
Insta-Poetry as a Popular Product: A Case Study on Rupi Kaur *Milk & Honey*

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ABSTRACT

In 2014, Rupi Kaur published *Milk & Honey*, a collection of poetry and prose exploring the female experience that originally appeared on social media, to widespread success. Insta-poetry, poetry disseminated through the social media platform Instagram, has since become a highly popular modern literary form, continuing to gain popularity since the day it was first published in book form. This research examined the phenomenon of Insta-poetry as a popular product with a case study of *Milk & Honey*, exploring the reasons Kaur's first self-published work was so popular and the contestations that drove *Milk & Honey* to become a popular Insta-poetry product. Foucault's subject-power theory and Aeron Davis' production were employed to retrieve the findings. Furthermore, a descriptive-qualitative method was applied in conducting and analyzing the data. It was found that Kaur utilized Insta-poetry to challenge social norms and empower women, trauma, and relationships. Consequently, Kaur decided to self-publish her Insta-poetry in a book even though it was considered too basic and detracted from the complexity of traditional poetry. Regardless of the controversy, Kaur has been able to play an impactful position in introducing poetry to a new generation and modernizing the way literature is disseminated.

Keywords: *self-published poetry; popular Insta-poetry; feminist poetry; subject-power; Milk & Honey*

INTRODUCTION

Rupi Kaur is known as a Canadian writer, poet, and Insta-poetry artist of Indian descent. Kaur is part of a growing group of young insta-poets, so-called because she became famous after building a large following on social media (Walker, 2017). Kaur used this medium to share short poems and illustrative drawings which heavily touch on topics such as love, trauma, women, and the immigrant experience. Her first poem on Instagram was uploaded in 2013. This poem is about encouraging women to be vulnerable in toxic relationships and empowering women not to

be weak in a world of men (Kaur, 2013).

In 2014, Kaur published her highly popular first book of poetry titled *Milk & Honey* (Kaur, 2014a). This poetry book explored the female experience in evocative and easy-to-relate-to language. *Milk & Honey* is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, entitled "the hurting", elucidates the pain and trauma experienced by numerous women. The poems in this chapter explore themes such as sexual abuse, loss, trauma, abandonment and objectification. The second part delved "the loving" that exposes the

varied aspects of love and friendship, spanning from romantic love to familial and platonic love. The poems in this section are an exploration of love filled with grace and delicacy, while also addressing the shadowy side of love such as jealousy and betrayal. The third section is devoted to heartbreak and the process of self-healing, which is written as “the breaking”. The poems in this section explore themes such as the loss of love, grief, and finding the resilience to keep going. The penultimate section of the book is titled “the healing” and focuses on strength and self-love. The poems in this section explore themes such as finding one's voice and identity, accepting oneself as one is, and embracing the power of women.

Milk & Honey was written, illustrated and self-published by Kaur. From the day it was first published, *Milk & Honey* became an international phenomenon. It sold over 3 million copies, has been translated into over 35 languages, and became a #1 New York Times bestseller-holding on for over 100 consecutive weeks. It was also reprinted 16 times by 2017 and sold over 3.5 million copies (Agency, 2022). However, before *Milk & Honey* achieved widespread acclaim, the work faced multiple rejections. As noted by Nawotka, Kaur did not receive support from a major publisher; her poems were dismissed as being too brief and simplistic to qualify as true poetry (Nawotka, 2022). Flood and Chain, as cited by McQuillan (2018), stated that Kaur's work, *Milk & Honey*, demonstrates not only her simplicity but also solipsism.

In light of these arguments and critiques, we sought to address the reasons behind the immense popularity of *Milk & Honey*, Kaur's first self-published work, and to explore the factors that contributed to its rise as a prominent example of Insta-poetry. This study therefore aimed to uncover the driving forces behind the success of *Milk & Honey* using the production analysis approach developed by Aeron Davis (Pickering, 2008). According to Davis, this approach analyzes the final product and makes inferences about the process of its production. Production analysis in the context of popular literature involves examining the process of creating a literary work, including the decisions and choices made by the author, the cultural and historical context of its creation, and the impact of these factors on the final outcome of the text.

