

Metaphors of Depression in Rupi Kaur's Poetry
Collection *Home Body*

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Depression is a mental illness that has been plagued by stigma and indescribability throughout its history. The frustrating task of describing depression outright has driven many of those who suffer from it to try and express their feelings and thoughts through art. The difficulty of pairing any words with depression makes literature the most fascinating form of this artistic expression. That is why in this thesis I look into how depression is handled in poetry. After establishing the relationship that depression and language have, I examine the relationship between depression and poetry. With these findings, I am able to analyse Rupi Kaur's poetry in her poetry collection *Home Body* (2020) and how the metaphors associated with depression show up in her works.

The most common way to describe depression in literature is through metaphors. I show how these metaphors came to be, why they seem overused, and yet remain the most popular way to describe symptoms of depression. These metaphors revolve around darkness, slowness and disassociation. I also bring up how, in some cases where the illness is not lifelong, the illness can be a rebirth, a way to find hope and happiness through changing thought processes.

My findings show that Rupi Kaur uses several of the metaphors linked to depression in her works in *Home Body*. The metaphors of darkness, emptiness and worthlessness are prominent in the collection and metaphors of hopefulness become prominent near the end of the collection.

Key words: depression, poetry, depression in literature, Rupi Kaur, metaphors

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1 Introduction

Many widely known writers have been riddled by mental illness(es), like Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Randall Jarrell (Thomas and Duke 2007, 217). This shows that many of those who struggle with mental health find their solace from writing. One of the most common mental illnesses for writers is depression, which is also considered the most common mental illness in the world (Gallardo, Furman and Kulkarni 2009, 288). As James C. Kaufman and John Baer write (2002, 271-286) how research on writers and their mental well-being shows that out of all groups of writers women poets were the most depressed. They also point out that this strong likelihood is labelled as the “Sylvia Plath” effect as she is a “common image of a female poet who suffered from mental illness” (ibid.).

As depression is an illness that has little physical symptoms that could be easily described, those who suffer from it have had to find ways of describing it through other means (Malhi and Mann 2018 and Emmons 2010, 1). The best way to make someone understand how depression feels is through metaphors (Emmons 2010, 94). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a metaphor is “A figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable” (OED 2001). With time, people with depression have used the same metaphors to describe their view of the world and thus these metaphors have become the actual symptoms that are sought after when diagnosing depression (Emmons 2010, 96-97). Depression is one of the most fickle things to be inspired by as David Wojahn notes “Perhaps the most commonly reported symptom of clinical depression is not mere lethargy or a blue mood, but a mind-numbing lack of engagement with the world” (1995, 115). This creates a paradox where one wants to write about their experiences and condition but is unable to. The challenges in describing depression might also be the reason so many of those who struggle with it are drawn to artistic pastimes and especially writing about (e.g. describing) their emotions. Because not even those who experience depressive thoughts have been given the necessary means to express them, they turn to the options they find to describe the inexplicable.

I will look at the metaphors associated with depression in Rupi Kaur’s poetry collection *Home Body* (2020). Rupi Kaur is a Canadian poet, although she was born in India. Kaur started out publishing her poems on Instagram, where they gained a lot of attention. In 2014 she published her first collection *Milk and Honey* and has since become one of the best known poets of the 21st century (Darnaud 2016). Many people have criticised her work because of its origin as “Instapoetry” but Kaur has been able to gain attention by tackling issues such as women’s place in society, issues of body image and mental health as well as the struggles of facing abuse (ibid.).

I chose this topic and the poetry collection for my thesis because when I read the poems, they resonated with my own experiences. In addition, for me poetry is an important way to express and sort through my thoughts, feelings and experiences. Because of the liberties poetry can give with regard to grammar and word order, it allows for variety in the expression of thoughts and feelings and still remain relatable and finds its audience. For me, the written word has been a way to escape reality and find like-minded people who understand the thoughts and feelings twirling in my mind, thus making me feel less alone with my struggles.

I look at selected poems from Rupi Kaur through various research done on literature and poetry, in particular about depression and how it is depicted in literature but especially in poetry. I will examine the metaphors connected to depression and how these metaphors came to be. I also discuss the struggles of writing about a complex illness: those who suffer from depression and write about it also face the arduous task of writing about something for which they cannot find words for. Because many of Kaur's poems do not have names in the collection, I will refer to them by the page number they are on. It is also important to note that Kaur does not capitalise any of the letters in her poems, as when she started writing poetry she could understand and read her mother tongue, Punjabi, but could not write in it. One of the scripts in Punjabi does not have upper or lower case letters, and Kaur feels that this is "A visual representation of what i want to see more of within the world: equalness" (Kaur n.d.).

