

Chapter 4: The Creator, the Viewer, and the Content in Instapoetry

As the cat
climbed over
the top of

the jamcloset
first the right
forefoot

carefully
then the hind
stepped down

into the pit of
the empty
flowerpot

William Carlos Williams

Although the literary art of poetry has evolved across ages with the changing media—oral to print to digital—it becomes necessary every now and then to question its definition. In philosophical discourse, poetry (like art) is defined by *what* it does and *how*. The inquiry pertaining to the "what" of poetry dominates the discourse of Philosophical Aesthetics, while the "how" is discussed as a part of Analytical Aesthetics. William Carlos Williams's concrete image of a cat climbing over a closet and descending into a flower pot in his poem suffices as an answer to both of these questions; that is, poetry as a literary art aims to concentrate the everyday emotions, lifting them through the use of figurative expression, and fill the reader with a higher sensitivity towards the same feelings previously encountered in the absence of the language of poetry.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ In "The Function of Criticism," Terry Eagleton talks about the language of poetry as being "constitutive of its ideas" as opposed to the language of 'discourse' which deals with language in its material density (2007, 2)

Three things integral to this definition are: 1. emotions as the object of poetry; 2. use of figurative expression for restructuring the emotions in order to effect intensity; and 3. the completion of communication by the reader. These integrants cannot be compartmentalised, as they attain their full meaning only when they are seen as flowing into each other. This flow achieves a smooth transition due to the presence of some connate factors situated in between the core integrants that further decide the mood of the flow. For instance, the way poetic language (the second core integrant) is communicated to the reader (the third core integrant) also depends on the conditions that surround the reading experience (the factor between the second and the third core integrant). However, many Analytical Aesthetics theories (as discussed earlier in Chapter 2), whose focus is on "how" poetry becomes poetry, only consider the second integrant without laying enough stress on connate factors.

When such a path is followed, aesthetic complexity becomes the only measure by which poetry is assessed, making poetry something that is above and apart from life. Hence, the relationship between poetry and life becomes complex and distant instead of being consistent and close; poetry comes to be associated with the mantic arts, where aesthetic quality remains a precondition for poetry's definition. As a result, accessible poetry like Instapoetry is relegated to lower art for lacking intensity—for being *instant* rather than *reflective*—and therefore not qualifying as poetry. Nonetheless, the misconception that complexity is a prerequisite for art has already been reviewed and refuted in the second chapter. And so, following Dewey and Berleant, this chapter attempts to suggest the significance of connate factors; and in this light, it also endeavours to read poetry as an *aesthetic experience* and redefine this experience as *engagement* by taking Instagram as its particular instance. This reading, by necessitating an examination of the aesthetic field, aims to suggest that poetry is at once a social event and an aesthetic performance, where a clear distinction between the two aspects is unachievable.

The material sources, psychological states, and socio-cultural factors involved in the aesthetic field of Instagram art have already been analysed using New Media theories in the third chapter. When the aesthetic field of Instapoetry is studied, the conclusions derived from the analysis of the abovementioned factors do not differ greatly; i.e., like Instagram art, Instapoetry also emerges as networked poetry, where its poetics intersect with a materially implicative sociality of networks and where visual and textual choices are governed by the requirements of the platform, i.e., Instagram. On a similar note, Camilla Holm Soelseth (2022) explains how digital platforms like social media significantly reshape the relationship between audiences, artists, and artworks in the cultural production ecosystem. She contends that it is

because of this "platformization" that the operations of cultural industries remodel the production, distribution, and monetisation of cultural content (98). On the one hand, platform-dependent authors operate in multiple ecosystems simultaneously, sharing works among communities on social media platforms as well as managing relationships with readers. While on the other hand, Social Media Entertainment (SME) sees readers as its stable residents caught up in the constant loop of the consumption economy. It is evident that, owing to poets' and readers' changing outlooks on the medium, their respective roles also shift. And this shift, in turn, influences the production, distribution, and reception of poetry, making it not just poetry but Instapoetry. Accordingly, the present chapter attempts an analysis of poets and readers as Instagram users to relocate the definition of poetry on Instagram, thus addressing the three central components of Berleant's aesthetic field—artist, audience, and art.

4.1 Poets and Readers as Instagram Users

We are the users of Instagram and we made this book.

We see something we otherwise might have missed. It makes us happy.

We almost can't believe our eyes. Is this really happening? Yes! This is happening!

We grab our phones and we shoot.

We make everything dreamy and vintage and beautiful.

We share. We share and share and share.

We commune with people down the hall, and on the other side of the world.

We look. We smile. We laugh. We are astounded. We maybe even get a little misty-eyed.

We like. Oh, how we like.

Bridget Watson Payne⁹⁹

An *Instagram User* simply stands for an individual using Instagram. This category also comprises, amongst a mass of millions, poets and readers. It is preferable to add "Instagram" as a prefix to these poets and readers, as they are subject to all those regulators that also influence almost any Instagram user. For instance, the "platform vernacular"¹⁰⁰ or the unique

⁹⁹ Bridget Watson Payne mawkishly portrays social media user activity on Instagram in the preface to *This Is Happening: Life Through the Lens of Instagram*.

¹⁰⁰ See coinage in "#Funerals and Instagram: Death, Social Media and Platform Vernacular" (Gibbs et al. 2015)

grammar, style, and platform logic of Instagram (as Bridget Watson Payne draws) as much govern user activity as they govern the activity of a poet or reader on Instagram. Further, the rules of the medium (commonly known as "community guidelines" of *all-for-all* media platforms like Instagram) influence user participation as much as they affect poet or reader participation. Poets and readers are as much dictated by the dominant media cultures¹⁰¹ as Instagram users are. Again, the implications of a digital identity¹⁰² similarly influence poet and reader performances, as they affect almost any other user.

Moreover, since Instapoetry is accessed by users on a cell phone using high-speed internet through Instagram—a platform that is not primarily dedicated (unlike printed poetry) to sharing and reading poetry—the purposes of sharing and reading poetry on the platform vary from those on traditional reading platforms. These purposes, in turn, inform the shift in the roles of poets and readers on Instagram, who assume the role of *users* of Instagram prior to being a poet or a reader. It can be concluded, therefore, that the old roles of the *seer* poet and the *informed* reader¹⁰³ undergo a paradigmatic shift on Instagram. This change further has an impact on the way poetry is circulated and read on the medium. With regard to this, the role of the poet as a content creator/artist and that of the reader as a content viewer/audience have been investigated and understood before poetry is (re)-read as media content.

4.1.1. Methodology

The shift in the roles of poet and reader is recorded and analysed with the help of quantitative and qualitative data, as has been discussed in the thesis Introduction. Collection process of the quantitative data has primarily aided the field analysis, based on which qualitative data is collected. However, a proper analysis of both quantitative and qualitative datasets has been carried out only after completing the entire collection process. Both datasets have been given equal consideration and presented as a dialogue rather than one directing the other. While strictly descriptive quantitative data analysis aims to present the larger picture,

¹⁰¹ By dominant media cultures, the researcher hints at consumption culture and materialistic experiences that define the present times where "I consume. Therefore I am" becomes the subtext of most pictures shared or posted on social media.

¹⁰² Identity passes through a modified set of political concerns in the digital world. For instance, complying with the standards of online "taste" or disagreeing to fall prey to trends states an individual's stance in the structure of a digital society. With identity, the role of an individual subject—the user—also changes.

¹⁰³ Stanley Fish, a leading figure in Reader Response Theory, elaborates on the role of an "informed reader" who is well-educated, possesses a thorough comprehension of the world, and holds the capability to perceive and appreciate the linguistic and literary intricacies of a given text (Regis 274).

qualitative data analysis is partially exploratory and aims to shed light on the nuances observed at the level of an individual user.

Quantitative data consists of information related to themes and types of poetry posts from 115 poetry *Profiles* (all Public Profiles) on Instagram; engagement received on these posts in terms of *Likes* and *Comments* are also taken into account, where "type of poetry profile", "post type," and "themes" are independent variables and the nature of engagement is the dependent variable. These variables are partly derived from the researcher's personal experience of poetry on the platform and partly from the available literature¹⁰⁴ on the subject. For example, variables indicating the rate of engagement include both *Like* and *Comments*; and even though *Like* can be considered a legit material form of engagement, sometimes readers only mindlessly scroll through and double-click pictures without reading or even viewing the image/video properly. In that case, the sincerity of *Comments* can be considered a more reliable variable than the overall engagement rate.

The data is collected on the basis of a naturalistic observation method, relying on Instantaneous sampling within a targeted timeframe of two years (June 2021 to May 2023). The selection of 115 samples is done on the basis of the cluster sampling method, where the samples are randomly selected through probability sampling. The samples are repicked according to the number of *Followers* on the profile so that only popular profiles do not crowd up the sample size, making the analysis erroneous. Again, the number of *Followers* does not present the most accurate picture since *Followers* can be bought through bot software. Also, the profiles are not chosen merely for their popularity because it is the real-time engagement that builds the algorithm *Feed*. The data is then analysed using MS Excel tools (for descriptive analysis) and SPSS (for cross tabulation) to comprehend the experience of poetry on Instagram.

The result of quantitative data analysis (henceforth indicated by "Qty Data") is supported by qualitative data, which is collected through a semi-structured interview conducted over email. Since the researcher required a detailed and introspective response from the interviewees, asynchronous mode of interview has been chosen for the task. As mentioned above, the interviews are not influenced by or embedded within the results of quantitative data;

¹⁰⁴ Refer to the following sections from Introduction in order to locate available literature on Instapoetry: "Background" and "Perspectives and (Re)-Reading"

and the questions are designed to reach a full perspective on factors contributing to the production, distribution, and reception of poetry on Instagram.

A total of thirty-six participants are selected, among whom twenty nine are readers of Instapoetry and digital literature and seven are Instagram poets. A sample selection of sixteen readers from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, studying in varied disciplines such as Law, Psychology, Political Science, and Literature, and thirteen readers from Telegram and WhatsApp Poets' Communities was made on the basis of convenience sampling. The decision on the selection of poets is based on the types of profiles and number of *Followers*, where seven poets represent each type of profile (personal, strictly artistic, curative, and so on) and have a wide range of followers (from 500 *Followers* to 50k). Thus, the sample selection of poets is done through stratified sampling. Even though sample selection is done based on the criteria of availability, utmost care has been taken to involve individuals from different parts of India. Further, the age range of the interviewees is between 18 and 30, as statistical data suggests that persons between this age range form the highest number of Instagram users¹⁰⁵.