In addition to explaining the contestations that propelled *Milk & Honey* to become a popular Insta-poetry product, we employed Foucault's concept of

subject-power to construct a coherent argument. Foucault (1982) posits that the subject is not an isolated and inherent entity but is shaped by the intricate interplay between power and knowledge (Mansfield, 2000). Power in this context refers to the subject's ability to control and influence individuals and society. Meanwhile, knowledge refers to the information and understanding that individuals and groups may have about each other.

Foucault employs the term “knowledge/power” to illustrate their intertwined and mutually reinforcing nature. Knowledge serves as a tool to legitimize and sustain power, while power exerts control over and restricts access to knowledge. This power permeates everyday life, categorizing individuals, marking them with their identities, imposing laws of truth that they must acknowledge and that others must recognize, as well (Foucault, 1982).

A number of previous studies have examined Rupi Kaur's *Milk & Honey*. Furthermore, we decided to include several literature reviews as a novelty before writing the findings and discussion to avoid repetition of research because Rupi Kaur's *Milk & Honey* is still a hit to this day. The latest research conducted is entitled “Becoming a New Voice of Feminism: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rupi Kaur's Feminist Instapoetry” Marieke (2023) investigates how Rupi Kaur leverages social media to establish herself as a new voice in feminism. Their theoretical framework encompasses feminist theories with an intersectional focus, as articulated by Hooks, Crenshaw, and Spivak, as well as feminist theory incorporating digital intersectionality by Cochrane. Additionally, Marieke's study employs Castells' paradigm of the network society and van Dijk's critical discourse analysis approach. By focusing on Rupi Kaur's emergence as a prominent feminist voice, the aforementioned research demonstrates that she has successfully built a personal brand. Despite independently advancing feminist narratives akin to those of significant feminist scholars, Castells' paradigm reveals that her visibility in Instapoetry is contingent upon her followers and the platform's algorithms. Thus, Rupi Kaur has harnessed social media to become a new voice in feminism.

Aman (2022) highlights *Milk & Honey* as an example of Insta-poetry that is compared with Plato, Aristotle, Sidney, and Shelley's theories on the function of poetry and the role of the poet. They show that this emerging subgenre is influenced by Instagram and

publishing strategies that are largely for economic purposes. Sainz & Granado (2018) found that the relentless growth of social networks has enabled the emergence of new genres in contemporary literature, such as micro-poetry, a powerful art form that can convey a lot of emotions in a few simple and straightforward lines, as shown in Rupi Kaur's *Milk & Honey*.

Both the previous studies and the present one examined *Milk & Honey* as the material object. Marieke (2023) used a feminist framework to find that racial issues and women's empowerment were Kaur's appeal. Castells' paradigm illustrates that she relies on her followers and the platform's algorithm for her Insta-poetry visibility, and consequently is able to become the new voice of feminism with the help of social media. Aman (2022) examines *Milk & Honey* as Insta-poetry that has a different form from traditional poetry. The findings of both Marieke (2023) and Aman (2022) do not highlight *Milk & Honey* as a popular literary work and are still restricted to analyzing the content of the text that rationalizes *Milk & Honey* as a self-publishing and light-dominant form. Finally, Sainz & Granado (2018) analyze *Milk & Honey* as a self-publishing phenomenon. Their findings primarily focus on the content of the poems and their relationship to feminism. In contrast, this study diverges significantly from the three previous studies. The differences lie in the theoretical framework and methodology applied. Specifically, this study employs production analysis and Foucault's subject-power theory.

This research was qualitative in nature, employing a methodical, step-by-step approach. Within the context of production analysis, the data were gathered by examining the process of creating *Milk & Honey* as a literary work. This included exploring the decisions and choices made by the author, the cultural and historical context of its creation, and the impact of these factors on the final text. Once the necessary data were collected, we analyzed it using the employed theories and related literature. The findings are subsequently presented in a qualitative-descriptive manner. Through these approaches and methods, this research aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of Insta-poetry as a popular product, with a particular focus on the contribution of Rupi Kaur's work.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the article delves into *Milk & Honey* as a popular literary product within the Insta-poetry genre, authored by Rupi Kaur. The findings and discussion are divided into two main parts. First, the researcher examines the reasons behind the popularity of *Milk & Honey* as a self-published literary work. This is further elucidated in two subsections: the sense of relatability experienced by female readers and the multifaceted ways in which feminism resonates throughout Kaur's poetry. Second, the researcher explores the contestations that have propelled *Milk & Honey* to become a prominent example of Insta-poetry.

