with the therapist to form an uplifting force that rescues the patient from darkness, enlightens his/her avenues, and nurtures his/her soul.

Furthermore, the receptive mode allows individuals to develop a sense of community with others as it brings related experiences or feelings to mind. It generates an awareness of affiliation through sharing a strong bond. It assists a more sympathetic and empathic reaction toward others' stories, encouraging the acceptance of the other. Wassiliwizky writes that, "Poems have real emotional power and serve as a testament to all of us that we are never alone, that amongst these collective voices we can find those that ring at the same frequency as ours" (Wassiliwizky, 2017, qtd. In David Xiang & Alisha Yi, 2020, para. 13).

Reading others' poems ensures a consolation and a safe haven as it asserts a place for the displaced and a home for the homeless. The readers discover new or hidden angles of their hearts as the poem echoes their silent voices and says what they cannot express, establishing a sense of self-understanding. It drives them to face their fears and transports them to a world of

resilience. The act of sharing the poems with others creates a healthy space of commonality, brings people of diverse backgrounds with similar experiences together, and reminds the author and the readers of their human nature.

Mazza's E mode stands for the expressive/creative component. It incites the attendees to write creatively. Using the free writing technique, they focus on the flow of the ideas without caring about editing. The major concern here is purging any overwhelming feelings or thoughts that may bear a heavy load on the patients' shoulders. If we apply this notion to Instapoets, it is possible to argue that writing poetry serves as an expressive instrument and an outlet, always reminding them that there is hope to dream again, have faith, and open up new horizons for a magical moment of transition.

Writing poetry gives the author the chance to recall past memories. It is the author's gate to better self-knowledge, rethinking past decisions and revising any tough moments. A poem is a mirror of the self that reflects the author's heart and gives credit to his/her voice. Poetry writing is a powerful medium that paves the way for the poet's self-expression and self-assertion. David Xiang et al. note, "Poetry creates avenues for self-expression that cannot be felt through other means of communication. This in itself can be a healing and restorative process, a self-guided therapy that allows us to strengthen our mental health and connection to ourselves, and to those around us" (2020, para. 14).

The E mode can be extended to the readers/users who play a pivotal role in regenerating new meanings of the poems. This is achieved through the interaction of users on the platform, the participatory culture of distribution, and collaborative content creation. Camilla Soelseth explains these points in her article entitled "The Media Ecologies of Norwegian Instapoet Trygve Skaug", where she investigates users' active interaction with Instapoetry. She contends that followers contribute actively to Instapoetry through their likes, comments, and shares. This leads to the discussion of "participatory distribution", where users can become co-authors of the poems, participating in disseminating and re-sharing the original poems (Soelseth, 2023, p. 37, 50). Other examples where the users participate in creating the poems in the platform include, first, the followers' reinterpretation or re-imagination of the original poem in new creative ways using different media forms, like videos or audio to trigger the emotional effect. Second, writing poems as a reply to existing ones, either expanding on their themes, or providing a new vision to them (Soelseth, 2023, p. 44).

Thus, we can consider the users/readers of Instapoetry as content generators who ensure a dynamic relationship between the audience and the original poem, creating new meanings and ushering in enlightening perspectives. Consequently, Instapoetry is not a static process, but

rather a collaborative work that drives us to see beyond the digital and consider the “post-digital” a more prominent concept.

The S represents the symbolic/ceremonial component. It explores the different symbols that a specific poem may have depending on the patient’s experiences, situation, background, and moment of reception. If we link the symbolic to Instapoetry, it can be represented in the form of sketch drawings that often accompany the poems posted on Instagram, which will be explained in detail in the practical part.

Mazza’s RES model of poetry therapy can perfectly fit the writings of Instapoets and their community of followers/readers. The clinical spaces can be substituted by virtual spaces, where the Instapoet can play the role of the therapist and the poet at the same time, while the Instagram followers are the readers or the patients. Readers who suffer from shyness can express themselves comfortably through digital safe spaces within the comfort of their homes, breaking barriers of fear, and building bridges with people in the same situation.

