

ENGL 3220: British Literature since 1798:
"The Idea of the Author in Modern British Literature"
Dr. Carey Mickalites

Course Description

In their 1802 "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, poets Wordsworth and Coleridge set out to revolutionize the language of poetry by emphasizing the idiom of common folk, while also instructing their readers in how to evaluate poems. Over a century later, American-born T.S. Eliot would publish several critical essays that also sought to cultivate a small and select audience for the difficult and experimental poems he and his fellow modernists were writing. Eliot's contemporary and friend, Virginia Woolf, would make a major contribution to early feminism by insisting on a cultural space and material support for women writers. And just after the turn of the twenty-first century, celebrity author Zadie Smith would write a book about, well, celebrities, featuring a character obsessed with collecting autographs in ways that reflect on Smith's engagement with her fans, critics, and public image as a Black British author. Literature, that is, is not only written according to the writer's designs, it is also inescapably enmeshed in larger material and social conditions that go into making up "the author." Rather than the standard march through major periods and representative authors (which often uses an anthology), this section of 3220 will survey a range of selected texts from Romanticism, modernism, and the contemporary period and will focus on how they engage with the cultural authority of the writer and the phenomenon of celebrity. Along the way we will attend to how the very idea of what an author is, or what constitutes authorship, changes over time according to evolving social, political, and economic structures in British history.

Likely Texts for the Course

- Coleridge and Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* (including 1802 "Preface")
- Selected poems by Percy Shelley and John Keats
- Austen, *Northanger Abbey*
- Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- Eliot, select poetry and criticism
- Lewis, ed. *Blast I*
- Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
- Amis, *The Information* or Smith, *The Autograph Man*

*Please contact the professor, Carey Mickalites, for questions about the course.
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