In the next section, I analyse what kind of language is used in connection with depression and why this language has been established as connected to depression. I will discuss depression as an illness, how depression and poetry are connected and why it is difficult to be inspired by a mental illness such as depression. In section 3, I analyse how the established metaphors of depression are used in *Home Body* (2020) as well as their origins. In the conclusion, I will return to my findings about depression, its relationship with language and literature and how the metaphors of depression are visible in Kaur's poetry.

2 Language and Depression

Depression is intangible and the best way to make it tangible is through metaphors which relate the illness to more tangible things. The origin of these metaphors is often connected to other societal concepts, such as the common description of depression as “being down in the dumps” or “feeling down” that originate from the thought that down is bad and up is good (Emmons 2010, 96-97). I will discuss such language use in detail below. However, relying solely on those accounts makes it difficult to grasp the disease, as depression has a long and stigmatised history, which makes it difficult for many to talk about their experiences (Konstantinou and Attia 2024, 1).

This has its downfalls, as David Wojahn writes when he discusses his experiences of his father’s and his own depression. He remembers his father’s struggles to put his illness into words and the feelings associated with it, but as he was going through the illness himself, he started to understand these struggles and the inability to talk about them: “- to try to describe my condition in any way but the most barely verbal fashion seemed wholly beyond my resources” (1995, 111). These struggles might be one of the reasons why those with depressive tendencies often find themselves writing about the very thing that is bothering them, trying to find the correct words to describe their feelings and emotions. As noted above, the struggle of describing depression may be the reason why those who suffer from it find ways to express themselves through different kinds of art. One of the reasons I want to focus on poetry in this context is the struggle to find words to describe depression, which creates a frustrating problem for those relying on the written word to express their anguish.

Language is an important way for us humans to understand and process everything that comes our way. That is why when we encounter something indescribable, it is left outside our comprehension and we cannot recite it to others, which leaves the experience only for us to remember. Language also shapes how we comprehend things. We process things through language, and thus the way we word things affect those around us, and our own thoughts. Emmons (2010, 5) mentions how language used in connection to depression defines how the latter is identified and how fundamentally language affects the way others’ descriptions of the illness take shape. She writes: “According to many sufferers, words cannot describe the pain of depression, and yet it is ironically a condition largely known through the words that they do find” (Emmons 2010, 13). Because depression cannot be accessed through any other means than the experiences of the ones who suffer from it, it is impossible to attach anything to it without these accounts. This is also why the illness is so tightly confined to the restrictions of language and the words of those who agree to talk about their experiences with it. Emmons (2010, 16) describes depression as a “rhetoric illness”

because “Our comprehension and experience of it starts from and returns to the language we have available to describe it.” This trouble leads depressed individuals to describe their feelings and thoughts through metaphors to make their struggle understandable to those who have no idea what they go through: “When access to depression is available largely through figurative language, that language ironically threatens to foreclose creative thinking and alternative solutions” (Emmons 2010, 96). With time, and enough people using the same metaphors for their feelings, these metaphors have come to be the actual symptoms of the illness: “Figurative ways of explaining an emotional state may eventually come to serve as literal explanations for the disorder; they begin to manifest in physical symptoms” (Emmons 2010, 96).

Poetry uses several different literary devices which makes it easier for everyone to make their own conclusions of the content of the poem:

Through the use of poetic devices such as metaphor, symbols, imagery, cadence, the poem allows the reader to develop their own relationship to the work. [...] [The readers] are able to locate themselves in the poem, and when there is difference, they are able to transcend the poem and create that which is their own. (Gallarado, Furman and Kulkarni 2009, 291)

This is one of the ways for writers to move large audiences. Poetry and its literary devices allow enough freedom for the readers to create their own narrative and relate to the content of the poetry they consume: “To write directly of depression is to forego many of the structural and thematic symmetries which literature thrives upon” (Wojahn 1995, 115). The possibilities this opens for those who want to express their state-of-being with insufficient words gives some relief for describing the incomprehensibility of depression. However, as I will discuss later, there is also the possibility to write about the possible aftermath of the illness, which can include themes of hope and rebirth as is the case with *Home Body*.

Next, I clarify what kind of an illness depression is and why it is difficult to open up about. I also discuss how depression might be triggered in addition to how and why depression has changed.