3. The healing power of Instapoetry

Instapoetry has been criticized as superficial, oversimplified, and lacking depth and complexity. For instance, Rebecca Watts has described Instapoetry as “artless poetry” (2016); Hailey Furilla noted that, “when Instapoets claim their work is synonymous with poetry, it damages the reputation of poetry overall, stripping it of its beautiful intricacies” (2023, para 5). Thomas Hodgkinson wrote that, “Their posts often seem like passing thoughts, hastily expressed, then cut up at random to resemble our conventional idea of poetry” (2019, para. 7). Despite the criticism they have faced, the Instapoets under study, Rupi Kaur, Najwa Zebian, and Alexandra Vasiliu, take poetry to a new horizon as they accompany their readers throughout their journey of self-growth and self-development. Instapoetry in this sense becomes a sort of insta-therapy where poets become life coaches who uphold self-affirmation.

Rupi Kaur’s collection of poems, *The Sun and her Flowers*, touches upon themes of self-growth, self-love, self-healing, and self-discovery. The book is divided into five chapters: “Wilting”, “Falling”, “Rooting”, “Rising”, and “Blooming”. This chapter division of the book mirrors the life cycle of any flower. “Wilting” symbolizes the hardships and suffering that a person may come across. “Falling” is about drooping, going through abuse and depression. “Rooting” delves into keeping up with hope. “Rising” deals with holding firm to life and rising again. Finally, “Blooming” is a reminder of flourishing and blossoming, which stresses the inner power that creates a resilient self.

This poignant journey of growth and healing is much akin to Najwa Zebian's metaphor in *Sparks of Phoenix*, which is divided into six chapters. "Falling", "Burning to Ashes", "Sparks of Phoenix", "Rising", "Soaring", and finally, "A New Chapter". Zebian urges her readers to embrace positive change from a healthy mindset in her poetry collection. This process of healing enables her to shine like a star. Her story of survival resembles that of the immortal bird the phoenix from Greek and Egyptian mythology. It regenerates itself through a restorative and renewed life cycle. A phoenix takes its power from the sun and rises from the ashes of its ancestors. Words miraculously let Najwa fly and regenerate a new self, built upon the ruins of her dead and burnt self, like the phoenix.

Both poets know it is important to go through pain to heal. They both insist that one must die to live again and burn to heal. Instead of avoiding feelings of pain, they must face rejection and numbness. The melancholic mood in Kaur's "Wilting" and "Falling" echoes her sense of loneliness, loss, desertion, and rejection. However, her loss has taught her that softness further harms. Rather than lamenting her previous romantic relationship, she embraces strength, and rather than accepting rejection, she chooses herself. In an interview with Meera Nakhlava, Kaur speaks about the importance of writing poetry for healing,

Writing is one of my favorite forms of therapy. I leave it all out on the page. It allows me to reflect on everything and sometimes I'm surprised about what flows out of me. Poetry in its most sincere form is thoughts that are eloquently formed together. Through writing poetry, I found community in so many others. (Kaur, 2022, para. 9)

It is clear that writing poetry is a valuable source of self-understanding and self-discovery. Standing at the crossroads, Kaur always chooses herself. She is aware of her inner strength. She discovers that she should not search outside; she must turn to her inner self to find love. Self-love is a vital step in self-growth. Kaur writes, "Those externalities could never work out if we didn't turn inward and learn how to love ourselves in order to love other people" (2017, p. 40). Throughout her course of self-understanding, Kaur knows she should not be a victim of depression. Numbness does not break her or make her half a person, but she rises as emotionally whole and well again. The fact that she is breathing is her second chance to live a happy life anew.