Analysis methods for qualitative data are Content Analysis and Narrative Analysis methods. Consequently, the data is analysed through not only open and thematic codes but also analytic codes. Open codes are marked manually and thematic and analytic codes are processed deductively and inductively (i.e., Hybrid Coding) on MS Excel, which are then used to form concepts and larger categories, contributing to a certain theory on experience of poetry on Instagram.

Transcripts of the interview are presented verbatim with minor changes in syntax and vocabulary (only where absolutely necessary) to match the formal tone of the thesis. Markers for poets and readers are as follows: P1 for the first poet, P2 for the second, and so on; R1 for the first reader, R2 for the second reader, and so on. Identifiers like sex and profession are not considered for both user categories. The results that closely capture (on an individual level) the manner in which Instapoetry is engaged are then merged with quantitative data results and comprehensively presented to attain a coherent picture of aesthetic experience of Instapoetry.

¹⁰⁵ As of 11 May 2023, the highest user numbers are observed in the age groups of 18-24 and 25-34 ("Instagram Users, Stats, Data, Trends, and More").

4.1.2 Poet as Content Creator as Content Artist

A poet is not only someone who creates poetry but is necessarily a writer of poems authenticated through publication. The idea of a poet is closely connected with writing process, from which publishing is rarely discounted.¹⁰⁶ Poets have traditionally been regarded as prophets who deliver truths to their readers in a way yet unrealised. Such a conception also assumes that the process of writing a poem is infused with a flavour of wisdom, which is then legitimised through the gatekeepers in the publication exercise. However, on Instagram, there is a fundamental shift in these determining aspects by which a poet is defined, which subsequently changes the role of a poet on the platform; and Instagram poets find themselves demanding recognition as legitimate poets (like poets in the traditional channel of publication), as the process of production and distribution of their poetry makes this identification dubious.

As the third chapter understands, this shift must not be mistaken for revoking their status as poets; rather, it must be studied within the context of the platform to flout unsubstantiated claims on legitimacy and authenticity of these poets. In this light, the current section attempts to analyse the activity of an Instagram poet in and during the processes of production and distribution of poetry—such as building a profile identity, positioning themselves in online community, working with digital textuality, adapting to visuality, as well as following the platform algorithm—in order to highlight the change in the role played by these poets as compared to their traditional counterpart. First and foremost, it is the writing environment—the possibility to compose in varied environments (given the portability of electronic devices)—that holds a deciding impact on the creative process. Philip Monks marks this based on personal experience:

What is happening around us is part of the creative process, and may in fact be the subject of the poem; the use of the portable device can make its direct capture immediate and, notably, can make it less like notes or a draft and more like a created piece in its own right, simply because it is closer to the publication platform... My poem 'The Chroniclers' was drafted in a café on paper and both its structure and content clearly owe something to the location and the medium. The long lines were perhaps my way of luxuriating in the freedom of the paper (as opposed to the limited line length of iPhone Notes), though they are also an attempt to suggest

¹⁰⁶ It is common amongst poets to believe that publication validates them as professionals in the field. For instance, P6 admits, "As for published works like anthologies and self-published books, the response may not be as immediate as online platforms, but it allows me to reach a wider audience and establish myself as an author. The reception for published works may take time to build, but it carries a sense of accomplishment and validation as a writer."

the languidness and novelistic nature of the thoughts. I deliberately maintained the long lines for this reason in the redrafting process (79-80).

Besides, a poet's intended profile identity also plays a crucial role in determining the content and manner of posting on their profiles. Upon analysing responses from seven poets (see table 4.1), a strong correlation was observed between the poets' intended profile identity and the purpose of posting on the platform.¹⁰⁷ In other words, the purpose of posting affects the type of profile the poet will ultimately keep on the platform, and vice versa. The bidirectional trend remains so because of the role played by poets' engagement goals that direct the purpose of posting and the evolution of profile identity. It can be inferred that the main objective of all poets is to disseminate their work to receive authentic feedback. However, this only marks the initial phase of their journey and the outcomes in the developmental phases may vary for individual poets based on their decision to either embrace or disregard the mechanisms of the platform to promote their work (see table 4.2). For instance, for P2, P3, P6, and P7, the purpose is to reach a wider audience, and so they work towards creating a profile that is handled professionally, whereas P1, P4, and P5 insist on keeping their work and profile personal, which governs their purpose on the platform, i.e., sharing their work only with their *Followers*, not employing many engagement strategies as observed in the rest of the poets.

Table 4. 1
Instagram Poets Interviewed for the Study

Poets	Names and Usernames (As of May 2024)
P1	Kavya Lakhani - @kavyalakhani916
P2	Dhruv Bambhaniya - @ dhruvkumar_2920
P3	Kalpika - @ _spillinggg_teaaa_
P4	Stavan Pancholi - @ stavan.pancholi
P5	Shravan Nair - @ theshravannair
P6	Vidisha Ramteke - @ peacefulpoetry__

¹⁰⁷ In the case of the purpose of posting and the identity of profiles, the researcher insists that it is a correlation and not causation, because the purpose of posting does not always lead to the kind of identity the poet wants for the profile. However, both variables seem related to one another, as the analysis follows.

Table 4. 2
Purpose of Posting Poetry on Instagram

Purpose of Posting	Poets
For Personal Sharing	P1, P5, P4
To Create Repository	P2, P3, P5
As Publishing	P2, P3, P6, P7

Among the poets who state that their profile is simply a repository of their works (P2, P3, and P5), only P2 possesses sufficient knowledge of the platform algorithms and also utilises them to advantage. In P3, unlike P2, there is no employment of engagement strategies. However, both can be considered as maintaining a professional profile due to the segregation of their creator account from their personal account. In contrast, P5's profile solely serves as a personal collection without any implemented tactics for reader engagement. Similar to P5, P1 and P4 also exhibit a personal inclination in their poetry, as their profiles show a fine balance between personal life updates and their works. Although their works, while reflecting a personal touch, also maintain a level of professionalism. Engagement techniques are not extensively utilised by the individuals mentioned, and therefore they can be considered majorly as personal profile type. Among them, P1 stands out as the most widely recognised poet. This is not due to the implementation of engagement tactics, but rather because the poet has professionally published her work on the Instagram community page @ttd_official, which remains the main source of her popularity. Moreover, the poets who share their poetry on the platform as a means for publishing (P2, P3, P6, and P7) maintain a strictly professional profile as they refrain from including personal life updates in their profiles. Not so common with P2 and P3, skillful employment of engagement strategies for enhancing *Views* and *Followers* is observed in P6 and P7. They also actively network and often participate in various communities to expand their reach, which for a brief period of time is also seen in P4. Nevertheless, in the majority of profiles, professionalism and personal attributes are not completely distinct; rather, they blend together (see table 4.3).

Table 4. 3
Profile Identity of Instagram Poets

Profile Identity	Poets	Selected Responses
Distinct	Professional profile	P2, P3, P6, P7 P2 - I also see Instagram as a form of virtual society where everyone has their unique social image. So, I use Instagram to project an image of my liking by strongly curating everything that goes on my profile.
	Personal profile	P1, P5, P4 P1 - [It is a] Personal profile...I also use it for posting life updates as well as articles/stories/poems from other writers that I find interesting... I choose a theme based on what I have experienced in my personal life as well as what I think should be said more often, because I think people are going through it. P4 - I would prefer it to be a creator account, however I do post my personal information and certain life events as well. (Anyhow, living in the 21st century, are there any actual distinctions that we can ever locate?)...A general emotional state or the time-space I find myself in heavily affects my creative domain and runs the horses of my poetic rigour. In thematizing my poems I start with an idea, an acute, single thought or sometimes even a line that I myself am amused at and then, as has happened on several occasions, I observe either the surroundings or take inspiration from the recent work I have read, and try to mould the clay into a fine looking pot of poetry.
Ambiguous	Personal with a note of professionalism	P1, P5, P4
	Professional with a note of personal approach	P3, P6 P6 - I like to keep my creator account separate from my personal account. My poetry have been personal to me, they are a part of me... As for my own profile and content, I believe I have my own distinct style and voice... My poetry reflects my emotions, thoughts, and experiences, making it a true reflection of who I am as a poet. I aim to create pieces that resonate with my audience, evoking emotions and sparking meaningful connections.

The ambiguous profile identity mentioned in table 4.3 shows how profiles are never strictly professional or personal; instead, they are fused. This occurs due to the presence of a distinct type of "social" behaviour that is prevalent on social media platforms, dubbed as "distanced intimacy" (Perlow 3). Instagram is a virtual platform where users cultivate a distinct social persona. Likewise, poets use Instagram to exhibit their preferred image by meticulously curating and presenting their poems on their page. Personal experiences often pervade the thematic range of poetry, since many poets assert that their work is shaped by their own emotional state and the specific circumstances in which they exist. Poets exhibit a unique style and voice in their profile and content, but they tend to keep a separation between what is socially personal (which can be shared on the platform) and what is entirely personal (which is rarely shared on the platform). This specific brand of sociability on Instagram operates on the principles of "networked individualism" (Jenkins et al. 2016, 28-31), where the platform can be understood as a space where individuals can connect and establish common ground without delving too deeply into individuality with mere traces of agency.

Owing to the sociality availed by the platform and the inherent interaction between poets and readers, a certain sense of community is bound to transpire. The constitution of this community can differ as the magnitude and nature of involvement vary among poets, but it is evident that all the poets appreciate audience involvement and acknowledge the importance of the support and comments they receive. Poets inclined to maintain a more personal profile or a repository profile typically join either an established community on Instagram, such as @ttt_official or @unerasepoetry, or have a fixed group of *Followers* that includes friends and pre existing connections (e.g., P1, P2, P3, and P5), whereas profiles that are professionally bent (e.g., P6, and P7) either endeavour to establish a community or initiate an independent community. P4 is the only poet that leans towards keeping a personal profile and yet has attempted to build a community of poets whose poetic interests coalesce (see table 4.4).