The Reasons for *Milk & Honey* as A Self-Published Literary Work Became Popular

Milk & Honey, a self-published literary work by Rupi Kaur, gained popularity for several interesting reasons. Some of these are because its relatable and emotive content resonated deeply with a mass audience. Her poetic themes of love, loss, trauma, healing, and femininity touched the hearts of many readers, especially women, who found comfort and validation in Kaur's words. Kaur effectively made use of platforms like Instagram to share her work, reaching a wide audience. The combination of strategic use of social media and the authenticity of the self-publishing process contributed to the popularity of *Milk & Honey*. The subsections further explained the reasons for *Milk & Honey*'s popularity in more depth.

The Feeling of "Relate" by Female Readership

One of the insta-poems posted by Kaur in January 2014 is also included in *Milk & Honey*. This can be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

In her Instagram post, she wrote "because I have recognised you", whereas in the book, the line is changed to "I have seen you in my mother's eyes". The poem is part of the "loving ones" that aspire to the hopes of women in relationships. The poem posted on Instagram received 6,294 likes from readers and 230 comments (Kaur, 2014b). Another Insta poem included by Kaur in the poetry book *Milk & Honey* is in the subsection "the breaking". This poem is about a woman giving up on her relationship to save and love herself. The poem was uploaded by Kaur in May 2014. Kaur had neither changed the illustrations nor the

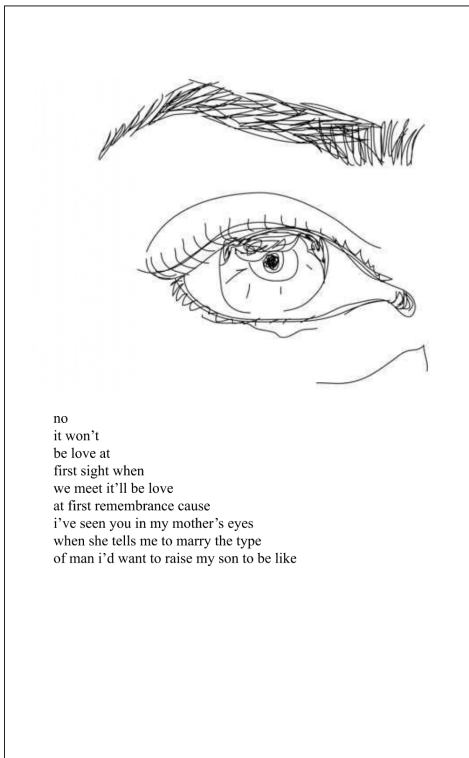


Figure 1. The poetry written in *Milk & Honey* book (source: *Milk & Honey*, p. 48)

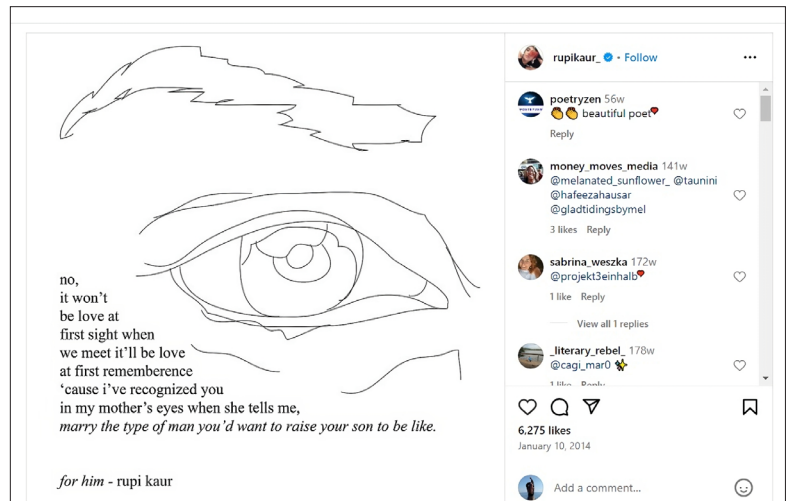


Figure 2. Insta-poetry written before it is published (source: [instagram.com/rupikaur](https://www.instagram.com/rupikaur))

lines of the poem after the insta-poem was published.

