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The media ecologies of Norwegian instapoet Trygve Skaug: tracing the post-digital circulation process of (insta)poetry through participatory-made Instagram archives

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ABSTRACT

The name instapoetry – or Instagram poetry – suggests a specific attachment of poetry to Instagram. But how bound is instapoetry to Instagram? This article uncovers the relationship between instapoetry and Instagram by analysing the participatory-made exhibits of Norwegian instapoet Trygve Skaug. By investigating the various media instantiations of Skaug’s poetry, the article discusses *how* instapoetry is platform-dependent and shows how the poetry binds to many different contexts and materialities by existing in multiple media ecologies. Based on this, the paper introduces the post-digital circulation process of poetry as constituting instapoetry’s medial constitution. This process focuses on the emergence of “new media”-cultural approaches to poetry as a post-digital, but still platformed, state of cultural production, interlocking with “old media” ways, as well as creating a setting for the dominance of a platformed lyric poetry.


KEYWORDS

Instapoetry; media ecologies; post-digital; poetry circulation; Trygve Skaug

Introduction

As an instapoet, Norwegian poet and singer-songwriter Trygve Skaug works as a content creator in the Social Media Entertainment ecosystem (SME). SME is a new ecosystem operating interdependently and disruptively alongside the older established media industries (Cunningham and Craig 2019). This means that the widespread use of platforms is reconfiguring cultural production and distribution. In this way, we can talk about the platformization of cultural production (Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy 2021). However, what exactly is the reach of this platformization on poetry? In other words, is instapoetry *just* Instagram poetry?

While contemporary research has done a lot of essential and, at times, ground-breaking work focused on the specificities of the new native-to-online

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actors in this ecosystem (i.e. influencers and content creators) (Duffy and Sawey 2021; Scolari, Fraticelli, and Tomasena 2021; Glatt and Banet-Weiser 2021; Arriagada 2021; Cunningham and Craig 2021; Duffy 2017; Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy 2021; Abidin 2017, 2016), there is still much to be done on the overlaps, interlockings, and interactions between different ecosystems and media ecologies. These interconnections can be explored by probing the material instances of a phenomenon through traces of it found in the content shared on social media platforms, as social media acts as both presentational media but also logistical and distributional media for different types of content.

In this article, I will therefore argue for re-thinking instapoetry as *just* “platform literature” or as just platform-*dependent* literature, at times referred to as “third-generation electronic literature” (Flores 2019), and will instead place instapoetry as a phenomenon into a state of the post-digital (Cramer 2015). Based on this, the article will discuss the importance of what will be coined as *the post-digital circulation process of poetry*, which I identify as constitutive of the cultural production of instapoetry.

This will be done using the exhibitional approach (Hogan 2010) to examine the participatory-created exhibitions that result from the logistical media part of Instagram meeting user practices, thus making it a socio-technically produced exhibition site. These exhibitions are collections of posts made by 1) users tagging Skaug’s Instagram account and 2) users using his name as a hashtag (#trygveskaug).

Skaug is by far the most recognised and well-known instapoet in Norway. In addition, he is also a famous singer-songwriter, placing him in the lyric poetry tradition of poetry, recognisable in the poetry he also publishes. He gained recognition as an instapoet in Norway in 2012, in the early phase of the instapoetry phenomenon. He shared – and continues to share – his poetry by posting them as Instagram image posts. On his official website, he has his own store, where you can buy concrete physical artefacts of his poetry, such as poetry collections, posters, postcards, tote bags, and coffee mugs. There is, therefore, a compelling argument to be made about the materiality and distribution of instapoetry by using Skaug as an example.

Through applying a media-sensitive exhibitional approach, the article will demonstrate how the poetry binds in various ways to many different contexts and materialities, all of which are also showcased on Instagram as image posts. This contributes to the continuous circulation of Skaug’s poetry on the platform. In short, how interlockings of “old” and “new” media affect the circulation of poetry and poetry itself.

This research is therefore inspired by the words of literature researcher Mike Chasar, who in *Poetry Unbound* encourages researching poetry by immersing ourselves “in poetry’s various media instantiations in order to understand its

range of possible meanings and effects” (Chasar 2020, 11). Understanding these media instantiations makes it possible to better understand the functions of instapoetry.

Theoretical background

Media ecologies

Ecologies can be seen as “dynamic systems in which any one part is always multiply connected, acting by virtue of these connections” (Fuller 2005, 5). A media ecology comprises the processes, agents, and materials relevant to the artefact’s production, distribution, and consumption. As such, it is possible to speak of the Instagram ecology while also speaking of Instagram being part of broader media ecology (Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin 2020, 81). While this article is not a study of media ecologies directly, it does engage with them by tracing the artefacts, thereby showing how the poetry exists – and is realised – in different media ecologies and how these ecologies interact with the Instagram ecology and create the ecosystem of instapoetry. This type of work has previously been done by media ecologist Fuller (2005) and, more recently, by media and literature researcher Solveig Daugaard in her thesis on the media ecologies of Gertrude Stein (Daugaard 2018).

Similarly, in *Poetry Unbound* (2020), Chasar argues for the importance of studying what poetry binds to. A cultural artefact is bound when it is inscribed onto material-discursive media technologies and becomes part of the connected media infrastructures, such as the codex as a technology¹ and the infrastructures of the book industry. Or Instagram as a social media platform and the infrastructure of the SME. Approaching this media ecologically means also accounting for the interlockings of these specific media infrastructures, and their connections with other media infrastructures. These types of connections also contribute to creating a greater potential for poetry as transmedial.