In a similar vein, in *Home Body* Kaur realizes that real loss lies in losing herself and not loving it. Although she suffered sexual assault and abuse at a very young age, which has led to her psychological depression, she realizes that loving herself means gaining everything. She

reminds herself that her bad days are the result of her miserable experience. In order to feel alive, erase the scars imprinted on her body, and forget the hideous memories, she needs to live just in the present moment. This encourages readers to construct a home within themselves. She admits in *Home Body*, “After feeling disconnected my mind and body are finally coming back to each other” (Kaur, 2020, p. 4). Pain and suffering created in Kaur a strong woman, who ultimately unveils the reality of herself and discovers the precious jewel within her heart. She needs to listen to her inner voice, where self-love lies in embracing all parts of herself and accepting her imperfections. *Home Body* is, then, a poem of reconciling the soul to the body and piecing together the fragmented pieces of the self.

Social media has made poetry and the poet closer to the audience. Contrary to the typographic patterned traditional poetry that remains restricted to a particular social class, Kaur, Zebian, and Vasiliu break the restraining barrier between the author and the reader by making their writing more accessible with its straightforward, prose-like language and universal themes. As inspirational poets, they form a community with their followers. Their quotidian posts are a soothing solace that transforms them from confusion to understanding and from pain to healing.

Encouraging words can empower the Insta-subscribers to cope with their daily hardships and challenges. They can forge new, sharp insights into their lives. With their evocative and reassuring words, the Instapoets being examined appeal to the emotions proving their poems’ immortality. Whenever they publish their poems on Instagram, they receive millions of positive comments and feedback on their posts. Following a post that Kaur (June 26, 2024) published on Instagram, for instance, from her book *The Sun and her Flowers*, her followers thusly commented, “I feel this deeply! Beautifully said”, “you say what we feel, beautiful soul. Thank you for being such a loving, powerful, and courageous expression of light” (Amanda Doll, 2024). This shows how the power of inspirational words can be life-changing.

Likewise, *Sparks of Phoenix* is a call to everyone who has undergone pain to keep his or her good nature. Zebian urges every hurt person to gather each broken chunk of his or her selfhood and create a strong identity out of that mosaic. Najwa insists that once they look retrospectively at their lives, they notice how powerful and resilient they are, and how those who have caused them pain will suffer remorse. Zebian states in a publication she has posted on Instagram,

When someone hurts you, remember this: It’s tempting to wish pain for the one who caused you pain, but don’t let them make you become like

them. Their biggest punishment is that they have to live with what they've done. Their biggest punishment is that they are who they are. Your biggest blessing is that you are who you are. Your biggest blessing is that you can feel the pain of injustice. That is what stops you from making anyone around you feel that pain. Don't let their pain make you lose hope. Pick up the pieces of yourself that they shattered. And rise strong above their words. When you look back at your life one day, you'll remember all that you've endured. When they look back at theirs, they will have to regret all of the pain that they spent their life causing. (September 30, 2020)

Najwa Zebian insists on the power of connecting with oneself throughout the healing process. She does not find home in other people or in anything external. She accepts her vulnerability, knows her self-worth, and finds peace by setting boundaries in all aspects of her life.

Furthermore, Alexandra Vasiliu's poetry book *Dare to Let Go* is a guide toward an inward journey that encourages Insta-readers to discover their inner strength and dare to move on without looking back at any past wound. In a post she published on Instagram from "Your Healing Story", Vasiliu writes, "If you read this book, you are trying to write your story, a story about self-forgiveness and self-acceptance. A story about finding inner peace" (2022, p. 13). Vasiliu's uplifting poetry emphasizes the significance of searching for inner peace and embracing positive change. She has received many welcoming comments on this book. As proof, her followers write, "I got this book and it's been amazing on my healing era. Every word is priceless." "You're honestly my inspiration and what keeps me going" (Marieumm, 2022).

Dare to Let Go is a call to challenge sombre moments with resilience. It is a call to find the light within the heart. In the poem "A Lovely Inner Garden", Vasiliu states on Instagram that, "It will take time to see growth inside your heart and admire the vibrant flowers that you planted within" (2022, p. 15). So, despite all odds, one must always keep shining and find an illuminating way to rise again. However, she tells her readers that embracing personal transformation and finding inner strength may take time, so they must be patient. At the end of the journey, they will discover that the path is worthwhile. Ultimately, they may bravely reflect that it was not easy, but they could achieve it.