2.1 What is Depression?

Depression has been labelled as the most common mental illness. It is estimated that around 3.8% of the world’s population suffer from it (Durbano, Irtelli and Marchesi, 2024, XI), and World Health Organisation has deduced that depression will be the most burdening disease in the world by 2030 (Malhi and Mann 2018, 2299). There can be many a reason for depression, but things that are known to cause it include traumatic experiences, sudden life events (such as unemployment or wars) and physical health (incl. biological factors and lifestyle such as diet and substance abuse).

Only a fraction of the people who suffer from depression have access to treatment (Durbano, Irtelli and Marchesi 2024, XI). Depression is not only a mental illness, as it has been found that depressed individuals have higher risks of different disorders as well as several physical illnesses, and thus face having possible life-long repercussions outside the illness itself (Durbano, Irtelli and Marchesi 2024, XIV). Depression is not merely a moment of sadness or unhappiness: to be diagnosed with depression, an individual must have five or more symptoms every day for two weeks (Malhi and Mann 2018, 2300). These symptoms need to differ from the normal functioning of the individual. These symptoms also cannot be the result of another mental illness, medical illness or a side-effect of a medication (ibid.).

Although depression has shaken some of its stigma, many still fear the repercussions of telling people openly that they are depressed (Konstantinou and Attia 2024, 11). Depression has also changed, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, which triggered deep loneliness and depression especially in younger individuals (ibid.). The digital age has been both a curse and a blessing to the newer generations, as it has both unifying and separating effects. Some people find help and friends through different social media, but the same social media can also increase peoples' fear of missing out and can highlight the loneliness and mundaneness of ordinary life (ibid.).

As Malhi and Mann state:

Major depression [...] severely limits psychosocial functioning and diminishes quality of life. [...] In practice, its detection, diagnosis, and management often pose challenges for clinicians because of its various presentations, unpredictable course and prognosis, and variable response to treatment. (2018, 2299)

This shows that depression is not an easy illness, and it does not have a definitive cure. This might be one of the reasons why depressed individuals try to find their answers in different forms of art. Those who do survive with or from the illness, are able to see the world in a different light, some even finding it motivating to survive with or from it. I will highlight this view later on.

In the next section I examine the relationship between depression and poetry through different research done on the topic. I discuss how poetry differs from different kinds of literature and how it can affect the trajectory of a depressed individual.

2.2 Depression in Poetry

The relationship with depression and poetry has been established in different research projects. Kaufman and Baer (2002) show how research establishes that female poets seem to be the most

depressed group of individuals amongst writers. One of the reasons why is in the way different writers think and see the world. Kaufman and Baer write that nonfiction writers have a more “paradigmatic” (meaning a more realistic and logical) thinking style while fiction writers and poets think more “narratively” (meaning a focus on what might and could be). Kaufman and Baer further highlight this by mentioning how poets seem to be more emotional and introspective than fiction writers, because poetry focuses more on emotions and internal feelings. This introspection can be associated with mental illness.

Literary research also connects poetry to strong expressions of emotions. Kaufman and Baer mention that people with mental illness might gravitate towards poetry, or then the linguistic style of poetry appeals to those who are mentally ill. Because of the introspection and strong emotional expressions, poetry might add to the mental instability of (female) poets. Results of different studies discussed by Kaufman and Baer show that writing has some therapeutic effects, but less so with poetry. Many of the research results show that narrative and long periods of writing are needed for better mental and physical health, and this is better provided by writing fiction rather than poetry. Poets also write more about their trauma, and expressing negative experiences might actually increase the writers’ negative mood. However, this seems to be a subjective response as writing might be the thing that helps those with mental health problems to stay sane, so to speak. As Clark notes:

What we found to be significant for treatment and recovery is that these writers give voice to their depression. It is in speaking the “unspeakable suffering” of depression that one begins to recompose the narrative, to trace the threads of the story from the past to the present and to find a way to make new sense out of old material. [...] Thompson begins writing a journal at fourteen, not only to try to understand her depression but also to prepare for a writer’s vocation. Later she is rescued from suicide by seeing her own words on a computer screen. (2008, 93)

This shows that for some, writing might be the lifeline needed in the murkiness of their life; it gives them an outlet that might protect them from their own mind in the future. Writing might also be helpful in the sense that it can be used to distance oneself from the illness instead of identifying with it. While Kaufman and Baer have found out that poetry is not the most therapeutic writing style, there is no denying that any type of writing can help with mental health.