Poetry and social media

An artefact does not necessarily only exist in one media ecology; the more easily it can work as a transmedial object and the fewer infrastructural constraints, the more unbound it is. This intensified following the digital turn of cultural production, as people now seek to circulate work on networks, and show an active preference for the circulation of works (Edmond 2019, 238). Jacob Edmond ties this to the change of artistic value, changing from production to use and exchange value, a shift that is also intensified by social media (Edmond 2019, 157). According to Manning and Soelseth, this type of preference of circulation is also found in the practice of instapoets, who actively disseminate poetry on Instagram to make their work accessible to a potential large public audience, as

well as encourage further circulation and versionalization by readers (Soelseth 2022; Manning 2020, 264).

As Edmond writes in *Make it the Same – Poetry in the Age of Global Media*: “literature increasingly circulates in multiple versions online, in print, as an audio or audiovisual file, and as a text. It may equally reappear edited and transformed in different works across various media” (Edmond 2019, 4).² However, this is not necessarily new. Chasar identifies past periods of circulations of multiple versions of poems, showing how these periods resemble the state of poetry meeting social media today. Certain periods and medial constitutions encourage poetry as a multimedia-friendly genre (Chasar 2020),³ while other periods stabilise particular bindings and make certain media ecosystems hegemonic and dominant or make them operate with little overlapping or interlocking with others. Looking back at earlier time periods, Chasar uses Edna St. Vincent Millay’s poem *The Murder of Lidice* from 1942 as an example of a poem which used radio broadcasting as distributional media, but which was also designed for further transmedial distribution (Chasar 2020).

Edmond makes the same type of argument on the unbinding of poetry in our times, noting how the possibilities of social media have brought widespread emphasis and awareness of poetry as multimedial (Edmond 2019, 5). This also merges with an idea of the primacy of the single poem, which is considered the artefact of focus in instapoetry, defined by poetry scholar Lotman (2021).⁴ However, this is also a focus that has always been present in the circulation and use of poetry *off the page* (van der Starre 2021), such as in street poetry and slam poetry.

What is *new*, however, is the relation of poetry to the digital in the time of social media. A state which can be called the post-digital. As such, it is possible to describe instapoetry as a mutation of poetry, and the result of a mutation of new power structures, to paraphrase Florian Cramer in his disentanglement of the concept of the post-digital (Cramer 2015, 13). Post-digital refers to “a state in which the disruption brought upon by digital information technology has already occurred.” In this state, there is a hybridisation of “old” and “new” media (Cramer 2015, 18).⁵ The term *post-digital* can therefore be used to describe “new media”-cultural approaches (platformed practices on social media) to working with so-called “old media” (i.e. poetry itself, but also, at a different scale, material media like tattoos and coffee mugs).

Platformed practices

In the article *When is a Poet an Instapoet?* (2022), I identify the typical practices of instapoets as agents in the Instagram ecology. Through looking at the practices of poets as creators in the SME, I argue that a defining practice of the new social media poets is the practice of publishing poems *freely* for circulation into the everyday rhythm of people’s lives through the most everyday medium of them all: social media.

Secondly, another defining practice is making use of the infrastructure of Instagram, where users participate in the sharing and circulation, as well as versionalizing and adapting the poems for further distribution (Soelseth 2022). This means that there are not just copies of a single work put into motion, but instead, as Edmond notes; “the work of copying, repetition, and translation, in which the consumer becomes a producer” (Edmond 2019, 6), in line with a wider shift in the prosumer economy, where author is defined by consumption (Edmond 2019, 159). It is through this participatory work, made possible and intensified by the connectivity of Instagram, the poet is recognised as a poet, and can also turn platformed labour into monetising of the audience through different types of commodities.

Here, we have a case of poetry inscribing itself onto Instagram and its infrastructure, and at the same time being so easily transmedial due to its digital make-up and shaped by the participatory culture enabled and strengthened by the networked structure of the web (Jenkins 2006). The participatory distribution and authentication of instapoetry are identified to be constitutive to the success of poets in the SME (Soelseth 2022).

Poetry in repetitive motion

As stated, Edmond focuses not only on the preference for circulation but also on a turn to repetition in *Make it the Same*. However, such a focus on repetition merging with the mode of distribution influences content and form as well – not only in poetry being made to be transmedial, but also in the components of the poetry itself. Therefore, following the definition of lyric poetry laid out by Culler in *Theory of the Lyric* we are dealing with a mutated lyric poetry. Lyric poetry as a genre is short, nonnarrative poetry constructed for repetition (Culler 2017, 123), it is “memorable writing to be received, reactivated, and repeated by readers”(Culler 2017, 37), and “texts composed for reperformance” (Culler 2017, 37), meaning that the reader also occupies the position of speaker, at least temporarily (Culler 2017, 37).

While ritualistic aspects of lyric poetry make them “stick in memory, where they come to play a role in thought and action, enlarging imaginative resources” (Culler 2017, 305), they also need to realise (further) repetition. This depends upon the lyric (re)performance, making itself memorable but also circulated. For instapoetry it is a post-digital platformized context these reperformances take place in which gives them their particular medial constitution.