The surge in Instagram likes and comments that year prompted the question: why did Kaur's Insta-poetry product become such a popular work? Partly, this is because Kaur has the ability to emotionally connect with her readers on Instagram. Additionally, her followers are predominantly female, and the issues she raises are closely related to women's experiences. In analyzing the content of *Milk & Honey*, the researcher employs the textual analysis method developed by Aeron Davis in Pickering (2008). This approach seeks to highlight the common codes used by Rupi Kaur, examine the presentation of the text, and comprehend the underlying assumptions embedded within it (Pickering, 2008).

In her writings, especially in *Milk & Honey*, Kaur clearly shows her intention to honour her parents' stories. All of these topics are discussed starting from Kaur's realization that she might not be talking about any of this if her parents had not decided to leave their country. She reflects on issues of diaspora, migration, racism, and also gender inequality to offer

a safer life for others, their children, including herself. While acknowledging the reasons that drive women to migrate, it is also crucial to recognize the agency of migrant women and challenge the binary narrative of forced and voluntary migration. Violence against women and girls, often perpetrated by partners or family members, is frequently relegated to the private sphere and consequently overlooked in discussions of forced migration.

According to the latest available estimates, there were 280.6 million global migrants in 2020, representing close to 4% of the world's 7.8 billion people. To put this in perspective, if migrants formed their own country, it would have been the fourth most populous country in the world in 2020, after China, India, and the United States, and just ahead of Indonesia (Batalova, 2022). Meanwhile, at mid-year 2020, female migrants comprised somewhat less than half of the global international migrant population, accounting for 135 million or 48.1% of the total migrant stock (Brief, 2023). Thus, exposing how hard and deep the experience of being a woman

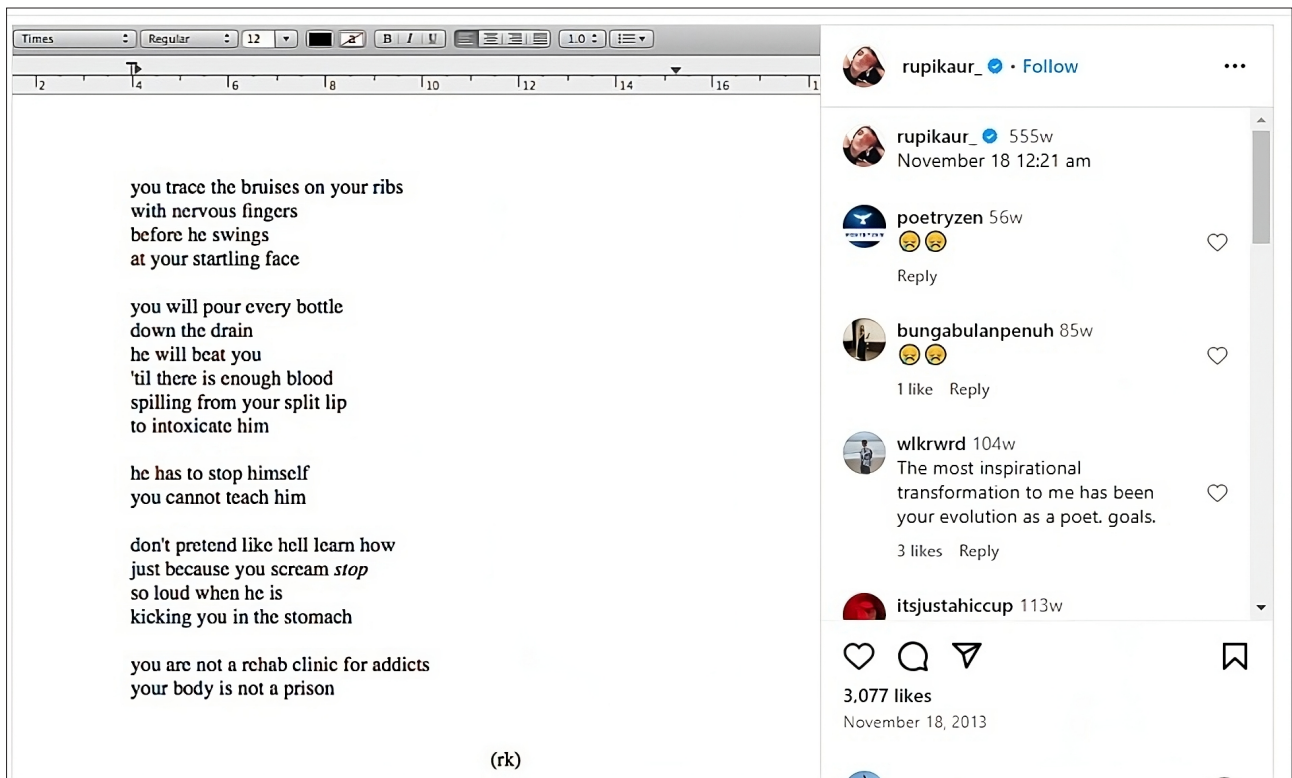


Figure 3. Kaur first posted Insta-poetry on Instagram, 2013.