Why poetry and mental illness seem to be so closely associated? Gregory Orr writes:

We are creatures whose volatile inner lives are both mysterious to us and beyond our control. How to respond to the strangeness and unpredictability of our own emotional being? One important answer is the personal lyric, the “I” poem dramatizing inner and outer experience (2002, 4).

While this dramatization is one of the reasons writing might exacerbate mental illnesses and their symptoms, I believe that despite this, writing our unpredictable and unreliable feelings down also has qualities that help us navigate them and perhaps even seek help. Orr continues:

[I]n the act of making a poem at least two crucial things have taken place that are different from ordinary life. First, we have shifted the crisis to a bearable distance from us: removed it to the symbolic but vivid world of language. Second, we have actively *made* and shaped this model of our situation rather than passively endured it as lived experience (2002, 4-5, original emphasis).

The “bearable distance” Orr mentions can be intensified. This is further explained by Shelly Beamish (2024, 80) who notes how (in confessional poetry, but possibly in other writings as well) there exists a poet persona, which is not a completely true version of oneself in their writing. By using different writing methods (such as metaphors and hyperboles) the written result is separate from the source of the inspiration in the first place. Although in confessional poetry, this poet persona is quite literally a persona created to be able to write about taboo subjects of the time, I see the poet persona also as a way to possibly distance oneself from the written word through exaggeration or belittling.

In the next section, I will analyse how the metaphors associated with depression are present in *Home Body*. I will divide the analysis into sections which each discuss a different type of metaphor of depression and explain the history behind the metaphor and how it is relevant in Kaur’s poetry in *Home Body*

3 Depression in *Home Body*

I have established the relationship between literature and depression above and how metaphors are at the centre of this relationship. Before analysing the metaphors in Kaur's *Home Body* I want to briefly discuss general depression metaphors that do not show up in *Home Body*.

Many writers describe their depression as a beast of some kind (Emmons, 2010, 102). They strive to slay this beast but end up feeling like it is a close friend or companion when it is plaguing them (ibid.). This beast does not mean a mythical or mystical beast, but instead the beast or monster that is a part of the self, and thus this self is the target of this battle (Emmons 2010, 102).

Depression is not necessarily a beast, as it is also commonly described as a domestic animal, such as a dog or cat (usually black ones) (Emmons, 2010, 103-104). This shows that for some depression is a beast that needs to be fought, while others see it as a part of everyday life, even a close companion that cannot and should not be fought with, as that might make it flare up. Some writers have also expressed how, even with the burden of the illness, depression has given them a different view of life:

Memoirs such as Kay Jamison's *An unquiet Mind*, William Styron's *Darkness Visible*, and Meri Nana-Ama Danquah's *Willow Weep for Me* emphasize the depth of appreciation and feeling that come with depression, not only accepting that these moods are integral to who they are, but insisting that there is a value in them. (Clark, 2008, 22)

This suggests that although depression is an illness that drives some people towards (self-) destructive habits, for some it can also be a kind of a companion, a comfort or a learning experience. Not everyone suffers from depression their whole life or all the time, and because of this, they are able to see it as a lesson of sorts. This view of the illness plays a part towards the end of *Home Body*, as Kaur's poems start to display hopefulness that can come after battling depression. In the next sections I analyse Kaur's poetry in more detail through the metaphors found in the poems. I also provide some background for the metaphors and how they are not always explicitly used, but rather merely implied.

3.1 Darkness

Many of the metaphors associated with depression are tied to societal expectations and stereotypes (Emmons, 2010, 96). Many of such metaphors have to do with darkness and heaviness, mainly because these expressions have been associated with depression from the beginning: "Descriptors such as darkness and feeling weighed down have been repeated so often and for so long that they have ceased to be recognised as metaphorical at all" (ibid.). Kaur uses darkness in her very first

poem in the *Home Body* collection: “i’m in the darkest room of my life” (Kaur 2020, 7). Here, depression is depicted as “the darkest room”. The use of room in this context could also be read as a place you can leave, given one has the strength and opportunity to open the door. Another possibility is that “the darkest room” has no doors or windows to get out and locks its occupants inside its walls.

Darkness is also the focal point in another poem: “my mind keeps running off to dark corners/and coming back with reasons for/why i am not enough” (Kaur 2020, 10). In addition to the darkness associated with depression, this contains a reference to how depression affects self-esteem and makes the sufferer feel inadequate. Such thoughts and feelings are not necessarily as universal as one might think, as Clark notes: “Some of these states and traits are more abhorrent and painful than others, for example, and some affect moods, capabilities, and responses more central to self and self-identity than others” (2008, 15). Thus, poetry is quite a personal way of expression, but those who relate to certain thoughts or feelings gravitate towards the works that deal with their own experiences.