While the lyric poetry traditionally emphasises the aural dimension applied in the formal qualities for these effects (Culler 2017, 35), in the secondary literacy era⁶ of networked social media, the oral temporality of the visual-textual modes of communication opens the way for emphasising another dimension. Here, an

utterance is an image post. Repetition needs to align with the visual as well as the shareable (perhaps what in social media lingo might call “hashtag relatable”), which can be called modes of repetition in the culture of connectivity and logics of social media.

Doesn't this then make sharing, adapting, copying, remediating, and versionalizing just different ways of repeating the poem in an online connected world? This means that it might be constructed for repetition, but the Instagram inscription of these poems are particular because the repetitions are realised in the participatory distribution and circulation of the poems on social media and the web in general. Transmediality as well as formal qualities affording shared experiences and connectivity (i.e. the use of “I” and “You,” and “We”) are ways of composing for a platformed repetition. And while analysing the components of the successful instapoetry to account for such formal qualities is also of interest, it will not be of focus further on in this article.

The article will now briefly address the methodology before analysing and discussing the content of exhibits and how they show “new media”-cultural approaches to poetry and the post-digital – but still platformed – state of cultural production.

Methodology

Process of collection and analysis technique

The choice of a case study of Trygve Skaug is based on wanting to focus on what a successful instapoet and high-visibility Instagram user can tell us. Successful users can tell us something about the social media logic of what is emphasised or not (Omena, Rabello, and Mintz 2020, 4), which means that looking at Trygve Skaug critically means that we can see “what works” on Instagram when it comes to instapoetry.

To do this, the tagged archive of Trygve Skaug and the hashtag of his name are treated as two participatory-created exhibition sites. An exhibition site is “defined as a site (typically online) where people submit reproducible artifacts” (Hogan 2010, 381). This is a way to take advantage of how social media logistically employs exhibitions in the form of collections of photos (Hogan 2010). Here, the tags serve as indexes or bookmarks, organising and sorting posts (Rambukkana 2015, 2; Bruns and Burgess 2015, 15; Jungselius, Hillman, and Weilenmann 2014; Giannoulakis and Tsapatsoulis 2016). This approach has been successful when analysing the online presentation of the self on social media (Hogan 2010). In the context of instapoetry, it has been used to analyse the practices of instapoets as content creators (Soelseth 2022).

Where this study differs is in the change of focus from persons to artefacts. This is possible because the artefacts are directly connected to the poet because of the practice of “citing” the original author by other users. Citing, in this case, is

done by tagging the author's account or using a hashtag containing the author's name.

The reason for including the exhibit of #trygveskaug is related to the relevance of hashtags on Instagram as a constitutive element. Social media scholars Highfield and Leaver advocate for studying practices on Instagram through hashtags (Highfield and Leaver 2015).

Further on, for the sake of analysis, the corpora had to be qualitatively manageable, and only posts from the last four years (at the time of writing) were included in the analysis. The posts then went through an initial coding and sorting by type of post, where all posts which just depicted Skaug or in some other way did not contain poetry by him were excluded.⁷

Ethical considerations

Instagram posts featured in this article are public posts belonging to public accounts. Taking posts from ordinary users and placing them in new contexts (such as a research study), without consent, should be handled with care. In this study, while many posts are mentioned and described, only posts from accounts belonging to obvious professional profiles and businesses are depicted through screenshots.

The material instances of instapoetry

What do the archive of #trygveskaug and his own tagged archive as exhibits reveal? In the following sections, the exhibitions are analysed to say something about the material instances of instapoetry and, more specifically, in what way instapoetry is bound to Instagram.

Multiple material surfaces of inscription

While Trygve Skaug is most known for sharing his poetry on Instagram, he also commodifies his poetry by inscribing the poetic text onto various commodified artefacts. These are bought by his readers, who take photos of these artefacts and share them on Instagram, thus creating a *re-inscription* of depictions of these on Instagram (Figure 1). In the exhibits, ordinary users post images of his posters as they hang them on their walls, and they post photos of his poetry collections, proudly acknowledging they own them.

While the poem posters, postcards, and poetry collections can be bought from his official website, they are sold alongside other collaboration pieces, including clothing items and coffee cups. However, there are also further collaborations depicted in the exhibitions, in which businesses advertise that they are selling them, and ordinary users share that they own them.