in the migration flow has attracted female readers to relate to Kaur's stories as it is experienced by migrant women across the globe. There are over 2.35 billion users on Instagram, and this number is projected to reach 2.5 billion by the end of 2023. The gender distribution of Instagram users is relatively even, with 50.7% being male and 49.3% being female (WhatstheBigData.com, 2023).

This data reflects Kaur's influence as a subject with the power to impact her readers. She understood that her substantial follower count provided a platform to create something meaningful. Kaur consistently posted poems related to women's experiences on her Instagram. As illustrated in Figure 3, Kaur shared a poem aimed at empowering women, reinforcing their sense of value and strength.

The poem:

you trace the bruises on your ribs
with nervous fingers
before he swings
at your startling face

you will pour every bottle
down the drain
he will beat you
'til there is enough blood
spilling from your split lip
to intoxicate him

he has to stop himself
you cannot teach him

don't pretend like hell learn how
just because you scream *stop*
so loud when he is
kicking you in the stomach

you are not a rehab clinic for addicts
your body is not a prison

(Source: [instagram.com/rupikaur](https://www.instagram.com/rupikaur/))

The poem above was crafted by the poet with

the intention of encouraging her readers, particularly women, to appreciate themselves. It underscores that women should not be vulnerable or allow their bodies to be violated by men. The poem emphasizes that women are not responsible for men's welfare nor their lives. Furthermore, there were several comments written by female users and a male saying:

@poetryzen (emoticon)

@bungabulanpenuh (emoticon)

@wlkrwr: The most inspirational transformation to me has been your evolution as a poet. goals.

@itjusthiccup: Thank you for sharing. I have been writing my whole life and only started sharing when I got diagnosed with Breast Cancer. But I found in your writing a connections. So I started reading them all. I finally got the beginning.

(Source: [instagram.com/rupikaur](https://www.instagram.com/rupikaur))

Rupi Kaur appears to be attuned to her readers' preferences, which is evident throughout *Milk & Honey*. The book not only unveils her post-traumatic memories as a daughter of the Punjabi diaspora living in Canada but also illustrates how these memories catalyzed her post-traumatic growth. Kaur's narrative demonstrates how resilience, self-awareness, social support, and spirituality can be profoundly helpful in coping with traumatic memories and past grief. Her posts consistently relate to her personal experiences and resonate with the broader experiences of women (Masini, 2019).

Feminism Reverberates throughout Kaur's Poetry in Myriad Ways

Milk & Honey powerfully articulates Kaur's intention to empower women, providing them with the space to express and explore their identities. Kaur's experience as an immigrant in Canada—a nation renowned for its large immigrant population, exceeding 8.3 million people—has afforded her the perspective to resonate with the challenges faced by immigrant women in their host country. Despite Canada's reputation as a welcoming *home for migrants*, Kaur's work reflects the complex realities and hardships immigrant women often encounter (Canada, 2022). India is the first rank of Immigrant country of origin to Canada which

contributed around 27% of the country's population in 2022 (Sivakumar, 2023). However, this statistic does not make Kaur and any other immigrants in Canada not confront challenges in their daily lives.

As a migrant, Kaur delves into the diverse, tumultuous emotions experienced by immigrants. Many migrants face continental ambivalence and may delay making critical life decisions, thereby risking their future stability (Freemantle & Landau, 2022). The absence of a support network often exacerbates feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and irritation among migrants. Migrant women encounter different experiences than migrant men, facing unique challenges and pressures (Charsley & Wray, 2015). Migrant women face several challenges, including lack of employment, difficulty accessing the financial system, and the absence of a support network. Gender-specific labor markets and expectations based on gender norms in both their origin and destination countries further complicate their experiences. Kaur has successfully raised awareness among her readers about the importance of understanding and addressing these gender-specific difficulties. Tackling these issues is critical to ensuring the safety, empowerment, and effective integration of female migrants into their new communities. Within her book *Milk & Honey*, Kaur has potentially built a new home for empowering women that she called sisterhood to her readers that engage women to feel safe and gain their support system. Kaur's vocal has a strong feminist sense within the tone of her poetry.