Table 4. 4
Online Communities and Instagram Poets

Community Type	Poets	Selected Responses
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Stagnant	<p>Predetermined (Consists of connections established before using Instagram)</p>	P3, P5	<p>P5 - For the past 2-3 years my posting on Instagram has been next to nil. Maybe that's why the engagement might have decreased. People do not expect from me anymore. If I start writing regularly again, I am sure that people will interact more. The ones who see my posts read and still appreciate my penmanship I would like to say that my audience is limited and they are still consistent over the years.</p>
Dynamic	<p>Initiated (Consists of a fanbase community created by the poet)</p>	P7	<p>P7 - I like to interact with them a lot. So, I'll reply to almost all of them. And then that in general always helps. So, what I've observed is somebody would follow if you commented back. But this is not really a very scalable strategy. But it does work, and initially I was just doing it because I like replying to comments and it just feels very motivational to people who were commenting on my reel. So, I was just replying to them and then I saw this happen. I guess that's a strategy that I use. The other one would be commenting on other people's work. So, like if I'm a fan of someone, I'll follow their work closely and then I come into work and stuff so that they get sort of engagement. And what usually happens is that my audience would just unknowingly form in front of my comment and then that would be a great moment for them.</p>
	<p>Built (Consists of connections that come together for the specific purpose of sharing poetry)</p>	P4, P6	<p>P4 - Yes, there has been a significant transition in the reception of my work. Initially, the main readership was the general follower audience of mine. However, as my work was shared and posting picked up pace, the readership numbers increased. Much of this was also aided by the writing community folks who commented and shared my work, which in turn led to a larger engagement.</p>
	<p>Subscribed (Consists of many individuals subscribing to an online poetry community page created by a group of few users)</p>	P1, P2, P4, P6	<p>P1 - In 2018, my work was getting reception but not as much as it started getting reception in 2019. I think terribly tiny tales has helped me massively in the process of both writing and getting more readership</p>

It is crucial to acknowledge that the production of their poetry is consistently shaped by the dynamics of the community to which they belong. For instance, the themes addressed by P1 are in line with the content seen on the Instagram community page @ttr_official, where these poems are published. P3 and P5 maintain their distinct writing styles due to their minimal involvement in community participation, which does not influence their writing. P2, whose engagement with communities such as mentioned has not been fruitful, admits that adherence to a specific writing style and theme familiarity are necessary for building a successful relationship with these communities. P4 and P6 establish their respective communities centred around their poetic interests and recognise the significant impact these communities have had on the calibre of their artistic output. P6's writing style is characterised by relatability and simplicity, which resonate with her community. On the other hand, P4's compositions delve into a postmodern critique of the ordinary. P7's objective is to defamiliarise form with each *Reel*, while keeping the style of his content uniform across the posts to retain the identity constructed thus far. And so he establishes a distinct presence in the field of Instapoetry/short film, creating a new community on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Telegram. This community encourages viewers to contribute their own writings and projects following his style, in addition to commenting and sharing the poet's posts.¹⁰⁸

In addition to exerting an influence on the poet's work, communities also contribute to the poet's expansion of audience. Most poets emphasise the significance of upholding a favourable digital image and community involvement in enhancing their readership and achieving success in their online literary pursuits.¹⁰⁹ Communities may not always operate based on personal and relatable themes. But active participation by fostering connections can expand a poet's reach, where engaging in collaboration and maintaining readership through networking are regarded as advantageous approaches to increasing visibility. For example, P4 and P7 lack personal or relatable themes, yet they have managed to build a strong community based on shared interests. Alternatively, while considering P1 and P6, it is apparent that the communities that they have subscribed to are established around relatable themes and function effectively. The main contention here is that communities operate solely on the basis of participation, regardless of whether they are formed on related themes or not. However, not

¹⁰⁸ Such practices synchronise with Leonardo Flores's vision of third generation e-literature (2019). Berens notes in this regard that it is because on digital media "the technical barrier-to-entry lowers, a wider range of people are empowered to *try it themselves* [my italics]," moving past the aesthetic of difficulty that governs the first two generations of e-literature (2019b, 4).

¹⁰⁹ Any Instagram rule book would suggest the same. See Jodie Cook's take in the subsection "Responding to Engagement" of chapter three in her book *Instagram Rules* (2020).

everyone benefits from being part of a community, as over a period of time they may become weary of excessive involvement in the social networking aspect and withdraw from participating (e.g., P2).

Further, many poets who aim to establish a professional image also utilise the visuality of the platform as a means of engaging their audience (e.g., P2, P3, P6, and P7). Some poets even choose to incorporate their own visuals, such as personally taken images, to infuse their work with a customised touch. Professional or personal, poets look to ensure that the visuals align flawlessly with the intended message of the text because Instagram is a platform where words get subsumed into the logic of an image (Naji 6). Thus, poets on Instagram undertake the task of graphic design as well. For instance, 5 out of 7 poets utilise recognisable styles and incorporate related themes and imagery. To create visually appealing posts, poets focus on several key components: maintaining consistency with the brand's aesthetic, employing minimalist design, incorporating high-quality photographs and art, making deliberate typeface and font selections, utilising colour psychology, effectively utilising space, incorporating themes and seasonal features, and incorporating interactive elements such as swiping storylines in *Carousel* posts (see table 4.5). For this, respondents have used a wide array of visual components in their work, such as employing black and white backgrounds for textual content (P2), incorporating visually appealing photos to improve poetry (P3, P5, P6), creating video compilations that correspond with the poem's topic (P7), and sharing personal photographs (P1 and P4). Therefore, the poet transcends their role as a mere poet and transforms into a creator of media, producing art and assuming the identity of a content artist instead.

Table 4. 5
Consideration of Visuality during the Production Process

Grounds for Using Visuals	Poets	Selected Responses
Creativity as Necessitated by Platform Affordance	P1	P7 - Also from a marketing standpoint, if you think about it, nobody really reads on Instagram. They are really short of attention span anyway, right? So presenting it in a visual format, in a format that can actually hold people's attention is the last resort you have as a poet anyway, if you want a large audience to actually engage with your work
	P4	
	P3	
	P6	
	P7	
	P5	

Special Emphasis on Visuals as an Engagement Strategy	Aesthetics	P2	P2 - Then I decided to try something minimal. Something that could improve the aesthetics of the profile. That's when I came up with the idea of posting my writeups alternating in black and white background. It created a pattern and symmetry and gave a chessboard-like appearance to my profile. I felt it was better and more systematic than random stock images. And also, the process became much simpler.
		P6	
		P4	
	Relatable	P6	P6 - The visual nature of the platform also allowed me to complement my poetry with appealing visuals, making it more engaging and relatable to the audience.
	Visuals	P3	
Visuals as an Identifier Of Profiler's Media Makeup	Identity	P1	P3 - I also sometimes only post pictures that I have clicked that look nice or mean something to me. Some of my pictures are also taken from Pinterest.
		P2	
		P4	
		P5	

The decision to enhance the visual appeal of these posts and cultivate a specific aesthetic is intended to attract attention to these posts amidst the traffic of attractive content on the platform that is known for its emphasis on aesthetics. P4 concurs with this proposition, "These social media platforms provide a newfound access and textual nature to a creative work which makes up for the temporal nature of the "post." The work in consideration is not isolated from the general oceanic mass of posts that it surfs in and can be easily skipped." In order for readers to take note of the poetry posts, it is necessary for the poets to create such posts.

Creativity as necessitated and facilitated by platform purposes and requirements is illustrated in fig 4.1 while relatable visuals can be found as exemplified in 4.2.



Fig. 4. 1 Limerick by @diana.bentham showcasing optimisation of posts by introducing artworks with poetry (8 Aug. 2023)



Fig. 4. 2 Free verse by Divyang Mokariya accompanied by a picture that shows seamless integration of thoughts visiting a particular moment of the day (30 June 2023)

Further aesthetic profile language can be seen in fig. 4.3. While figs. 4.4 and 4.5 show that the choice of unique visual representation of poetry is made to maintain a particular, distinct identity on the platform and be known for their particular style, creating a niche on the platform.

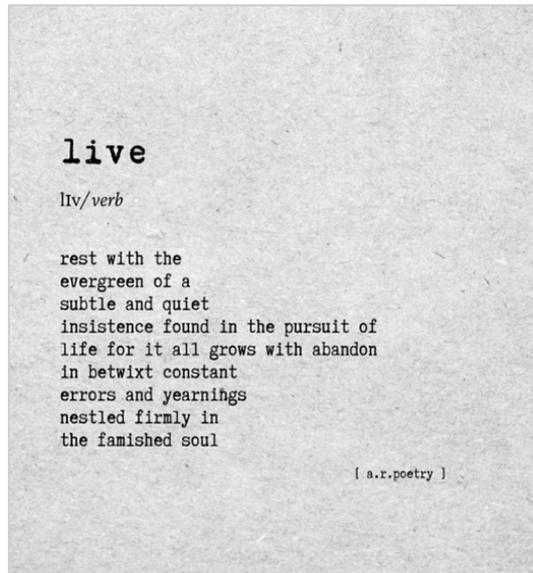


Fig. 4. 3 Profile aesthetics exemplified in an acrostic by @abiortoreino (10 Jan. 2023)

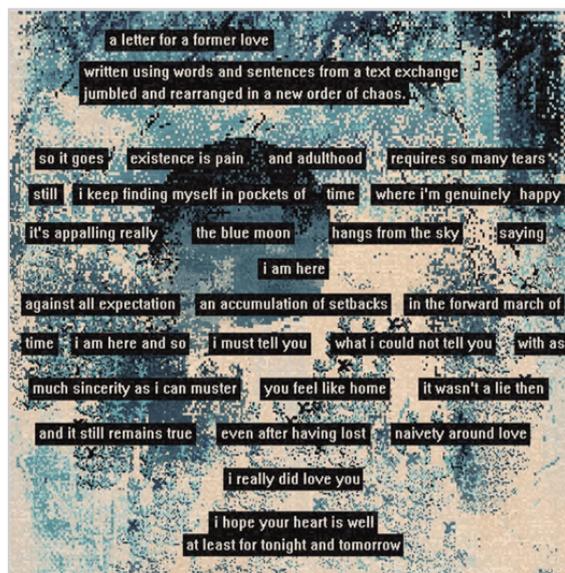


Fig. 4. 4 Unique profile aesthetics as adopted by @8bitfiction in a narrative poem (16 June 2020)

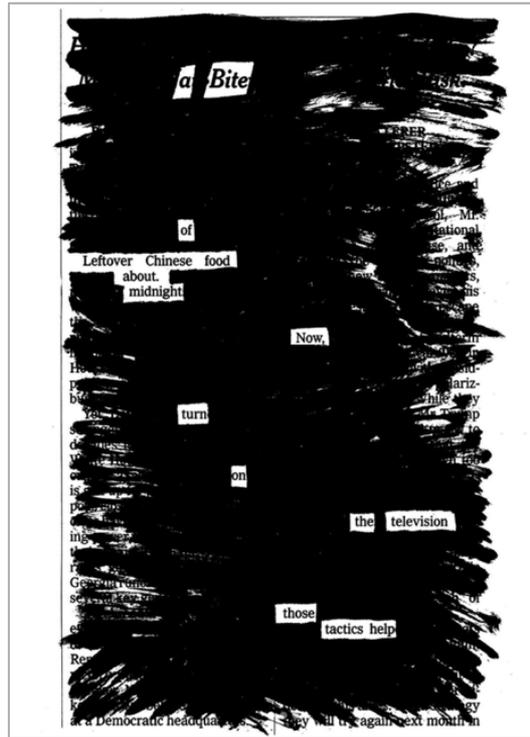


Fig. 4. 5 Unique profile aesthetics as adopted by Austin Kleon through blackout poems (22 June 2023)

In *Spreadable Media* (2013), Jenkins, Green, and Ford describe how successful creators must grasp strategic and technical components to create content that is favourable for distribution. Five key factors are recommended for developing spreadable media: availability to audiences at the expected time and location, portability, reusability, relevance to several different audiences, and integration into a continuous content flow to increase media dissemination (197-198). Thus, poets, too, must consider what motivates people to actively seek and share *the* aesthetic experience of poetry on Instagram. To do this, poets, as creators, must know the audience's needs, media circulation patterns, and the latest tools. Table 4.6 illustrates factors that Instagram poets consider as requirements of their audience during the process of production.

