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CONTEMPORARY FREE VERSE AS A LITERARY GENRE  
IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSLATION

The hallmark of poetry is its ability to resonate with the feelings of a reader through the intentional use by an author of all or some of the following elements: meter, rhyme, and literary devices. And while it's nearly impossible to confine such a broad and imaginative genre to the prison of standards, we can't help but notice certain qualities of poetry that distinguish it from other literary forms. These qualities, in turn, pose the biggest obstacle to the translation of poetry if one aims to render each of them verbatim. But here's one caveat: contemporary poetry does not possess any of the traditional poetic features, and only the mere

belief of a modern poet underpins the belonging of certain works to the genre of poetry. Hence is the question: whether contemporary poetry should be translated as prose or as poetry.

In its evolution, poetry underwent many changes in form and structure under the influence of political, economic, and cultural shifts. The appearance of the genre of free verse reflected, to a certain extent, the transformations society was experiencing in the era of new scientific discoveries and technical progress of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Free verse started the democratization of poetry, when a previously elitist field with rigid forms was incrementally replaced by more simple and lightweight ones. By 2014, the tendency had eventually blurred the lines between prose and poetry, giving way to bite-size poems resembling Instagram captions.

One of the most illustrative examples of contemporary free verse is the poetry of Rupi Kaur, a Canadian poet of Indian origin who writes about life struggles and inner turmoil from the perspective of a modern woman. The main peculiarity of her poems is their simplistic form – most of them consist of one sentence – and lack of traditional poetic elements. It's claimed that Kaur's poems are free verse for they don't conform to conventional poetic standards, which is quite controversial as free verse poets still have to abide by certain poetic rules, as without them, their poems would be nothing but prose.

We compared R. Kaur's works to the most prominent representatives of free verse genre and concrete poetry, as understanding the nature of her type of poetry can help us determine translation strategies to apply to her works. We came to a conclusion that even if meter and rhyme can be omitted in free verse, literary devices will still be in place, as they serve to achieve the suggestive quality. In classic free verse or concrete poetry by W. Whitman or L. Zukofsky we see a great number of literary devices, including catalogues, anaphora, symplece, imagism, parataxis, allusion, and wordplay that contribute to such suggestive quality. We failed to find these in R. Kaur's poems which are in fact very straightforward. For example, *hair / if it was not supposed to be there / would not be growing / on our bodies in the first place*. A number of literary devices and rhymes appear only sporadically and occasionally throughout R. Kaur's poems. In general, her works are more similar to simple acts of everyday communication. Hence, we deem it feasible to implement the same translation strategies as for prose in combination with preservation of the author's graphic choices and balanced approach to the choice of equivalents with the same emotional connotation.