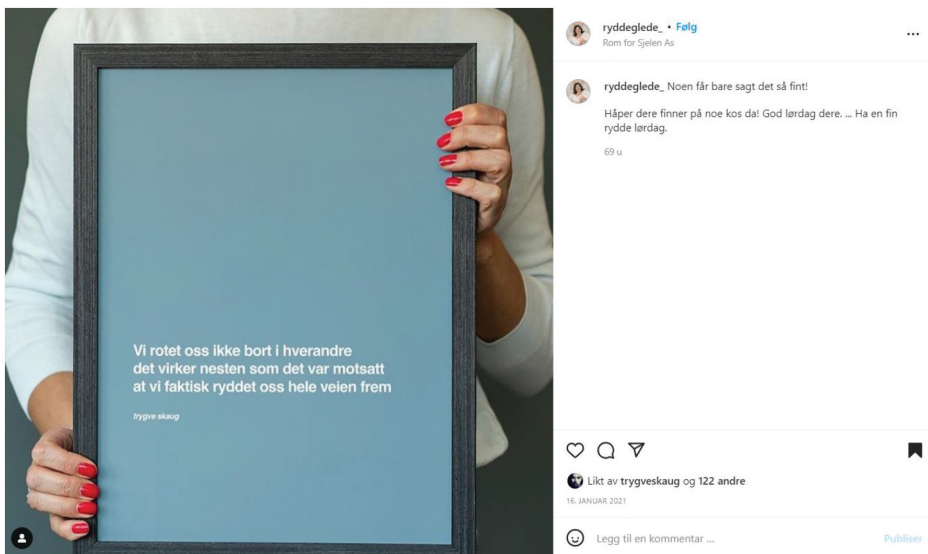


Figure 1. A post by an influencer showing one of the poetry posters.

Collaborations off and on Instagram

Drinkable poetry

The most depicted and shared poetry artefact, by both ordinary users and professional accounts, is coffee mugs with poems inscribed (Figure 2). These mugs are a collaboration with a Scandinavian interior company *Søgne Home*. They are sold from his official webpage and by multiple other businesses that



Figure 2. Mugs with poems, as presented by an online store.

advertise on Instagram. Both exhibits show multiple instances of his coffee mug being placed in different work and leisure settings. This way, poems are placed in everyday life, part of everyday rituals.

Wearable poetry

Mittens. Another group of photos found in the exhibition depicts mittens with a specific knitted pattern. The pattern contains the name of one of his poetry collections, which is also a citation from an opening line in a poem. While the title is not inherently poetic or a complete poem, I have included it because it refers to the poem and poetry collection. As such, it works more like a representation of a poem (or poetry collection) that can be recalled by the wearer, lending poetic attention to the words and meaning and giving the phrase a poetic function on its own. Various accounts show photos of the mittens either being worn or in the process of being knitted.

The knitting pattern can be bought from the knitting store *Threads of Wonder* (@threadsof wonder), which also shares photos of these mittens (Figure 3). According to the captions, the pattern has been made in collaboration with Skaug, and part of the earnings go to the *Star of Hope*, a non-governmental aid organisation for children worldwide.

T-shirts and tote bags. A collection of photos shows clothing items and tote bags with selected poems. This is a collaboration with Fair & Square, a clothing production company centred on ethically made materials. Among the photos are also the company itself showing how the t-shirts are made. Posts from ordinary users show people wearing these items, wearing poetry. In this way,



Figure 3. Mitten and knitting pattern, in collaboration with Trygve Skaug.



Figure 4. The official profile of one of the owners of Faire & Square, showing off one of the poetry t-shirts.

they share the poetry with the world as they go about their daily life, much the same way they post it on Instagram.

Spa time

A different collaboration concerns a specifically developed spa relaxation ritual with the Norwegian spa *Son Spa*, where a specific poem by Skaug is featured in

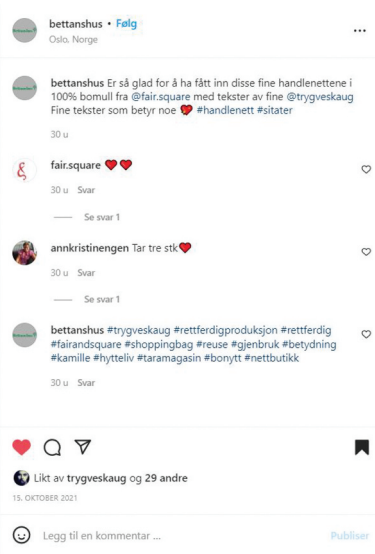


Figure 5. A store advertising the poetry tote bags.

the physical room where the ritual takes place. This spa ritual can be found advertised by the spa itself, but there are also photos by visitors depicting, among other things, the poem featured on the wall in the spa area.

Poetry art in urban and rural Norway

A few posts show his poems inscribed on walls of buildings in Oslo City Center, as seen below. In this particular post, his publishing company is asking if people have seen these poems in Oslo city centre (blue hexagon in the photo in [Figure 6](#)) while also in the caption writing: "Yes to more literature in the urban environment!."

Other photographs show a square wooden box with a glass plate in the middle featuring a poem. In one post, the photograph shows the box on a mountaintop ([Figure 7](#)); in another photograph, taken a few days later, it is suddenly in a city. A couple of days later, in yet another new location. Always on the move, circulating. The box also has the hashtag #verdensfinestepublikum [The World's Greatest Audience] on it, referring to what he calls his fans when he does concerts as a singer-songwriter. These boxes often appear in proximity (time and place) to where he is holding a concert. These boxes intertwine his poetry with his music or (written) lyrics with (song) lyrics. A user captions a photo of this box with (paraphrased in English): "when you suddenly stumble upon art, and it hits you right in the heart."

Further posts from 2018 also show photos from his poetry exhibition *Hjemmekamp*, where poems were put on exhibit the same way and in the



Figure 6. Photo of one of three poems found on buildings in Bispevika, Oslo.



Figure 7. The so-called poetry box, found on top of a famous hill outside of Bergen, Norway.

same space art is: galleries. As with art, visitors take photos of the poems hung on the walls and post them onto Instagram, where they originally appeared as posts by Skaug.