Gender norms established and perpetuated stereotypes, which can result in prejudicial judgments and discriminations against people who do not comply with them. Gender stereotypes can be both beneficial and harmful, although they typically suit conventional ideals of masculinity and femininity (United Way NCA, 2023). According to the feminist perspective, gender roles are not only based on appropriate behavior, but also on power dynamics in society. Women often face poverty once their marriage dissolves due to the expectation that men should be the major breadwinners in their households. Research suggests that men tend to be more ambitious and task-oriented at work, whereas women prioritized interpersonal interaction (Blackstone, 2003).

Among her chapters, Kaur very much stands boldly into the idea of radical feminism. Radical feminism contested that patriarchy (male dominance)

is at the basis of women's oppressions and that women face oppressions even in non-capitalist cultures. They argue that in order for women to be treated equally with men, patriarchy must be eradicated (Barkan, 2011). Patriarchy, derived from the Greek term *patriarkhēs*, meaning "rule of the father", refers to a social system in which men hold a disproportionately high share of social, economic, political, and religious authority, with inheritance typically passing down the male line. It does not refer to any specific individual or group of men but rather to a type of society in which both men and women participate and reinforce these dynamics (Mirza, 2013).

A patriarchal society fosters male privilege through male dominance, identification, and focus. It is organized around a fixation on control, with one of its main characteristics being the systemic oppression of women (Anyangwe & Mahtani, 2023). Through her writing, Kaur has been spreading hope and courage, encouraging women to bravely challenge patriarchal beliefs and the societal norms imposed on them. Living in a patriarchal community often leaves women feeling powerless and unable to realize their potential. This can lead women to fall into patterns of toxic traits and self-preservation. Kaur has significantly motivated women to reclaim their power and stand up for themselves by fostering a sense of genuine safety and self-empowerment.

Kaur's statement, "If I knew what safety looked like I would have spent less time falling into arms that were not" (Kaur, 2014a, p. 22) conveys that had she known what true security and safety looked like, she would have avoided seeking comfort or support from people who did not provide it. This sentence reflects regret and introspection about choices made in unhealthy and insecure relationships. Additionally, Kaur expresses her sympathy towards her female audience who are still confined within traditional gender roles, highlighting the importance of recognizing and seeking genuine security and support in their lives.

Kaur's spirit of emancipation resonates in her tone, touching women's hearts by affirming their entitlement to their own bodies and personal space. Women have long been told that their traditional gender roles are to satisfy men's needs, both biologically and socially. Kaur strongly opposes this notion, asserting that women have the full right to say yes or no, even in intimate settings. To Kaur, it is

unequivocally rape when sexual desire is performed solely to meet one party's expectations. This powerful message encourages female readers to become more independent and bolder in their life decisions, promoting a sense of autonomy and self-respect.

The feminist touch in Kaur's *Milk & Honey* also extends to discussions of family dynamics. Kaur examines the ideal relationship between daughters and fathers, highlighting the profound impact a father's presence or absence can have on a daughter's perception of future relationships with men. The absence of a father figure can lead women to misconstrue toxic behavior as expressions of love. Kaur emphasizes that a father's role goes beyond meeting financial needs; it includes providing abundant, unconditional love, and affection. She posits that a father's love is a daughter's first experience of love, shaping her expectations, and understanding of relationships.

It needs to be highlighted that the above paragraphs detailing feminism in Kaur's poetry are part of Kaur's subject power. As cited in Foucault (1982), one way of establishing power relations by the subject is through the effects of words with or without technological advancements. As Kaur writes about women's experiences in *Milk & Honey*, this includes challenging dominating patriarchal norms and discourses and empowering women to reclaim their own narratives about their bodies and identities. For example, in the poem excerpt, "i am not a hotel room i am home, i am not the whiskey you want" (Kaur, 2014a), she challenges the idea that women are merely objects to be seen and judged, and asserts that they are complex human beings with their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Foucault's theory of subject-power offers a valuable framework for understanding how Rupi Kaur uses her poetry to challenge social norms, empower women, and build community. Her poems exemplify how discourse and social practices can be leveraged to produce knowledge and power, demonstrating how individuals can use this power to instigate positive change. As a subject knowledgeable in writing poetry and engaging an audience, Kaur has successfully built her power. This is rooted in the Foucauldian idea that knowledge is intrinsically linked to power; a subject with knowledge is capable of generating power. Kaur, as a subject, has harnessed her power on the Instagram platform and further expanded it by self-publishing her first work, *Milk & Honey*.