One poem suggests that the persona speaking thinks that everyone else is living a bright colourful life while they themselves are shrouded in darkness: “while everyone else/was living their life in colour” (Kaur 2020, 15, lines 1-2). This highlights the contrast a depressed individual feels between themselves and others.

Kaur also mentions darkness, but in a more hopeful poem: “i am loving myself out of the dark” (2020, 37). I will later discuss the hopefulness present in Kaur’s poetry, but this example deserves a mention here as well, as depression as a whole is described as “darkness”. This reduces depression into one of the most popular metaphors related to it, and no further explanation is needed for the reader to understand what “darkness” implies.

3.2 Suffering Slowly in Silence

Moving slowly or being frozen is also associated with depression. The origin of this expression is especially interesting: “In seventeenth-and eighteenth-century scientific thought, fluid flow theories asserted that blood had ‘slowed down’ in depressed individuals, leading to the use of such phrases to describe the experience of the illness” (Emmons 2010, 96). *Home Body* engages with this idea: “depression froze me in place” (Kaur 2020, 15, line 3). This metaphor is one that developed into a physical symptom associated with depression: “The metaphorical notion of a mind ‘weighted down’ in the early English language eventually took on the form of a physical sensation: heavy limbs” (Emmons 2010, 96).

Depression is not a very “loud” illness either, to those who are not going through it. Because it is a mental illness, it may go unnoticed for a long time, maybe even forever, unless the person who experiences it wants to speak about it. Malhi and Mann state that “[t]he onset of depression is usually gradual, but it can be abrupt sometimes” (2018, 2299). This silence and unpredictability also come up in Kaur’s poetry: “depression is silent/you never hear it coming/and suddenly it’s/the loudest voice in your head” (Kaur 2020, 13). This raises the point that depression affects every aspect of your life through being “loud” in your head. It affects how you think about things, how you feel (or do not feel) and distorts your view of the world (Malhi and Mann 2018, 2300-1). For Kaur, the invisibility of depression is also the topic of a longer poem titled *empty*: “i’d sink into the depression for months/half passed out from the grief/eyes open/mind lost in another dimension/write the book they said/get back on the road again/what’s taking you so long” (Kaur 2020, 22, lines 11-17). Here, the inability to tell anyone how depression feels, or that one suffers from it is also the reason why everyone is questioning the lack of action from the depressed individual. It highlights the struggle of getting anything done: “How do you write poetry at a time when even tying your shoes seems a Herculean labor? And how do you talk to someone about such a frightening predicament?” (Wojahn 1995, 115).

Other people do not have access inside another’s head, thoughts or feelings, and thus the burden of any mental illness falls solely on the person who is suffering from it. This may render other people completely unable to help, because they have no idea how much someone is fighting inside their own head, and people rarely want to talk about depression, at least their own, because of the stigma surrounding it. The fear of not being taken seriously enough, or even not having anyone close enough who they could confide in adds to the trouble of speaking up.

3.3 Disassociation

Depression can give some people an out-of-body experience, which makes them feel like they are not really there mentally, are only going through the motions mechanically, or feel like someone else is giving them commands. Hilary Clark notes how the actions of a depressed individual might not feel like their own anymore: “Control, and at least to that extent ‘ownership’ of symptoms is attributed to an agency external to the self” (2008, 16). While Clark discusses two accounts from the 15th and 18th centuries that describe thinking that their own thoughts were given to them from outer space, Clark writes that such accounts have lessened in recent years. It is also difficult to pinpoint what type of mental illness such thoughts are related to: “*Experiences* of unbidden thoughts and alien commands are typical of psychosis, now as much as then” (Clark 2008, 17,

original emphasis). However, such an out-of-body experience is also present in one of Kaur's poems:

it feels like i'm watching my life happen through a fuzzy television screen. i feel far away from this world. almost foreign in this body. as if every happy memory has been wiped clean from the bowl of my mind. i close my eyes and i can't remember what happy feels like. my chest collapses into my stomach knowing that i have to get up in the morning and pretend i'm not fading away all over again. i want to reach out and touch things. i want to feel them touch me back. i want to live. i want the vitality of my life back. (Kaur, 2020, 20)

Here, the world and even the speaker's own body feel out of reach, almost like nothing physical exists. The speaker feels far away from everything that is happening, and they cannot get in touch with the physical reality around them. Although Clark noted the diminishing use of alien thoughts, Malhi and Mann point out how "Sometimes, alongside psychotic features, patients can have marked psychomotor disturbance and other symptoms that reflect catatonia" (2018, 2301). They also point out how depressive symptoms can have many sources and can be linked to several other possible causes, which can be the underlying reasons for the depressive symptoms (2299-2302).