Dare to Let Go is the reader's empowering companion to seed change, keep blooming, find inner peace, and forgive the self. Vasiliu clarifies in the poem "Reclaim your Power" that letting go does not stem from weakness, failure, or loss. Moving on courageously and dignifiedly and starting a new chapter is an act of celebrating and honouring your inner power.

Vasiliu posts on Instagram that, “Letting go is a journey that starts with self-awareness and ends with self-respect. It is a journey of healing, finding yourself, and reclaiming your strength” (2022, p. 17). To let go means to build the self stout-heartedly, to work sedulously on the self, and to be gentle with it. To let go means to open up doors for new beginnings, which may bring hope with them.

Vasiliu comments on one of her inspiring posts on Instagram that *Dare to Let Go* was “written for all those who try to let go of a dysfunctional relationship and for those who struggle to let go of their past” (Vasiliu, 2024). With her constant motivational posts, she reminds her readers that they deserve a second chance, which has at its core self-love and self-esteem. Vasiliu’s kind words provide a shelter for all those who need support and do not find it in the outside world. Her poetry is a reminder that hope and balance can be restored to life through re-routing our energy toward the inner self and re-discovering our precious hearts.

In order to better illustrate their thoughts and sharpen their ideas, Kaur and Vasiliu further accompany their posts with some sketch drawings. Such a creative code of expression is a vehicle of communication through which readers can receive a concrete visual exemplification of the poets’ words and thoughts. If words are powerful, the combination of word and image is transformative. Geri Giabel Chavis notes that “words and images speak directly to the soul and heart. They etch paths to self-awareness and help bring about relief from sorrow and confusion.” (2011, p. 12) Both Instapoets rely on images of butterflies and flowers, which are visually appealing. Drawings of butterflies symbolize rebirth, transformation, beauty, and change. Their capacity to fly without boundaries can be linked to freedom and the ability to overcome hardships. While flowers symbolize love and happiness, their reproduction cycle alludes to new beginnings.

4. Conclusion

After exploring the notion of Instapoetry and healing in *The Sun and her Flowers*, *Home Body*, *Sparks of Phoenix*, and *Dare to Let Go*, it becomes evident that the Instapoets explored in this article are mental health experts who support the curative journey of their followers. They greatly contribute to the discourse of psychotherapy by offering a glimmer of hope to face trauma and sorrow.

In this article, we have applied Nicholas Mazza’s RES model not only to analyse the poets, but also to underscore the importance of Instapoetry to readers. Therefore, we have concluded, through the E model, that poetry writing constitutes a form of self-expression through which the poets articulate ideas of hope and healing. We have also shown, drawing on

the R mode, that the uplifting poems impel the readers to courageously reassemble the shattered pieces of the self. We have further extended the E mode to encompass the readers'/users' active participation in Instapoetry. This has been extensively discussed with reference to Camilla Soelseth's concept of "participatory distribution". We have also explained how the S, which stands for the symbolic, represents illustrations that aid the readers in understanding the core themes of the poems. Thus, the Instapoems previously discussed remain a source of empowerment, encouraging readers to find beauty and peace within themselves, without the need to chase them beyond oneself.

Instapoets continue to inspire their followers through their latest publications, which are oriented toward guided exercise books of self-therapy. Kaur's *Healing through Words* and Zebian's *The Only Constant* are interactive healing books that aim to aid readers through their own writing. They still publish some pieces from these recent books, which remind their readers of the importance of keeping shining despite all odds.