Contestations Driving *Milk & Honey* to Become a Popular Insta-Poetry Product

Milk & Honey gained popularity through a combination of strategic decisions and innovative practices by Rupi Kaur. According to Davis, production in the context of popular literature involves examining the creation process, including the author's decisions, the cultural and historical context, and the impact of these factors on the text's final outcome.

From an interview with Kaur, it is revealed that the rejections from publishers prompted her to self-publish her first work. These rejections spurred Kaur to innovate, enhance quality, and improve efficiency. Her innovations included designing the book cover, creating illustrations for her poems, and editing the content herself. By choosing the quality of the media used, self-publishing emerged as the most time-efficient method. These efforts collectively contributed to the book's widespread appeal and success (Nawotka, 2022).

The research results indicate that Kaur's courage and determination to self-publish are closely tied to her use of backward marketing strategies. Backward marketing operates on the principle that the most effective way to market a product is to begin at the point where the process typically concludes and then work backwards. This approach allowed Kaur to strategically plan and execute her self-publishing venture, ensuring that every aspect of her book, from content to distribution, was aligned with market demands and audience expectations (Andreasen, 1985). Andreasen (1985) described backward marketing as an approach that centers on developing strategies based on a profound understanding of customer wants and needs. This process involves companies seeking to gain deep insights into their customers and then tailoring their products or services accordingly. Backward marketing places the customer at the heart of the marketing strategy, emphasizing the importance of comprehensively understanding the customer to create greater value.

Backward marketing is the opposite of conventional marketing. Ordinarily, to sell a product, one would first manufacture the product, explain its advantages, and then sell it. Backward marketing works differently. Rupi Kaur, as a writer and producer of Insta-poetry, has attempted to understand her readers' preferences before publishing a book. Kaur

used Instagram to share her writings on themes such as trauma, racism, and women's empowerment. Within a short span of time, her posts garnered thousands of likes and hundreds of comments, indicating that her readers resonated with the issues she addressed.

When several publishers rejected her work, Kaur decided not to give up. Instead, she chose to self-publish, knowing that her audience was eager for her work. This approach of gauging reader interest and feedback before committing to a final product exemplifies backward marketing. Kaur's strategic use of social media to understand and engage her audience allowed her to confidently self-publish, ultimately leading to the widespread popularity of her book.

How is a poem exactly in particular like Rupi Kaur's poem rejected by a publisher? According to Lennard (2005), poetry in free form is often in open form. This does not mean that there is no form, but rather that the form is not predetermined. Similarly, "free" verse does not imply a lack of structure; all lines have rhythm, and all poems have form. In short, free verse allows for flexibility in the poem's structure, meaning there is no specific form a poem must take.

Publishers might reject free-form poems like Kaur's due to their unconventional structures and brevity, which can be perceived as lacking the traditional attributes of poetry. Such poems may challenge the established norms and expectations of what poetry should be, making them a less attractive prospect for publishers seeking more conventional literary works.

However, judging from poetry books published in previous years, nearly all poems adhere to similar forms in terms of the number of stanzas. For example, the poetry collection *El Dorado* by Peter Campion averages 4-6 lines per stanza (Campion, 2013). Each title poem spans up to two pages, similar to the poetry collection *Song & Error* by Averill Curdy, where each title also extends to two pages with more than six stanzas (Curdy, 2014). In contrast, Kaur's poems often consist of just a few lines, sometimes no more than a phrase. For instance, in the section titled "the loving", she wrote:

every revolution
starts and ends
with his lips

(Kaur, 2014: 49)

Another example in “the healing” part is:

do not look for healing
at the feet of those
who broke you

(Kaur, 2014: 158)

After reading and tracing some of the poems published in the same years as Kaur, the researcher came to the conclusion that Kaur's work was rejected because it had not followed the typical poetic form. The poems written by Kaur are closer to being considered as quotes than poems. Besides, her poetry broke the conventional rules of traditional poetry, regarding grammar and punctuation. Kaur's free-form poetry used lowercase letters. However, the inclusive and straightforward style effectively bridged her personal experiences with her readers (Singh, 2023).