Table 4. 6
Posting Based on Reading Interests and Patterns of the Audience

Reader Preferences Recognised by Poets	Poets	Selected Responses
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Content	Relatability	P1 P2 P5 P6	P1 - I follow the page of Megha Rao and I realize that most of her poems are written with a lot of honesty and there is a lot of depth as well as several references that keep the audience hooked. I want to write like her someday.
	Familiarity	P1 P3 P6 P7	P6 - When selecting styles and themes for my poetry, I take into account the platform where I'll be posting. For Instagram, I understand that concise, catchy, and easy-to-comprehend poems are preferred. So, I choose a simplified writing style that resonates with the audience on the platform.
Form	Brevity	P1 P2 P6 P7	P5 - The Insta audience, in general, isn't here for art or poetry to be exact. They are here for the instant rush, acceptance or validation of their feelings. But while even looking for these things, their attention span is a hindrance. They need short pieces that would give them what they need instantly and without any intention of keeping myself on any pedestal...
	Diversity	P4 P6 P7	P7 - And then for the film part of it, usually visual do well on Instagram. Strange visuals or visuals that people haven't usually seen on Instagram that do well. So, I tend to stay away from the cliches. You won't find me putting up like videos of aesthetic style or something because that's way too crowded on Instagram.

As shown, the majority of poets and curators of poetry¹¹⁰ focus on creating concise, captivating, and easily comprehensible poems, employing morphological, syntactic, and stylistic simplicity. Their works mostly involve the mundane and the internal conflicts that pertain to the everyday (see fig. 4.6 and 4.7). And it is not coincidental that the target demographic of Instagram is also primarily seeking immediate gratification, social approval, and validation through poetry that presents itself the way they prefer it to be. Again, to create these experiences for the readers, some poets consider the concept of relatability in terms of

¹¹⁰ Besides poets, curators are also mentioned here to acknowledge the fact that many pages on Instagram also feature traditional printed poetry. The posts on these pages are often curated by individual creators or artist communities like @poetryisnotluxury (interviewed in 2023 by Elizabeth Metzger), where they remake the printed poem by presenting it according to the expectations of the platform audience, e.g., excerpts, with minimalist design, in *Carousel* threads, and so on.

form and content (see fig. 4.8 and 4.9); for example, P1 acknowledges that she uses familiar formats for her readers because her readers prefer exploring narrative poetry through predetermined artistic techniques. However, P7, whose poetry is more popularly appreciated, consciously avoids clichés in his creative videos and argues that familiarity diminishes the element of interest and fails to draw in users to interact with the posts. Thus, it can be observed how most of the creators purposefully employ a variety of visual techniques and poetic forms to captivate and engage the audience with new and interesting posts that are not repetitive (see figs. 4.10 and 4.11). On the whole, it is apparent that the poets and curators adapt their posts to conform to the prevailing Instagram trends and make necessary changes to their content.

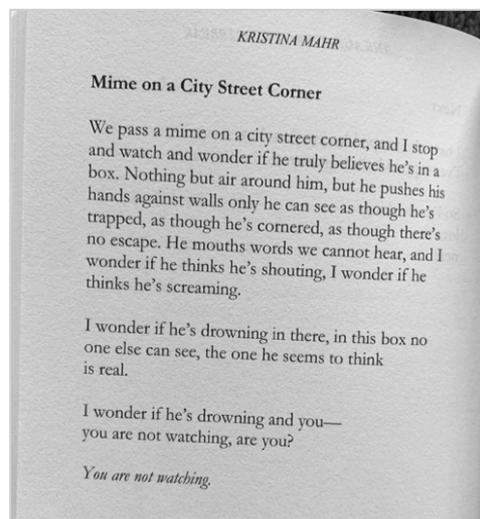


Fig. 4. 6 Scenes from ordinary life in a prose poem by Kristina Mahr (4 May 2023)

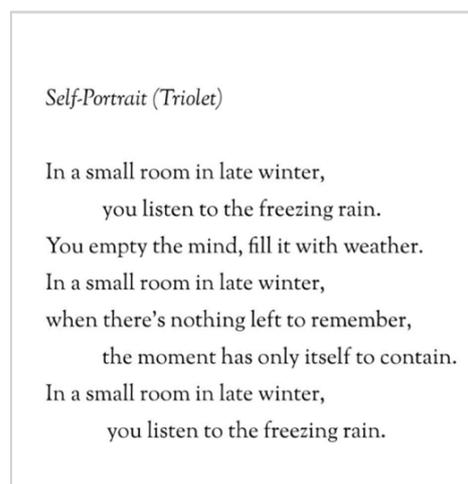


Fig. 4. 7 Scenes from ordinary life in a triolet by Massey Joseph (20 Jan. 2023)

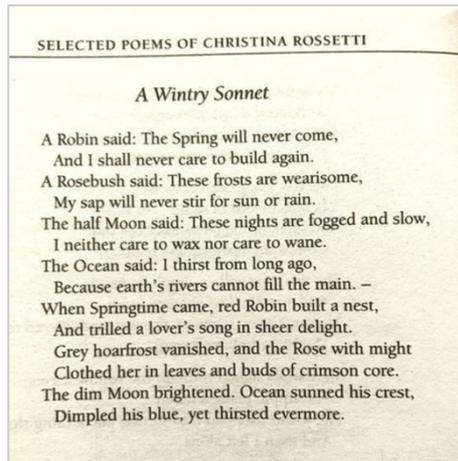


Fig. 4. 8 Familiar form and theme exemplified in a sonnet by Christina Rossetti posted by @englishliteratureinsta (17 Mar. 2024)

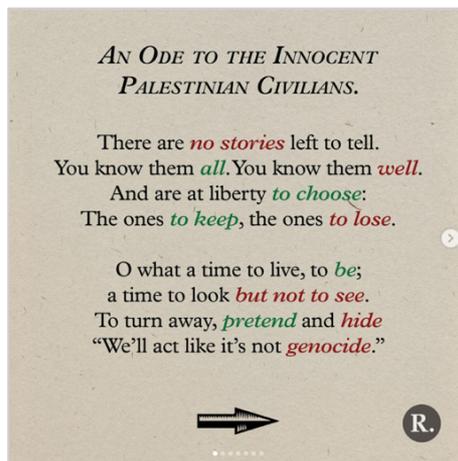


Fig. 4. 9 Familiar form and theme seen in an ode by Sahabat Ali posted by @reviewreligions (3 Nov. 2023)

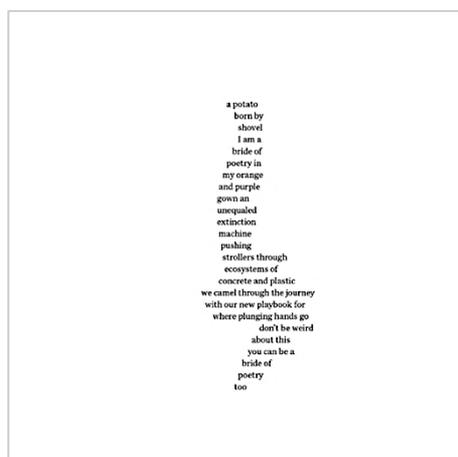


Fig. 4. 10 Creative posts that may engage the audience on Instagram illustrated in a concrete poem by C. A. Conrad posted by @poetryfoundation (8 Apr. 2023)

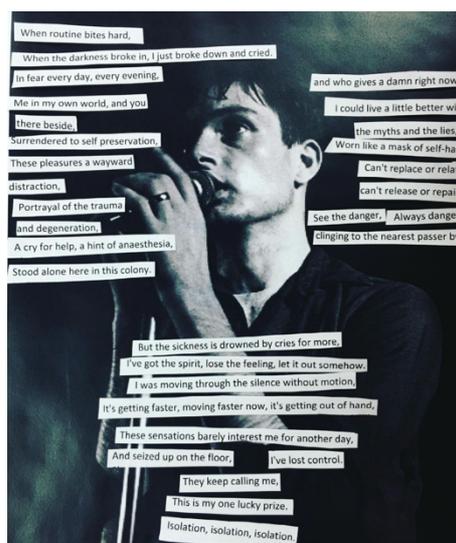


Fig. 4. 11 Pastiche poem by Matt Gahler as a specimen of creative posts (15 Mar. 2021)

Furthermore, the production process is also influenced by the manner in which their work is distributed. On Instagram, poets not only self-publish but also actively participate in the distribution process. With the exception of a few (P3 and P5), poets are concerned about the visibility of their work. To address the problem of online visibility, poets make use of platform algorithms. Whether they are aware or not, all poets have internalised the mechanics of the platform, and they consciously understand that there is an algorithm governing the way it works. All the participating poets acknowledge that there was a time gap between signing up on the platform and their actual posting activity on the platform, suggesting a possible assimilation of the platform's mechanisms within themselves.

Nevertheless, despite the knowledge, only some poets opt to adhere to the algorithm, while others do not. Irrespective of whether the algorithm is effective for them, they still choose to abide by it, and this choice has an impact on their art. To draw in and sustain *Followers*, poets are aware that they need to consider the limited attention span of the platform. Consequently, they follow the time windows and maintain a consistent schedule for posting. This requires them to create and share content periodically in order to stay current. Moreover, the poet's involvement in the distribution process alters their role from traditional channels of publishing, as P6 puts it, "Social media platforms, including Instagram, have their own unique dynamics, and audience behaviour can be quite unpredictable. The algorithms, trending topics, and timing of posts can all impact the visibility and reach of my content. I have been learning from these experiences and experimenting with different approaches to better connect with my

audience" (see table 4.7). It seems that increasingly, poets approach poetry as a means to explore and connect with the audience rather than as a means to indulge only into self-expression.