Works Cited:

- Ackerson, J., Scogin, F., McKendree-Smith, N., Lyman, R. D. 1988. "Cognitive Bibliotherapy for Mild and Moderate Adolescent Depressive Symptomatology." In: *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol 66, No. 4, Aug, pp. 685-690.
- Charry Rojo, R., Vojnović, A. 2023. "Instapoetry: Characteristics, Themes, and Criticisms." In: *RIThink*. Vol. 13, pp. 63-71.
- Doll, A. 2024. "We reach the halfway point of 2024." June, 26.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C8qFnFKytCs/>
- Furilla, H. 2023. "Instapoetry is Ruining our Perception of Poetry." In: *ProQuest*. 13 November.
<https://dailycollegian.com/2023/11.instapoetry-is-ruining-our-perception-of-poetry/>
- Giabel, G. Ch. 2011. *Poetry and Story Therapy: The Healing Power of Creative Expression*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher.
- Harrower, M. 1977. *The Therapy of Poetry (Master Work Series)*. Springfield: Jason Aronson.
- Hodgkinson, T. 2019. "Instapoetry may be Popular, but Most of it is Terrible." In: *The Spectator*. 11 November. Available at:
<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/instapoetry-may-be-popular-but-most-of-it-is-terrible/>
- Kaur, R. 2020. *Home Body*. Kansas City, Missouri, Andrews McMeel Publishing.
- Kaur, R. 2017. *The Sun and her Flowers*. Simon & Schuster.
- Kruger, S. 2017. "The Technopo(e)litics of Rupi Kaur: (de)Colonial Aesthetics and Spatial Narrations in the DigiFemme Age." In: *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*. No. 11.
- Marieke, D. 2023. "Becoming a New Voice of Feminism: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rupi Kaur's Feminist Instapoetry." Diss. Malmo University.
- Marieumm. 2022. "Comment on: alexandravasiliupoetry." October, 7.
https://www.instagram.com/p/CjZWDacLD_E/?img_index=1
- Massini, V. G. 2018/2019. "Rupi Kaur's Poetry: Trauma and Healing." Diss. University of Padova.

- Mazza, N. 2016. *Poetry Therapy: Theory and Practice*. Second Edition. New York: Brunner Routledge.
- Narayan, A. 2023. "Understanding Social Media Recommendation Algorithms." March, Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University.
<https://knightcolumbia.org/content/understanding-social-media-recommendation-algorithms>
 accessed: 17/02/2025.
- Navlakha, M. 2022. "Rupi Kaur on Using Poetry to Heal." Sept, 17.
<https://me.mashable.com/life-1/19961/rupi-kaur-on-using-poetry-to-heal>
 accessed: 25/05/2024
- Soelseth, C. H. 2022. "When is a Poet an Instapoet?" In: *Baltic Screen Media Review*. Vol. 10., pp. 96-120.
- Soelseth, C. H. 2023. "The Media Ecologies of Norwegian Instapoet Trygve Skaug: Tracing the Post-Digital Circulation Process of Instapoetry through Participatory Made Instagram Archives." In: *European Journal of English Studies*. Vol. 27, No. 01, pp. 33-59.
- Shoaib, A., Khozaima, D., and S. Nazeer. 2023. "Value of Words and Self-Love: An Analysis of Najwa Zebian's Interview." In: *Pakistan Journal of Law, Analysis and Wisdom*. Vol. 2, No. 03.
- Turan, S. 2022. "Finding a voice in 21st century popular culture: Rupi Kaur and her insta-poetry." Diss. Pamukka University. January.
- Vasiliu, A. 2022. *Dare to Let Go*. Independently Published, September.
- Wassiliwizky, E., Koelsch, S., Wagner, V., Jacobsen, T., Menninghaus, W. 2017. "The Emotional Power of Poetry: Neural Circuitry, Psychophysiology and Compositional Principles." In: *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*. Vol. 12, No. 8, pp. 1229–1240..
- Qtd in Xiang, D. H. and A. M. Yi. 2020. "A Look Back and a Path Forward: Poetry's Healing Power during the Pandemic J Med Humanit". Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 603–608.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7447694/>
- Watts, R. 2016. "The Cult of the Noble Amateur." In: *PN REVIEW* 239. Vol. 44, No. 3. January-February.
- Zebian, N. 2019. *Sparks of Phoenix*. Missouri: Andrews & McMeel.

Soumaya Guebla
Department of English and Letters
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Badji Mokhtar-Annaba University
Algeria
soumaya.guebla@univ-annaba.dz