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Art or Con? Exploring Instapoetry at the Intersection of Creator Culture, Digital Entrepreneurship, and Artistic Innovation

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What does it mean to be a twenty-first century author working on the internet, in spaces of algorithmically-driven digital culture and essentially commerce? My dissertation aims to unravel these complexities by studying three “instapoets” who achieved success via social media. Their emergence into the literary scene serves as evidence of technological shifts concurrent with social media that allowed this new generation of writers to bypass traditional gatekeepers. In conducting case studies of three such authors, I have charted an intelligible spectrum of activity—from artistic to commercial—that shows how social media is ushering in a new type of twenty-first century author who is, in many senses, a cross-over media and literary entrepreneur. With each angle explored, my dissertation reveals the convergence of artistic innovation, entrepreneurial activity, and creator culture in the ongoing evolution of authorship as it adapts to emerging communications technologies and social media.