Table 4. 7
Instapoets' Activity Around Algorithm

Strategies	Poets	Selected Responses
Time of Posting	P1, P4, P6, P7	P1 - I usually post either at around 11 am in the morning or after 8 pm in the evening. I have noticed that it is not very hard to boost engagement for my posts during this time.
Consistency of Posting	P4, P6, P7	P4- Due to a reduction of frequency of my posts, the engagement was affected, since Instagram algorithm works as engagement on a post increases. However, during 2020-21 there were a lot of readers and hundreds of comments and likes. I also used to have discussions regarding poetry and other stuff with many fellow writers.
Networking	P2 P4 P7	P7 - So engaging people on stories is like a really great way to show up in front of them that I exist, and you followed me and then sort of showing them why they followed you is also great to talk about, the story should be self-referential, talking about your work.
Other Promotional Activities	P2 P7	P2 - In my earlier posts, I used to add as many hashtags (related to the content) as possible. There are online tools from which you can copy popular hashtags for your niche.... I decided to make reels. I came very close to doing that. It was going to be about my writeups overlaid on aesthetic footage and calming music playing in the background. But then I felt it would become too demanding in terms of editing and posting regularly, not to mention worrying about the figures... Here's something else that I've done: buy fake followers when I was too much into increasing my reach and gaining attention. More followers mean more credibility, I used to think. I did a test run of buying 500-600 followers. It didn't work that well.

Besides these, poets have also worked with *hashtags* as a tactic to appease the algorithm and enhance their visibility, as seen by the findings presented in table 4.8. *Hashtags* are a form of metadata commonly employed to enhance the searchability of posts. In such circumstances, it is appropriate to apply tags that are associated with poetry. Instead, poets and curators have prioritised the use of tags that enhance user interaction (e.g. trending tags that have been searched for the highest) rather than tags related to poetry. As a result, the average level of engagement they receive has grown as well.

Table 4. 7
Hashtags and Engagement¹¹¹ (Qty Data)

Hashtags	Average Engagement
Engagement Boost Relatable Tags	6.31%
Poetry Related Tags	1.36%
Graphics And Craft Tags	1.14%
No Hashtags	0.32%
Art Related Tags	0.07%
Unrelated Tags	0.03%

A comprehensive analysis of the factors that contribute to a poet's ascendancy into an Instapoet demonstrates that a single factor alone does not result in increased engagement. Rather, it is the combination of multiple factors that yields engagement results. Moreover, as the poet participants point out, there are no bankable measures to decide a certain level of effective dissemination of poets' works. Notwithstanding the popularity status, what is crucial to note here is that these qualities define a poet as an Instapoet, a content creator and an artist - a content artist. However, following these strategies to make their work noticeable and even commercialise it does not imply that they are any less poets. They continue to convey and emphasise their individual voice and personality, which are not entirely subsumed under the platform's rationale. They strive to convey their unique perspective, even if their work is not

¹¹¹ Engagement Rate is obtained after dividing the total number of *Followers* on the profile by the total number of *Likes* and *Comments* on posts updated in the past one month. This is calculated with the help of online tool *Inflact*. See inflact.com/tools/profile-analyzer/. Average Engagement is calculated by adding engagement rate on profiles that use the types of *hashtags* mentioned in the table; the number so obtained is then divided by the number of profiles that fall under the category of *hashtags*. The same logic applies to Average Engagement that appears in Table 4.13, 4.14 and 4.16.

accepted as they anticipate. Neither do they excessively conform their creativity to meet the audience's expectations, nor is reception from the audience their *raison d'être* for writing or posting poetry. For instance, P4 admits slight imputation against his audiences, as "there were certain posts in which I thought certain metaphors were not picked up" and he still used them anyway; or P7, who would "post about anti capitalism or feminism in my stories. So, they reply that this was not expected from you and then just leave the account. So that's nice that it keeps your audience sort of fresh and in touch with both the exact values that you want on your face."

Thus, it is commonly accepted among poets (especially P1, P2, P4, and P7) that it is not always possible to keep up with the needs of the audience, whose interests are ever fluctuating and driven by their own specific preferences. It is evident through the poets' responses that the readers do not consume the same kind of content on Instagram because of what the platform occasionally means to the users, i.e., a distraction. The readers, it can be deduced, are receptive to resonating posts that simultaneously generate a sense of unfamiliarity every time they experience art on Instagram. And so, it might be argued that readers are not passive, but rather active in selecting what they choose to see and watch on the platform. They are not simply readers or ordinary audiences. They are consumers in the fast-paced cultural ecosystem introduced by the internet, and they actively engage with it. The following section attempts to understand the readers to unfold their mental milieu in which the experience of Instapoetry occurs.

4.1.3 Reader as Content Viewer as Content Audience

A reader is a reading subject who brings meaning to a text when read. Instagram user, as a reader, reads text that is reliant on a range of features incompatible with the text found in traditional modes of reading. For instance, Instagram reader follows a different path of *approach* as compared to traditional text, is introduced to a mode of *accessibility* diverse from traditional means, and is bound to a pattern of *actions* not likely expected of a traditional reader. Therefore, when the reader's activity is assessed through these three dimensions, i.e., *approach*, *accessibility and action*, one may be able to understand how poetry is read on Instagram. While *approach* elucidates reader's overall disposition towards reading on Instagram, *accessibility* particularly demonstrates how, for the readers, the form of poetry is compatible with the platform. This leads to exploring post-reading responses—*actions*—by the reader, which helps to comprehend their engagement on Instagram.

As one moves from traditional to digital, and especially to online reading, there is a noticeable shift in the reading approach. This shift can be tapped by examining the reader's orientation towards the medium of reading. This orientation is in turn contingent upon some identifiable factors, such as day-to-day reading habits and prioritisation of the reading source (traditional or digital). Since the subject of study relates to reading on social media, factors such as aggregate time spent on social media, number of social media platforms used, and the specific purpose of use must also be considered.

While analysing the responses collected from twenty-nine readers, four major reading patterns were found: 1. Active, Regular, 2. Active, Non-Regular, 3. Non-Active, Regular, and 4. Non-Active, Non-Regular.¹¹² Secondly, readers' preference for traditional and digital sources of reading were studied, and it was observed that engagement with either source did not hold any correlation with reading patterns for the respective readers. The classification of reading patterns and its consequent comparison with reading sources was done to eliminate the possibility of any supposition that connects traditional with active reading and digital with non-active reading. After referring to all the responses, it was concluded that the priority of the reading source is determined solely on the basis of availability of the source and the level of immersion required by the reading material; for instance, R20 admits that "If I can get the book at a reasonable price, the source will be a paperback or a hardbound book", while R1 agrees that "offline encounters may offer opportunities for deeper immersion and contemplation" (see table 4.9).

Table 4. 8
Sources and Patterns of Reading

Source	Selected Responses	Patterns	Freq.	Selected Responses
Traditional And Digital	R20 - My source would be Google Playbooks or a PDF file. I will access them using either my laptop or my mobile phone. My favourite website so far has been Project Gutenberg; their collection is vast and quality-focused... Yes. Poetry Foundation, Reddit, Poets.org, Instagram, Facebook (long-time	Active, Regular	8	R1 - I try to read every day, usually in the nights before going to bed, as it helps me unwind and expand my knowledge. My day-to-day reading pattern involves dedicating a significant portion of my free time to reading/writing. I try to read every day

¹¹² *Active reading* indicates actively seeking and involving oneself in intensive reading. *Regular or non-regular* merely indicates consistency in reading.

age), and YouTube When speaking of poetry, I am also considering spoken word, the voicing of old classic poetry, and similar content. If I can get the book at a reasonable price, the source will be a paperback or a hardbound book.	Active, Non- Regular	3	R29 - I'm not an avid reader though whenever I feel like I read for days. Once I start reading a book, I try to finish it as soon as possible
R14 - My usual source of reading is paperbacks, then also websites like medium, psychology today, etc., and subscribed newsletters from social media platforms. I also read e-books from mobile phone (ReadEra) as well as my laptop. I read every now and then on Tumblr as well.	Non- Active, Regular	6	R7 - I read almost every day; it could be anytime I'm free or bored, so mostly in the afternoon before a nap and before I sleep at night. (or if it's a gripping text, then probably all night or all day
	Non- Active, Non- Regular	12	R11 - I don't read every day. But, when I do, it is generally in the evening or towards the night once I get free from work. If it is work related, then I read throughout the day and generally 8-10 articles per day without getting deviated

Considering the case of digital sources of reading, more particularly online platforms like social media, it would be safe to deduce that they are preferred over the traditional texts because of the ready availability of resources. Responding to the difference between reading on traditional sources and online platforms, R23 elaborates on how availability (i.e. accessibility through digital tools) becomes the major reason for using the latter as a reading source:

...there are several art and literature accounts on Instagram and YouTube that I follow, which provide a wealth of good art to me. Ever since I laid hands on a smartphone, I've been using it to read poetry, which I have done from every possible medium. I've read and listened to poetry on poetry apps, social media, YouTube, blogs, eBooks, Spotify as well as poetry websites... The experience of reading poetry online is not necessarily better or worse as compared to printed books. I would say it's only different. Electronic media provide ready access to a large variety of literature readily on the go, with better searching, sharing and saving options.

However, despite the easy availability of resources and the time spent on the number of social media platforms, i.e., an average of three and a half hours on average of four platforms, most readers do not consider these as sources to employ immersive/contemplative reading. It must be noted that this disposition is not caused by the content of reading but by the many purposes for which social media platforms are used. For most readers, art and literature come consequential to—and not as a primary intent for—using social media. Apart from engaging

with art and literature, users also exploit information on these platforms to stay updated, maintain contact with their peers, and find newer connections (see table 4.10).