The metaphors discussed previously show the despair and darkness associate with depression, but depression can also have positive effects. Some people are able to crawl out of the darkness or see the illness as a possibility to grow and learn. These are the themes that show up near the end of *Home Body* and what I examine next.

3.4 Hopefulness

Even though many poems on depression tackle the despair and hopelessness of existence those who suffer from mental illness possess, there are also poems that embrace the hopefulness that comes when the sufferer is able to step out of the unending darkness inside their minds. In *Poetry as Survival* (2002) Orr notes how

The very hopelessness of the shattered self is its hope, because this devastated self possesses a radical freedom. All the ordinary, [...] connections to the world have been torn: the web is in shreds. The self is therefore free to make new connections to the world. And it has an even more primary task and opportunity: to make a new self. To create a new self to inhabit this new world (or this old world of "new" connections). (2002, 120)

When an individual has been so depressed that they have not had any hope or joy in their mind, it gives a new kind of freedom when they are able to breathe freely. They have battled their own minds and perhaps overcome some of their worst fears, unlocking new possibilities and the world

feels lighter, less serious and full of hope. This hope, or at least an encouragement towards that hope, also comes through in Kaur's poetry, in one of the titled poems *hope*: "nothing lasts for ever/let that be the reason you stay/even this sick twisted misery/will not last" (Kaur, 2020, 16). Sometimes this hope fills even the darkest minds and brings life back into a despaired mind: "the need to survive/lit a fire in me" (Kaur 2020, 25). And the poem on page 46 perhaps encapsulates the aforementioned idea the best: "our pain is the doorway to our joy" (Kaur 2020, 46).

The above examples are not the only ones in Kaur's book that depict hope even after (or despite) the darkness of a depressed mind. What is vital to remember, is that not everyone is fortunate enough to get out of the darkness. Some have to get through their day-to-day life with depression, without breaks or relief from the illness (Malhi and Mann 2018, 2299). This is not the case with Kaur's collection, as it ends with perhaps the most hopeful poem of the collection: "now that you are free/and the only obligation you are under/is your own dreams/what will you do/with your time" (Kaur, 2020, 189). This also invites the reader to consider their life, dreams and what they are doing, as they have gone through the journey presented through the poems in the collection.

4 Conclusion

Mental illnesses are hard to define or put into words because they can be experienced only by those who suffer from them. This struggle leads to different forms of artistic expression because they allow a certain freedom with expression. I chose to focus on poetry, because it battles with insufficient words to express the world of, in this case, depression. The literary device most used in connection with depression is metaphors and so that became my main focus in Kaur's poetry.

Metaphors about darkness, emptiness and loneliness that depict depression and its symptoms are ever-present in Rupi Kaur's poetry in her *Home Body* collection. Even if not explicitly stated and used in all of the poems, many of them have underlying themes related to depression, and describe the relief of being able to breathe after spending too much time shrouded in the inner darkness that depression brings. All in all, Kaur depicts depression from many different angles in her works, which gives different people with differing experiences the possibility to have something to relate to in her works. Poetry, with its freedom in word order and formation, gives a small but important possibility for people to indicate some of the hardships related to depression. Kaur is able to capture a fraction of this by utilising many of the best known metaphors of depression.

Depression can be debilitating and have the sufferer focus only on the darkest corners of their mind. Kaur is able to turn that hopelessness into a rebirth throughout *Home Body*. The journey this collection takes the reader on ends with a hopeful note, one that allows the reader to feel like they have power in their actions and that the darkness that might sometimes feel unending is indeed possible to conquer and leave behind. Kaur is able to give hope and presents the possibility of using any mental illness as a reason to keep going and to look at things from a more positive angle.

Although depression is very much out of the reach of expression, art offers something for those who search to express their melancholy spirit, with or without words. It can both exasperate or soothe the silent storm twirling inside troubled souls, but at least it offers a sign to those struggling that they are not alone with their difficulty in expressing their emotional state. Art offers a solace for those fighting the lonely fight, a thread of hopefulness in the nothingness that seems to be engulfing their life.

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