Lastly, there is also a range of collaborations with non-profit organisations where he contributes with poetry in various ways, from non-profit organisations using his poetry as part of their campaigns to Skaug being featured in commercial videos doing poetry readings.

Participatory versionalizing, remediations, and adaptations

The previous examples are all collaborations other professional actors have had with Skaug. However, as already briefly mentioned, in the study of the practices of instapoets, the participatory distribution by the audience – which also involves adaptations, versionalizing, editing, and reposting – is a central practice that the poets also acknowledge and encourage (Soelseth 2022). As such, we are seeing a participatory practice of what Edmond refers to as the poetic practice of the copy (Edmond 2019).

Users posts copies of Skaug's original Instagram posts or photos of poems from the poetry collections. Users usually add captions and hashtags for these posts, leaving the visual and textual presentation the same. Here, they are not doing more than sharing and spreading the poetry, or in other words, *repeating*. However, these posts exist alongside a plethora of different versionalizations,

depictions of remediations, and adaptations, hereby extending beyond just digitally created renditions. In other words, they become *reperformances*, or iterations, which are more than mere repetitions.

Photos in the exhibits depict poems as part of assemblages of concrete physical materials, handmade, with notes in the captions that often say that they are gifts from one person to another. This alludes to a social function this poetry also seems to have. Not only is the poetry shared by being reposted and shared through direct messages and in instastories on social media, but it is also shared with others in a much more personal way, versionalized and personalised.

Further examples of artefacts depicted on Instagram are photos showing pages from people's art journals or visual compositions, with the poem's text included, hung up as posters on walls. Some of these adaptations also work with the text itself, changing it from one written language to another (from the Norwegian *Bokmål* Skaug uses to the Norwegian *Nynorsk*) or translating it to another language. [Figure 8](#) shows a post where the poem's text has become part of an illustration and where the line breaks of the original poem have been altered, as well as written in *Nynorsk*. Is this a new multimodal version or a poem making up part of a more extensive visual work of art?

Using their official Instagram accounts, various artists also share either the poetry set to different types of illustrations, photos with paintings inspired by a poem, or a poem being part of their artwork ([Figure 9](#)). An illustrator behind the account [@detfolktenker](#) has illustrated a poem ([Figure 10](#)), an illustration that



Figure 8. An illustration featuring a poem, auctioned off by the illustrator. All earnings went to an aid project in Malawi.



Figure 11. Åsnes Library with a visual presentation of one of Skaug's poems.

Åsnes Library in Norway, setting the words of Trygve to different images, combining textual and visual components (Figure 11).

Adding visual components alongside the poem text is also found in craft-oriented accounts. One depicts a quilt inspired by a poem. Another, a paper cutter artist has created an adaption of a poem. The captions reveal the reason for doing so and what the poem means to the paper cutter personally (Figure 12).

A popular type of remediation is poems as cross-stitches, depicted either hung on walls or in the process of being made. They either contain the textual poem or visual components are added. One specific account even sells these cross-stitches (Figure 13).

Poetry curation accounts also post their versions. @kaffesitatet is an account dedicated to posting images of poems written on post-it notes and placed on a coffee pot (Figure 14). This curator works on and off Instagram and is an example of the dual distribution of something made for Instagram *and* the workplace lunchroom as a concrete physical space.

Similarly, poems are depicted written on different surfaces by different institutions, such as on the pavement in front of a bookstore or on a whiteboard in a hospital in Norway. A photo also shows a poem written on a COVID facemask. The poems are written down on everyday items in use, thus making the poetry, as poetic resources, part of everyday, with this also functioning on a meta-level, the social medium in itself being part of everyday (Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin 2020).



Figure 12. Paper cut piece featuring a poem by Trygve Skaug.

Tattoos

An example of poetry as part of every day is taken to the extreme in the collection of photos showing tattoos of different poems on the bodies of various people. Some tattoos show his poems as words “written” onto the



Figure 13. Cross-stitches for sale by Swedish account @backispysssel.

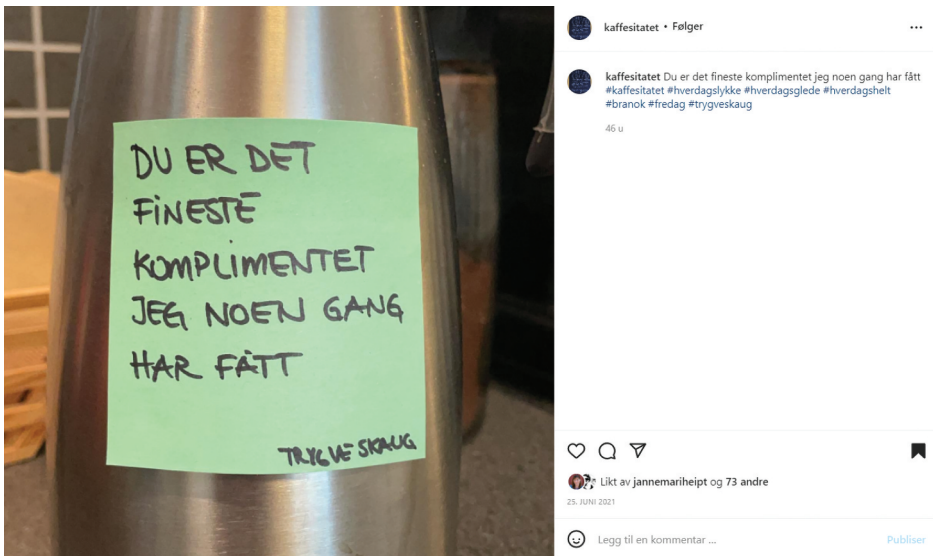


Figure 14. A post by the poetry curator profile @kaffesitatet.

skin. Other photos show tattoos inspired by poems, with more visual components added and making up the complete visual expression (Figure 15).