Table 4. 9
Purposes of Using Social Media Platform, Specifically Instagram

Purpose	Frequency	Selected Responses
Updates	23	R4 - Basically, I use social media for staying up to date with my surroundings. It works as a newspaper for me, a newspaper where I get news only about those things which I love and care about.
Networking	15	R20 - My main reason to stay active on Instagram is to stay connected with the majority of my peers because that is where they are all most active, sharing memes and clicking pictures; their lives are all over it, so it is easier that way
Community	20	R12 - I mostly use social media to keep up with the friends but then I use them to consume content, like Poetry and visual content I often come across poetry on Instagram. (Having friends who are also interested in the same things as I am we tend to share poetry we think that the other person would like, or we individually might have found interesting. This increases the variations and creates diversity in the kind of poetry we engage with
Art and Entertainment	27	R8 - I mainly use Instagram to keep up with new trends in different fields, mainly arts such as music, films, poetry and literature, etc., I discover new accounts that catch my eye and find inspiration from them. Apart from that, I use it to socialize with my friends by sharing funny memes and other interesting content... Yes, I come across all sorts of arts and diverse content on social media, it includes film quotes and edits, book reviews, poetry pages, art and design pages, storytelling videos, vlogs, stand-up comedy, etc

While other purposes prevail, reading on social media changes from traditional ways of reading not only in terms of attention and focus it gets but also in terms of convenient accessibility brought forth by the platform algorithm, which caters to the present circumstances of the reader predicted from their activity on the same or across different platforms. Social media experience almost always comes assisted by the algorithm, which acts as an accessibility tool embedded with readers' purpose; it curates and serves only that content which it deems, through readers' activities, the reader might be interested in engaging with. While this limits

¹¹³ Art and entertainment are subsumed under a common category because of the contestations regarding a staunch separation of the two. Also, a direct distinction between them would suggest that 'popular' art (which is mostly associated with entertainment *industry* is apart from 'Art', a viewpoint that the present research seeks to depart from. So, memes that supposedly disseminate as entertainment cannot be put in the non-art category, nor poetry, which is devised to make a reader ruminant on an idea, be considered as non-entertaining. Refer to Eric Gans's article "Art and Entertainment" (1985) to follow discourse on the dichotomisation of 'art' and 'entertainment'.

the scope of reading experience, it also enhances the experience in the direction that the reader is currently situated in.

Moreover, the algorithm is barely predefined, as it reroutes itself according to the activities of the reader. R20 notes that social media algorithms can be manipulated to receive posts as desired by the reader/user¹¹⁴: "If you work enough on your algorithm, you will only see what you want on your feed and not what Instagram is trying to promote." Secondly, since algorithm works on community logic,¹¹⁵ it also promotes different kinds of content to keep the reader hooked to the platform. Presenting content in this manner strikes a cautious balance between binding the reader with the community and introducing them to possibly newer communities, entering the reader into a state that is as constantly shifting as it is stable. This is how the algorithm pushes not only the self-same content that the reader might find agreeable to engage with but also the newer brands of content to expand the reader's consumption horizon, ultimately adding to the time spent on the platform. In this regard, R8 adds, "I come across different types of genres in poetry, such as Love, Pain, Art, Protest poetry, etc. I do not selectively engage only to those I find relatable; in fact I find different ways to relate myself to different genres of poetry..."; while R16 admits, "[I] got to read different kinds of poetry. Last year I came across Hindi poetry. Genre and theme: Nihilist or Romantic mostly. I think Instagram sends suggestions as per interest. If I read two/three poems related to Sufism, the next day they show more of them. I think relatable or new concepts engage me more."

These factors have an impact on the way one approaches reading on various social media platforms. However, there are specific factors that set apart the reading experience of poetry, especially on Instagram, from other platforms. These specific factors revolve around how Instagram makes poetry accessible. Two types of *accessibility* have been addressed in the discussion thus far. The first pertains to the availability of resources, while the second concerns the affordance of the platform, specifically the platform algorithm that facilitates the distribution of poetry to the readers. These two stand true for almost all the social media platforms, while the third form of accessibility—perhaps more important to mark the significance of Instagram for dissemination of poetry—can be observed in the rationale

¹¹⁴ Adam Mosseri addresses common misconceptions about Instagram's algorithm and explains how the platform's technology impacts user experiences. He clarifies that "we use a variety of algorithms, classifiers, and processes, each with its own purpose. We want to make the most of your time, and we believe that using technology to personalise your experience is the best way to do that." He openly discusses ways in which algorithms can be influenced by the users themselves to improve their experience on the platform.

¹¹⁵ Community here is not a tangible group or a countable entity; rather, its volatile existence is assumed on the basis of subscription to and consumption of a particular type of content.

of Instagram as a platform that acts as a portal to make poetry accessible to the activities of everyday life. Since using Instagram is a regular practice for the respondents, poetry on Instagram too becomes integrated into their daily activities. Thus, the third kind of accessibility is nothing but an interweaving of art with life. This integration is so effortless that it not only makes Instagram a suitable platform for sharing poetry but also makes poetry a more suitable form to circulate on the platform.

As compared to other social media platforms, Instagram, with its visual storytelling, is more akin to art. On the one hand, R11 acknowledges how Instagram "makes art accessible [,] or at least a part of it" by providing "budding artists a platform for their art." On the other hand, Instagram blurs the boundaries between art and everyday-life posts with the features that enhance visual appeal of the picture narrative it has to offer as its unique selling proposition.¹¹⁶ Art on Instagram, like any other post, is weaved into the everyday experience, so much so that there seems to be an overlap between art and the everyday where Instagram makes everyday artful and art an everyday affair.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, poetry as an art form shares some specific features with Instagram that make it more popular specifically on this platform. All the features and considerations (see table 4.11) deemed vital for the readers in poetry reading experience on the platform or otherwise were found to be catered to by Instagram's inbuilt platform affordances. As a result, Instagram emerges as a platform that facilitates an effortless poetry reading experience. R28 uses an apt metaphor to describe the encounter with Instapoetry: "Discovering poetry on Instagram, a platform built for social networking, is like finding hidden treasure in a bustling city. It challenges us to pause, reflect, and find the beauty of words amidst the fast-paced digital world." And so, from the curated responses in the following table, it may be clear how poetry as a form is in congruity with the platform aesthetics.

Table 4. 10
Instagram and Poetry as an Everyday Art

Features	Selected Responses
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¹¹⁶ Kozharinova and Manovich (2024) discuss how Instagram's narrative capabilities make it possible for users to create biographical narratives that can be compared to literature and film in the article "Instagram as a Narrative Platform."

¹¹⁷ While R8 seeks to find inspiration in discerning the distinction between art and daily life posts, acknowledging that there is a subtle demarcation between the two and the possibility of overlap, R28 suggests examining this duality by placing the posts into their respective contexts.

Community	R8 - I have a positive opinion about reading poetry on Instagram, although Instagram is basically a social media app, it is also a great platform to promote art and culture. It makes sharing art and finding inspirations incredibly easy and quick
Relatability	R11 - But I often also come across really good (relatable) literature on insta too. Generally, I actively look for poetry on insta/e-poetry. However, I tend to avoid it if it becomes too preachy or feels like it is trying too hard to be relatable. Surprise endings/happy endings are my favourite Romcom Horror Grief etc, I read them all with equal interest but only engage with the ones I find relatable or beyond great. [I like] Good imagery. relatable content. shorter format.
Audio-Visual Accessorisation	R25 - It is a way of expression that blends with photography, sometimes music, sometimes photographs of art journals that the poets themselves have made. Reels on Instagram also allows poets to speak in background while there are video clips that capture the essence of their poetry. This is a unique and interesting way to experience art and poetry. I usually spend 2-3 hours on social media and half of the time is spent reading these... The way the content gets experienced also differs largely because then it would only be textual/visual however through Instagram the poetry is upon to read along with music or in a video format as well. music, good recitation, and graphics [matter].
Brevity of Experience	R2 - Short poems which have effects like a bullet and feeling of the pang of an emotion at the end... I do read short poems based on life, hope and encouragement because I like how they have a instant cathartic effect and are relatively soothing

Instagram communities are virtual entities, and unlike traditional communities, they do not command defined protocols for membership. In this online setting, membership is open to all individuals who choose to follow accounts or use specific *hashtags*. The process of leaving is equally uncomplicated. While there may not be rigid rules and regulations, these communities function based on a shared set of guidelines that are influenced by the collective actions of their members. These guidelines are situational, with a common denominator of maintaining consistency and relevance in the content, actively engaging through *Likes* and *Comments*, and using specific *hashtags* for content categorisation and discovery.

The principle of "connection" plays an integral role in the context of social media. Readers, in their capacity as users, converge and establish connections with one another, resulting in the formation of online communities. These groups are formed based on common interests and are brought together by the types of posts they interact with. Relatability and community here operate in a tandem, where community is formed by shared elements that the audience can relate to. Themes such as Love, Self-love, Everyday Life, Trauma, and Heartbreak are more frequently seen in poetry than other themes (see fig. 4.12 and 4.13). Posts touch upon the profoundly personal aspects of the human experience, fostering a feeling of

rapport with the audience (see table 4.12). Individuals who can identify with these posts contribute to a vibrant community that is both inclusive and unrestricted, as the regulations for entry-exit differ from those of an offline community. The insight proffered by R26 is relevant in this regard:

It's a good way to ensure discussion on various topics when a conversation is being carried between friends or more than two while chatting on Instagram. The feed maintains its fresh supply of literature in a way, the poetry actually fuels the motivation and bravery to call all users and encourage them to post their vulnerability. So, poetry in itself becomes the human connection between the desires, and life of the very person who runs an Instagram account and follows poetry.

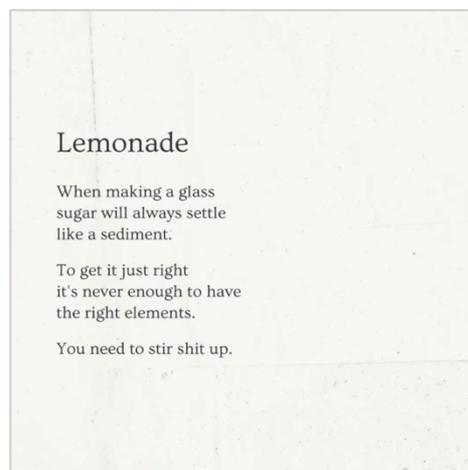


Fig. 4. 12 Inspiration driven poems exemplified in an epigram by Abhishek Lamba (6 June 2023)

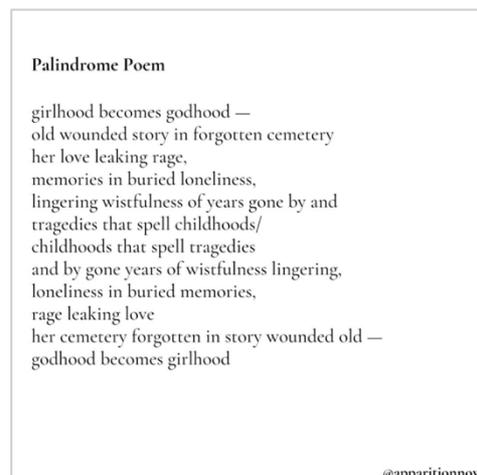


Fig. 4. 13 Feminist overtones in a palindrome by @apparitionnow (19 Apr. 2023)

Table 4. 11**Poetry Themes and Number of Profiles Engaging Them on Instagram (Qty Data)**

Theme	No. of Profiles
Love	52
Self-Love	30
Life	27
Everyday	10
Trauma/Heartbreak/Depression	29
Feminism	11
Varied	49
Identity	8

However, the correlation between relatability and engagement cannot be consistently counted as a reliable indicator. The user's engagement in these communities is constantly evolving due to the fluctuating relatability with different themes or styles. What is observed as a stable trend in engagement statistics is that readers are more attentive to audio-visual posts that keep them engaged on the platform. Furthermore, they are also intrigued by the personal profiles of poets, rather than solely focusing on poetry accounts. The audience desires a greater connection with the artist than maintaining a distant relationship with them on Instagram. They possess an enduring curiosity to witness fresh creations and new pieces from the poets they have a close acquaintance with. Similarly, table 4.13 indicates that personal/poetry profiles and short film profiles exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to other profiles.