The rejection had no negative effect on Kaur. She did not abandon her work and instead viewed the rejection as serendipity. This is where Kaur's contestation becomes evident. Additionally, the language used in Kaur's poems differed significantly from most traditional poems. Taking matters into her own hands, she decided to self-publish. Kaur self-funded the printing of the book and initially sold copies from the trunk of her car. In November 2014, she launched an online store and began shipping orders worldwide. Her hard work and dedication paid off, as *Milk & Honey* quickly became a bestseller.

In relation to the previous opinion in this paper, the writings produced by Kaur not only depicted her experiences and her family but also followed the tastes of her followers on Instagram. Indirectly, from the concept of subject and power of Foucault (1982), Kaur, as a subject, has a form of power that subjugates her followers on Instagram to favoring her writings and enables Kaur to produce writings from Instagram into books.

In accordance with Walker (2017), although the issues raised in *Milk & Honey* are difficult, such as trauma and violence, Kaur finds her own way to convey these issues (Walker, 2017). Kaur wrote the issues in short, simplistic verse with her own illustrations that acted as visual punctuation. “People are not used to poetry being so easy and simple,” she says. This simplicity is key to Kaur's connection with millions of young people around the world. Her poetry is straightforward and accessible, without heavy

analysis. In this way, Kaur is akin to a rapper, simply expressing her thoughts and feelings as they come.

Through her Insta-poetry, Kaur found her readership on Instagram. With millions of followers, her readers are drawn to issues related to women, expressed in a very simple language style. Kaur's target audience, predominantly women (based on an analysis of Instagram comments), has been established. These achievements and strengths provided Kaur with the foundation she needed to successfully publicize her works.

In 2014, Kaur hand-delivered her work to several publishers, who ultimately rejected it on the grounds that her poems were too short and simplistic. Additionally, the language used in Kaur's poems deviated from traditional poetic norms. In response to these rejections, Kaur took the initiative to self-publish her work. She personally funded the printing of her book and initially sold copies from the trunk of her car. Subsequently, she launched an online store and began shipping orders worldwide in November 2014. Her strategic efforts and dedication resulted in *Milk & Honey* rapidly becoming a bestseller.

Kaur utilizes social media, particularly Instagram, to reach a global audience and disseminate her poetry. This platform enables her to instantly distribute her work to readers, allowing her to maintain control over how her poetry is interpreted and consumed. Rupi Kaur's use of social media exemplifies Foucault's theory of subject-power in contemporary contexts. She leverages these platforms to challenge social norms, empower women, and generate new knowledge. Her poems and the online communities she cultivates have a significant impact on culture and society, demonstrating the power of words and social media to drive change.

CONCLUSION

Insta-poetry, as a contemporary form of poetry, gained popularity through several factors, including its relatability to female readership, the use of social media, and the power of the poet as a subject. Rupi Kaur's writing style in *Milk & Honey* is particularly effective in touching the hearts of readers and creating a sense of relatability. This is due to the themes her poetry addresses, such as love, heartbreak, personal growth, and women's empowerment. Kaur has a unique ability to connect with people, especially

women, through her poems, which reflect experiences that resonate deeply with many readers.

Rupi Kaur actively engages with the social media platform Instagram to share her poetry, often accompanied by simple illustrations that create a distinctive visual appeal. This approach has significantly expanded her audience reach. Consequently, despite facing rejections from traditional publishers, she successfully self-published her work, leveraging the power she cultivated on social media. From the perspective of Foucault's (1982) concept of subject and power, Kaur exemplifies how a subject can wield power to influence and mobilize followers. Kaur's influence on Instagram enabled her to transition her writings from the digital platform into the self-published book *Milk & Honey*.

As a result of Kaur's power as a subject, the popularity of Insta-poetry, particularly her work, created innovative marketing methods. From a production analysis perspective, Kaur's writing process began on the Instagram platform and culminated in the publication of a poetry book. This approach, known as backward research marketing, involved Kaur researching the themes her followers wanted to see and like. Once she understood her followers' preferences, particularly their interest in women's experiences, Kaur decided to publish her works. This method of production had a significant impact, leading to her first self-published book, *Milk & Honey*, becoming a bestseller and selling millions of copies.

COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

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