Figure 15. From the official account of a tattoo artist, showing a tattoo of a poem, but also adapted to the written language of Nynorsk.

Distribution on and through Instagram: the post-digital circulation process

Transmedial poetry

As these exhibitions and examples all show, the poetry of Trygve Skaug is highly transmedial. As such, we need to re-evaluate what we mean by instapoetry being platform-dependent literature. By investigating the various media instantiations of Skaug's poetry, it is possible to discuss *how* it is platform-dependent and how it binds to many different contexts and materialities as part of multiple media ecologies.

His poems initially have language as the main medial component, but, at other times, this component is part of a larger assemblage of different components that make up a multimedial poetic adaption. The poetry's inscription onto material instances is realised through his poetry commodities and collaborations, but most importantly, in the participatory *repetitions* and *reperformances*: repetitions and reperformances encouraged by Skaug through liking, commenting, and sharing. As Instagram posts, the poem artefacts can be either depictions of concrete physical artefacts or digital ones.

The post-digital circulation process

The form repetition takes is through copying, versionalizing, and adaption, but not only digital Instagram posts. This means that through repetition, poetry exists in multiple media ecologies and ecosystems for cultural production. However, these all interact with the Instagram ecology through how these artefacts are depicted and showcased back onto Instagram again as tagged user-generated content, thus becoming part of the Trygve Skaug exhibitions. This can be recognised as the activation of participatory culture by the networked structure of social media.

The post-digital circulation process for poetry can therefore be said to be platformed, starting with initial free distribution on Instagram, but, more importantly, followed by the primary circulation of iterations and a secondary distribution through commodities. This is, in turn, followed by users' secondary circulation of photos of these commodities. Last, a third circulation process of the physical commodities as they exist outside of Instagram connects the poems to other ecosystems of cultural production. Ranging from commercials to clothing, tattoos, and art installations.

The secondary and tertiary circulation

Through secondary circulation, it is possible to identify the interactions with other media ecologies as the artefacts circulate in the other ecosystems. The secondary circulation is also a result of the interlocking of one ecosystem with the SME and the Instagram ecology. The distribution of physical poetry

commodities like coffee mugs, cross-stitches, and tattoos also initiates a third form of circulation outside of Instagram. Here, circulation does not necessarily mean the physical movement of artefacts themselves. At the same time, while many can be said to *actually* circulate physically, like the travelling poetry box, the circulation of, for instance, the inscription on the buildings in Oslo city centre must instead be seen as placed in environments where humans circulate. So, by proxy of humans “circulating,” these poems are either stumbled upon or explicitly looked up because of stumbling upon depictions of them on Instagram. Likewise, for t-shirts and tattoos, humans become the vessel for circulation by wearing poetry.

Secondary distribution and achieving success

The secondary distribution through poetry commodities is also a sign of success and *increases* success, working reciprocally, or as a feedback loop (Soelseth 2022). What is distributed for free digitally are successfully commodified as non-digital material objects. This is made possible by the participatory distribution and participatory authentication of the poet (Soelseth 2022), characteristics of a prosumer economy. This is not only through copy and reperformance, but also through depictions of different material inscriptions, like the coffee mugs, the spa wall, and the posters. In the case of Skaug, his extensive collaborations with other vital actors in other ecosystems, as well as his bridging of written poetry with song, work in combination with ordinary users’ poetry content and creations to achieve success both on and off Instagram.

Primary circulation as participatory circulation

The many repetitions and reperformances by users in the exhibits strengthen Edmond’s argument about the life of poetry on new media regarding the extent to which multiple versions circulate online, repeated, copied, and edited as well as the dominance of the mode of copy (Edmond 2019). But it can also be broadened to include how poems simultaneously exist in many material forms. This aligns with Chasar’s point about poetry sometimes being a multi-media-friendly genre, an aspect intensified when given the right conditions (Chasar 2020). The poems of Skaug are unbound, and by being unbound, they are also constantly binding to multiple material codes, both digital and not digital.⁸

The visual and typographical expression of Skaug’s original published poems, such as font, colour, or relation to empty space in the image, does not remain unchanged when repeated. Instead, the distributed versions change everything from the written language to the typographical format (i.e. line breaks) and add multimodal elements. This change can be seen as reperformances where the new sender is occupying the speaker’s position, along with Skaug. This is

especially relevant when looking at those adaptations which in the caption are said to be gifts, from, for instance, daughter to mother. The speaker in the poem is speaking to someone, and through creating adaptations of the poem, the speaker in and of the poem becomes not only Skaug but also the (re)performer. Here, the conditions for repetition strengthen the lyric aspect of the “You” and the “I” as qualities which realise repetition.

Likewise, spending time making the inscription of the poem onto a new media instantiation, like a cross-stitch or a paper cutting, means infusing yourself into the poem to occupy the speaker’s place. Publishing the result as a post from your account on Instagram becomes a way to occupy that space. But it can also be iterations where a specific context is highlighted, like in the post by Åsnes library, which juxtaposes the poem with a photograph.