Table 4. 12**Type of Profile, Number of Followers, and Engagement (Qty Data)**

Type of Profile	No. of profiles	Average Followers	Average Engagement
Poetry Profile	56	308040	0.63%
Personal/Poetry Profile	24	123679	3.75%
Poetry/Short Fiction Profile	5	1986050	0.18%
Art/Poetry Profile	5	31455	1.52%

Poet/Poetry Profile	9	321178	0.69%
Literature/Poetry Profile	2	57600	1.38%
Selfcare Profile	1	103000	0.75%
Influencer/Poetry Profile	5	1656800	0.03%
Photography/Poetry Profile	2	9601	3.01%
Poetry/Short Film Profile	1	38900	32.07%
Films/Photography Profile	1	41400	0.11%
Quotes Profile	1	53000	0.05%
History/Art Profile	1	89400	0.45%
Graphic Poetry Profile	1	158000	0.07%
Art Profile	1	1100000	0.00%

One may assume that the high engagement rate in the short film category stems from the relatively smaller number of profiles compared to other categories. However, the data in table 4.14 contradicts this, showing a significantly higher engagement rate for profiles exclusively featuring *Reels*, compared to those with mixed posts or solely images. Readers acknowledge that the combination of images, graphics, and text intensifies the emotional effect; on the other hand, they believe that this textual quality should be exclusive to online reading modes and that it is well-suited to the medium's characteristics.

Table 4. 13
Type of Post, Number of Profiles, and Engagement (Qnty Data)

Type of Post	Average Engagement	No. of Profiles
Video	1.94%	81
Only Picture	0.65%	34
Only Video <i>Reel</i>	19.39%	6

At times, the brevity of experience is irrelevant to a certain extent, as individuals tend to prefer watching long, interesting videos to reading concise poems due to their familiarity with the format, which often leads to a lack of motivation to actively connect with the poetry post. Occasionally, they may leave a *Like* as a means of showing support for poetry, but they do not

actively connect with it beyond that. It has been found that *Comments* and *Shares* are rare occurrences, but they only occur when the post is compelling. Users also save lengthy or time-consuming content for future reference. The role of brevity is less significant compared to the way the poetry post is presented. If something is intriguing, everything else may be considered of lesser importance to the audience. The sophistication of the poetry or the issue of complexity is irrelevant in this context. This has more to do with how the poem's content is presented in accordance with the visual aesthetics of the platform.

Therefore, one can comprehend reader participation more accurately based on their mood, interests, and personal preferences by taking into account their actions such as *liking, commenting, sharing, and saving*. The action explains in an extensive way what each type of engagement behaviour entails for readers. The responses provided in table 4.15 provide a detailed understanding of the engagement habits of poetry readers on Instagram.

Table 4. 14
Types of Engagement¹¹⁸

Engagement Type	Selected Responses
<i>Like</i> (7.28) ¹¹⁹	R4 - Leave it a like. Even if I don't read it, it doesn't mean that I do not support the art form. I always try to support every art form that I can.
<i>Comment</i> (2.8)	R2 - I do comment sincerely every time I do. But I don't usually comment anything and just leave it at liking the content. I just don't want to judge the work in downscale, if it is good then a "like" will do and if it is not then just go on scrolling past them. It rarely happens that I found any Instapoetry so relatable to express myself "sincerely" in the comments.
<i>Share</i> (6.72)	R8 - Usually when I find a piece of poetry that is inspiring or relatable, I save it, or share it in my stories. If it's a short poetry, which I see very often on Instagram, I spend around 20-30 seconds reading it, and I read it a few more times if I really like it.

¹¹⁸ *Like, Comment, Share, and Save* are only considered as types of engagement and not levels, since they stand on an equal footing and have only a vague relation to sincerity of engagement. Using "levels" for these types would incorrectly tag one as less sincere and the other as more, which is not absolutely accurate. In this regard, insights offered by Jenkins, Green, and Ford (2013) into the evolving dynamics between media content creators and their audiences is notable. They suggest that although audience engagement is essential for consuming media in a participatory fashion, not all audience members actively contribute by providing feedback or creating content. Users have the option to engage in several ways, ranging from passive consumption of media, to active interaction with the media, and even contributing new content (157-158).

¹¹⁹ The numbers in parentheses indicate average number of times (out of 10) the reader chooses to *Like, Share, and Comment* on poetry posts on Instagram. Refer to the calculation of this average in Table A - Appendix III.

Save

R12 - When I sit down to scroll down Instagram my engagement to the post depends on how the poetry is being presented. If it's in a reel form, I tend to listen it whole and like and save the post to come back to later but if it has a picture which isn't visually pleasing, I mostly scroll past it leaving a like.

The responses suggest that the readers show their support for different art forms, such as poetry, by scrolling past the post with a *Like*, even if sometimes they haven't thoroughly read the content. For instance, R23 exhibits active involvement only when they are feeling inclined to do so. They engage in a perfunctory manner by briefly reading before engaging with the post sincerely. They show their endorsement of the growth of poetry page in ways other than leaving *Likes*, as they only prefer liking posts that they genuinely appreciate. While R4 expresses support for several artistic mediums, including poetry, by indicating appreciation with *Likes*, even without having read the content. Only a select few, such as R20, exhibit discerning taste in liking the content, but they make sure to share it if they find it sufficiently creative and intriguing.

Commenting on poetry is a more sizeable engagement activity where participants read poems, provide insightful feedback, and share them with their audience. While R1 actively comments on posts, some individuals, such as R2, refrain from commenting altogether. On the other hand, R21 prefers commenting only when a personal acquaintance posts poetry. Relatability serves as a motivating factor for certain readers to comment on and share poetry, such as R7 and R29. And some readers avoid commenting on posts with specific themes, like R5, who does not "Like comment post or share heartbreak poetry." Commenting activity thus has stronger grounds for tracing engagement; it is not always the most reliable factor to be considered but it is not as fickle as *Likes* in most cases (see table 4.16).

Finally, readers also save poetry content that they see as new, distinct, or personally meaningful, suggesting a desire to revisit it at a later time (R8, R12 and R26). Individuals allocate varying durations to the consumption of short and long poems, which remains contingent upon their level of interest.

Table 4. 16**Nature of Comments¹²⁰ and Engagement (Qty Data)**

Nature of Comments	Average Engagement
Incurious (26/115)	0.35%
Sincere (32/115)	1.28%
Partial (57/115)	2.27%

The data indicates that partially involved *Comments* have the highest number and engagement rate, while sincere *Comments* have an engagement rate that is closer to the norm. The scarcity of incurious *Comments* can be attributed to individuals opting to simply leave a *Like* on a post instead of providing a comment that lacks substance and fails to contribute to the conversation. sincere *Comments* exhibit a lower engagement percentage in comparison to partial *Comments*, suggesting that random *Likes* are not a prevalent tendency among these posts and profiles. Conversely, an increasing number of people are displaying a heightened curiosity towards the content and actively engaging in participation. Furthermore, friends and the community contribute genuine *Comments*, which are typically not extensive in scope, resulting in less interaction, however centred. Partial *Comments* are typically observed on pages that have a larger number of *Followers*, including community pages. Users engage with the content but often lack the motivation to leave *Comments*. These are particularly the posts that are relatable. Thus, readers on Instagram are not readers in the traditional sense of the word but showcase a new brand of reading where, in most cases, they read everything as a piece of content to be consumed. It is in this shift from "appointment-based viewing" to "engagement-based viewing" (Jenkins et al. 2013, 152) that the readers become viewers of content (Gioia 4), as they engage with poetry depending on where and how they want to be occupied.

¹²⁰ The researcher has classified three types of *Comments* based on observation of multiple posts on Instagram. Incurious *Comments* stand for one-word comments or emoji comments. Partially engaged *Comments* indicate comments that involve one or two sentences only meant to appreciate the work without any critical insights. Sincere *Comments* signify more than two sentences and analytical involvement from the reader. While the researcher notes the arbitrariness of such a signification, introspection of personal activity on the platform along with the interview data leads to these assumptions in formulating the aforementioned connection between the type of response in *Comments* and actual engagement experience.

4.2 Poem as Content as Art

Discussing poetry on Twitter, Phillip Monks deftly notes that it is not the form but the medium itself that influences the way poetry is received. It is not just the writer who is constrained by certain expectations, but also the receiver. There is an expectation for both writing and reading to be immediate. The experience of the poem in the tweet is influenced by the unique nature of Twitter as a medium, and this context is uncompromising (81). Through the examination of poets and readers on Instagram, it becomes evident that they absorb and engage with the semiotic concerns related to the platform's mediality and materiality. Consequently, it is reasonable to deduce that poetry on Instagram, as a creation of both the poet and the reader, becomes intricately connected with these concerns as well. Poetry thus marks its shift into content owing to the manner in which it is created, distributed, and received, and this shift does not suggest an inferior kind of reading, only different than how it is read in print. Besides, the shift is occasioned by two broader conditions that engulf the activity of poets and readers on Instagram, which this section means to discuss briefly.

Firstly, poetry, like content, is influenced by the platform's institutional concerns that dictate how it is *viewed* and *shared*, such as Instagram's community and commercial aspects. Poetry is moderated in the same way as content. Tarleton Gillespie defines content moderation as "a value" on social media, where the platform assists users in finding just the "right" content. The term "right" can encompass ethical, legal, and healthy content, but it also includes content that encourages user engagement, boosts advertising revenue, and enables data collection (208). Thus, in order for the platform to function, more audience engagement is needed, which means that more shareable content, i.e., relatable and visually appealing content, will be more in circulation. Jodie Cook provides an explanation in layman's terms.

There are several things that make great content great. It might resonate closely with the audience—especially true of emotive or humorous content. It could be visually stunning, something that stands out against other content, such as a natural wonder, dazzling colours or an optical illusion. It may feature someone your audience likes, someone well known or the company founder. At a more basic level, pictures of people go down very well. ("Why does content matter so much?")

