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978-0-521-15279-2 - The Lake Poets and Professional Identity

Brian Goldberg

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## THE LAKE POETS AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The idea that the inspired poet stands apart from the marketplace is considered central to British Romanticism. However, Romantic authors were deeply concerned with how their occupation might be considered a kind of labor comparable to that of the traditional professions. In the process of defining their work as authors, Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge – the “Lake school” – aligned themselves with emerging constructions of the “professional gentleman” that challenged the vocational practices of late eighteenth-century British culture. They modeled their idea of authorship on the learned professions of medicine, church, and law, which allowed them to imagine a productive relationship with the marketplace and to adopt the ways eighteenth-century poets had related their poetry to other kinds of intellectual work. Brian Goldberg explores the ideas of professional risk, evaluation, and competition that the writers developed as a response to a variety of eighteenth-century depictions of the literary career.

BRIAN GOLDBERG is Associate Professor of English at the University of Minnesota.

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