Some versions have also become more popular than others, rising to the role of being one of the authoritative versions, recognised by both other users and Skaug himself. The illustrated poem by @detfolktenker is such an example. Likewise, depictions of the various artefacts show that some media instantiations are more popular than others. Some poems seem to fit better with particular materialities. For Skaug’s poems, it is mainly the mugs and the cross-stitches. This could indicate that, in some ways, his poems are the most successful as everyday objects, thus channelling a sort of poetics for the everyday. In our contemporary lives, social media is our everyday as well, so emigrating from one everyday material (Instagram post) to another does not necessarily come as a surprise.

The platformed distribution

The digital (primary and secondary) circulation on Instagram is largely due to the socio-technological construction of the platform and the components of the Instagram media ecology. However, it is contingent on the primary distribution. This is a specific element at play related to a change in poetry production. The poet himself publishes the poetry freely for distribution as something easily copied and changeable, acknowledges and encourages the repetitions and reperformances, and allows others to use his poetry as part of new creations. It could seem like the lyric poem has, in many ways, found its way into a more similar life cycle as the song lyric or the ballads of old, which existed in multiple versions at the same time, with co-authors responsible for smaller or bigger changes.

Moreover, it is through these processes that it is possible to define the platform dependency of the post-digital circulation process of poetry. Instapoetry becomes platform dependent in primary distribution and through primary and secondary circulation. These processes utilise networked social media’s affordances and user-generated content’s participatory culture.

The platform dependency of instapoetry, seen through the example of Trygve Skaug, is influenced by him being a highly successful poet. One could argue that even being somewhat known as a singer-songwriter gave him even easier access to multiple media ecologies in the first place. However, this is not necessarily non-representative of other, more struggling poets, as it instead shows the more fully realised possibilities potent in instapoetry as a specific practice of poetry production, as well as possibly a new type of poetry arising out of the genre of lyric poetry. It is also documented that lesser known instapoets engage in similar practices as well, encouraging repetitions and reperformances, and selling the poetry bound to different material instances (Soelseth 2022). Tattoos and coffee mugs are by no means extraordinary in the media ecology of instapoetry. However, it also shows this process's reciprocal relationship to a poet's success. Circulation leads to authentication, leads to commodification, leads to collaborations, leads to greater circulation, creating a rippling effect.

Further, looking critically at the post-digital circulation process for poetry also means accounting for the commercialisation of cultural expressions and paradigms for artists and artistic production. Does poetry exist in conditions where it can live as a multimedia-friendly genre, or is it a commodification mainly driven by commercial values? It begs us to ask whether it is possible to achieve popular circulation without adhering to the capitalistic circuits of the platformed market today. The transmediality of instapoetry could therefore be argued to be just simple branding. Agreeing with this leads Kathi Behrens, for instance, to write that: "The best-known Instapoetry is shot through with commercial values in the content and the data-hoarding platform itself" (Behrens 2020).

It is also possible to look at it differently, instead focusing more on this as a result of a growing wish to be circulated (Cramer 2015).⁹ As such, Instagram, as a dominant social medium for the circulation of information and content, becomes, in the words of Florian Cramer, "the perfect example of a post-digital choice: using the technology most suited for the job" (Cramer 2015, 21). This way, it makes sense for a poet to encourage reposting and versionizing on Instagram.

Moreover, further commodification becomes necessary because the poems, as initially distributed and circulated, are free for all. The poet still needs to be able to earn money in one way or another. Instapoetry is thus at a crossroads of the capitalistic system and the wish for circulation and use exchange value (Edmond 2019, 157).

Conclusion

The post-digital circulation process shows the hybridisation of "old" and "new" media after the internet changes the rules of production and distribution (Cramer 2015, 21). It shows cross-stitches and digital illustrated poetry versions.

It shows art exhibitions of poetry, and it shows Instagram posts of poems exhibited in these art exhibitions. It shows digital commercials by non-profit organisations, and it shows libraries disseminating poetry on Instagram. Platforms have become networked centres protruding into multiple nooks and corners of cultural production and circulation.

The post-digital circulation process is further defined by different circulatory practices feeding into each other at various stages, creating feedback loops. The secondary circulation concerns, for instance, the fact that physical material instances of the poems are photographed, published, tagged, and find themselves in the exhibitions of the poet on Instagram. As well as liked and shared, which are interactions creating ripple effects.

The poetry of Skaug is inscribed onto various media instantiations, constantly repeated on Instagram. The various media instantiations are of different materialities and exist in different media ecologies. This problematises how much instapoetry can be defined as a genre or specific type of poetry connected to a specific medium. While it is poetry *on* Instagram, it is on Instagram for distributional purposes, with “new media” like social media platforms becoming a central part of the circulation process of poetry. However, more importantly, the artefacts’ unboundedness characterises the post-digital circulation process – a process welcoming the existence of multiple versions and multimodality.

This means that while instapoetry often starts with being posted on Instagram and where its crucial aspect is free-to-be-read-and-shared (Soelseth 2022), it travels beyond the social medium, binding with different materialities and contexts, thus transgressing the boundaries of the social medium on which it originated. Its ties to the (digital) materiality of the Instagram post are, at best, only temporary. This means we must also be careful with applying terms like “platform literature” or “third generation electronic literature” too strictly, as instapoetry is not born-digital or electronic literature. Instead, it is born *into* the *post*-digital, materialising after the digital disruption. Instapoetry is post-digital.