Likewise, vast majority of poetry posts seem to establish a common connection with their audience when they promulgate the principle of relatability. Here, the focus is hardly on linguistic or literary skills of the poet. On the contrary, acceptance, validation, and

shared emotions elicit a greater response, diminishing the gap between the poet and the reader. This results in readers creating and sharing more such posts, analogous to the way memes are created and shared. The posts represent the expressions of an individual experience in repetitive frames, where, despite recurrence, users find relatable insights in the expressions of everyday emotions (see fig. 4.15) in an everyday visual setting (see fig. 4.14).

Reading Rupi Kaur's direct style in her poetry collection *milk and honey*, David McQuillan argues that the aesthetic scandal surrounding the non-difficulty of her poetry is almost subversive to the dominant aesthetic values (iv). He interprets this simplicity as an act of dissidence, but it can also be viewed as a deliberate approach to the subject matter (caused by the shift in question), signalling the presence of an everyday strain in the aesthetics pertaining to Instagram itself. In other words, the experience of poetry gestures towards harmony with everyday life, as it gets encored within its relatable conventions, making poetry posts on Instagram a pertinent specimen of *Prosaic Poesics*.¹²¹ Throwing light on poetry's potential to be interspersed in everyday activities, Mike Chasar remarks that "poems appeared in print, only to be cut out, passed from person to person, memorised, recited, handwritten and sent to friends, scrapbooked, put to music and sung, recorded on wax cylinder, and then reprinted" (34).

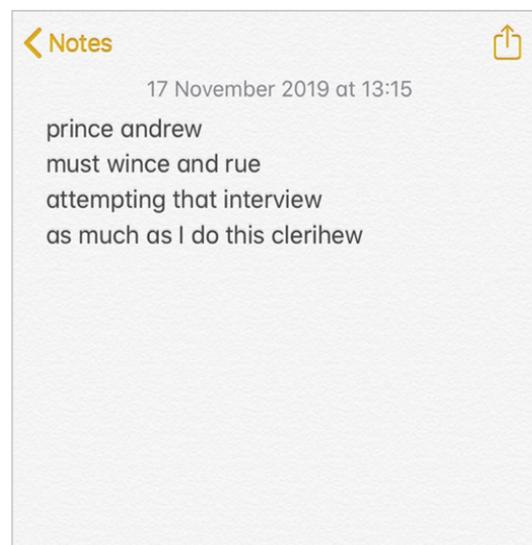


Fig. 4. 14 Clerihew by @nickasbury written in cell phone memo application (17 Nov. 2019)

¹²¹ Reference to Katya Mandoki's theory on everyday poetics (2007, 80).

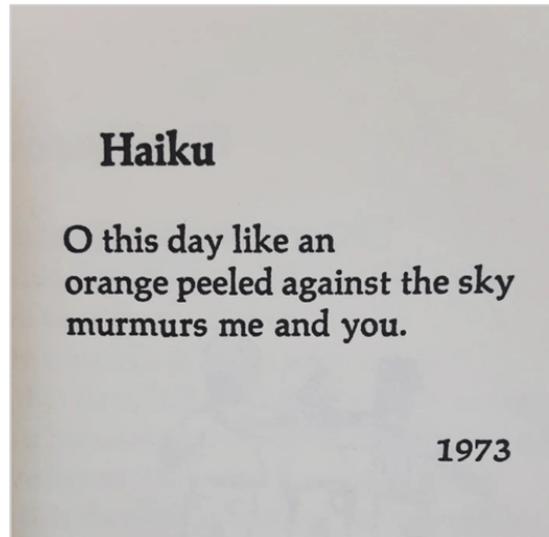


Fig. 4. 15 Quotidian sensory imagery in a Haiku by Sonia Sanchez posted by @poetryisnotluxury (9 Apr. 2023)

Chasar's remark gives rise to two considerations. While his central premise explicitly states how poetry can blend with everyday life. His explication, through the example of recording poetry through scrapbooking, implicitly highlights poetry's capacity to combine visual elements with text. Since Instagram is a social media platform focusing on visual media, it aligns perfectly with the aesthetic needs of poetry. Hessa Alghadeer's analysis of the multimodality of poetry on social media platforms reveals the consequences of this synchronisation between the platform and the art form. Alghadeer argues that multimodality is synonymous with the experience of living itself, as one perceives everyday life through various sensory channels such as sight, sound, and movement (92-93); and because these platforms allow for the simultaneous presence of multiple semiotic modes, they accurately represent, and even aestheticise, the conditions of everyday life. Therefore, she is right in proposing that, insofar as interpretation of poetry is concerned, the digital multimodal landscape quite evidently changes the meaning making process by reproducing it in a creative way that is also more approachable (see fig. 4.16 and 4.17). Similar to Chasar, she also notes how poetry is absorbed into the rhythms of daily life through lyrics, tweets, and text messages, as well as through informal conversations, protest chants, sports songs, and memorable advertisements. Moreover, one can consider how poetry is presented at slams, open-mic events, and so on. This awareness leads to the understanding that poetry is a dynamic and interactive medium, rather than one confined solely to a written, printed form.

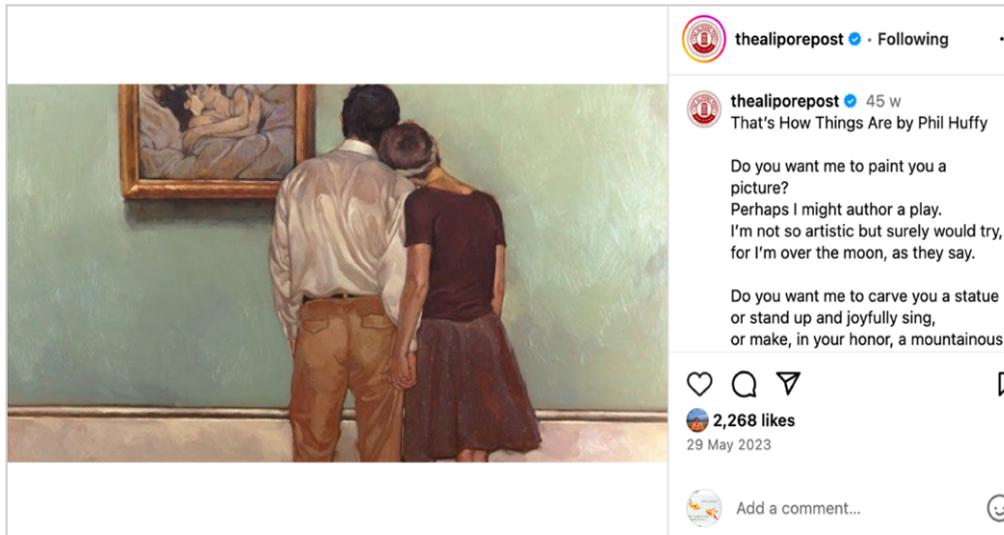


Fig. 4. 16 Approachable creativity as seen in ekphrastic poem posted by @thealiporepost (29 May 2023)

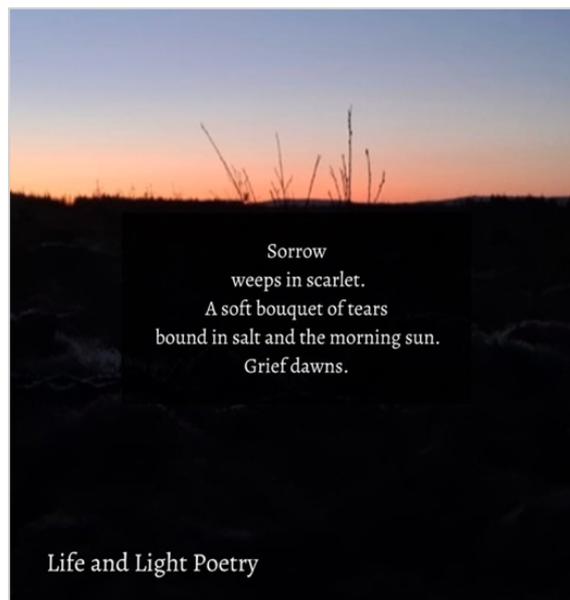


Fig. 4. 17 Approachable creativity in cinquain by Emily (12 Feb. 2023)

Nevertheless, while considering poetry's transition into content, it is not solely the factors of relatability and visuality that enact the transformation. Relatability and visual appeal are merely components of shareability, which is ultimately responsible for recasting poetry into consumable information of content. How? The answer is in following the rubrics of aura. Poetry, by definition, is regarded as a form of elevated art that has a distinct aura—aura being

something that wields a unique value by enforcing a supernatural vision around it. Walter Benjamin (1968 [1935]) proposes that once art is liberated from the burden of originality, it loses this aura. That is, once the masses move from contemplation to dispersion of thought (resulting from numerous copies that define content),¹²² the artwork's aura is rendered defunct. On Instagram, poetry becomes easily shareable, resulting in the loss of its unique aura. Although poetry does not lose its characteristics completely. It only gets subsumed into the defining contours of content that is replicable. While the poetry's aura yields to its shift into content, it retains the aesthetic experience, which in fact gets reanimated in the process. To put in another way, poetry does not deteriorate into something that is undesirable or lacking in aesthetic appeal; it loses the aura arising from singularity and is revived as content in the age of digital reproduction, where it is free to be adapted, moulded, shared, and inimitably experienced by multitudes.

Conclusion

Thus, Instapoetry, which shares social alignment with open mic culture, digital alignment with messenger apps, and visual alignment with film culture, provides a distinct aesthetic experience compared to traditional poetry. The reason why a critical response is unlikely on Instagram is because the platform primarily focuses on engagement. Consequently, even the most thought-provoking artwork is not likely to generate critical analysis or serious discussion. Instead, it will be perceived simply as content that is either engaging or not engaging. This includes not only the posts commonly referred to as "Instapoetry" specifically made for the platform but also traditionally published poetry that is shared on the platform; one only needs to examine the illustrative figures presented in the chapter to realise that the selected poems are either traditionally published or adhere to the already defined traditional forms. It can thus be concluded that the reading experience on Instagram is mostly influenced by the meaning that the platform gives to the poem rather than the form or content of the poem itself. Therefore, any poetry that is posted on Instagram is performatively *Insta*-poetry owing to the platform logic of Instagram and the instantness of the experience.

¹²² Kevin Stein advocates that the reception of art changes on Instagram owing to the state of reading, where so many stimuli surround the reader at a time. While distraction of thought is considered to be harmful to aesthetic experience, Stein notes that "Distraction as a mode of aesthetic attention explains the way many of us receive art nowadays. Distraction has fostered... 'polyfocal attention'—paying partial attention to a plethora of things at once" (101). This drives the point that distracted attention does not always lead to a rupture in the aesthetic experience.