It is, therefore, not the digital that makes instapoetry exciting.¹⁰ Instapoetry is less platform-*dependent* than what the name could suggest. By seeing instapoetry as post-digital, it is possible to uncover not only how Instagram is used as a tool or method for disseminating poetry (Manning 2020), but also that the circulation of poetry on and through Instagram happens in multiple ways. Bringing forth a post-digital circulation process of poetry, it is possible to also talk about poetry less centred around the poetry collection or poetry performance (i.e. slam poetry), with the primacy of one technology over others.

The materiality and processes of new ways of production, distribution, and consumption relate to the SME influence the style and function of poetry itself, which has been alluded to in previous research (Soelseth 2022). For Culler, a constitutive aspect of the lyric is that it is constructed for repetition (Culler 2017). The distributive infrastructure of Instagram leads to a specific platformed realisation of this repetition through sharing and versionalization. As such, it is

possible to say that the post-digital circulation process also affords poetry of certain qualities which encourages this type of repetition as it is realised in a networked environment. This also increases the potential for both success and circulation. Perhaps a better name for instapoetry is *instalyric*.

In relation to this, certain types of poetry might not be able to achieve success through social media. This could be those lacking the ritualistic aspects of lyric poems, such as that of lyric address. Successful instapoetry, such as the short non-narrative shareable experiences of Skaug, are examples of poems constructed for *platformed repetition*. Qualities such as the lyric address and a combined shared experience become qualities of the instalyric in the same way that lyric poetry, before the networked age, emphasised aspects tied to the aural dimension, like rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration. In both cases, being made for repetition.

While the success of a lyric poem is related to its success of being repeated, this success is not achieved through the poems' formal qualities alone. This is also why these components of the poems have not been the focus of this study. Instead, the focus has been on the medial constitution(s) of instapoetry as well as showing the importance of studying what also could be called logistical humanities: the components and processes of ecologies in which poetry come to be and is realised.

The distributional media infrastructure's effect on the consumption of poetry should not be overlooked either. This is important because social media and websites are the most critical interface for encountering poetry today (van der Starre 2021). The infrastructural change and practice of poetry distribution through social media multiply how poetry appears when and where people might need it. The change of practice concerning what is commodified and when also changes the immediacy and movement of poems in popular culture and the everyday. These types of processes of distribution and circulation are essential for the abilities, or potential, poetry must have as not just a reflection of the cultural imagination but as a force in shaping cultural and civic imagination (Chasar 2020). This force can gain strength from distributive practices. With few infrastructural constraints and being in multiple media ecologies, the poems, to paraphrase the Instagram user mentioned earlier, are something you suddenly can stumble upon and have go straight to your heart. This, in turn, adds to the argument for how vital the infrastructures of the cultural processes of distribution and circulation are, something which in the humanities has often been put in brackets, while the focus has been on (infrastructures of) processes of production and consumption instead (Parks 2015, 365). While much critique can be said about the dominance of social media platforms and their role in cultural production, at least as long as the SME is dominant, poetry becomes a bigger part of popular culture, offering poetic resources people can draw upon.

The practice of instapoetry also shows how it is possible to make a living while simultaneously providing free poetry, changing how we think about how artists such as poets make money. It constitutes a post-digital norm of art production that the artist as creator derives income from everything but the work in its primary distributed and circulated forms. However, this can also be said to have created a tension between community circulation (sharing) and audience commodification (commercial enterprise). How does this mode of distribution affect how the poetry is made and the reception of this poetry? Do relations with the audience and participatory culture's role in circulation demote or promote poetry as an aesthetic form of expression? These are questions raised by a post-digital circulation process that this article does not answer but still wants to leave you, the reader, with at the end. Let us continue this discussion in a future article or on social media somewhere.

Notes

1. Or, in the words of media theorist Lars Elleström, a technical medium (Elleström 2010).
2. This is also related to the materiality of the digital, a materiality affording change and ease of movement because it is merely zeroes and ones (Manovich 2001).
3. While this is not a diachronic study, it is necessary to mention the variations of poetry through time and place and not succumb to comparison with the stereotypical printed poetry collection, even if this artefact in the western world has evolved into the *prima facie* material binding because of the development of the printed word and publishing as a dominant commercial practice for written art.
4. The primacy of the single poem might seem obvious, considering the primacy of the image post on Instagram. However, it is possible to post multiple poems through the slide function and instastories.
5. The reason for quotation marks is because Cramer also dismisses the distinction between "old media" and "new media".
6. The paradigm following Walter Ong's secondary orality, as defined by Stewart (2016), where written expressions exist in an oral temporality, as opposed to the paradigm of secondary orality where the written is performed as oral utterances through TV and Radio.
7. Many tagged posts are irrelevant for this study as they depict Skaug as a musician or others publishing their own poetry and using his name as a hashtag.
8. Which, depending on how the poet treats the material, could also create aesthetic aspects of the poem itself.
9. However, this could also stem from the platformization of cultural production. At some point, we are left with the question of what came first, the chicken or the egg?
10. Instead, what we are seeing is an uncritical notion of digitality.

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