Dramatic changes in the reading public and literary market in early nineteenth-century England not only altered the relationship between poet and reader but prompted new conceptions of the poetic text, literary reception, and authorship. With the decline of patronage, the rise of the novel and the periodical press, and the emergence of the mass reading public, poets could no longer assume the existence of an audience for poetry. Andrew Franta examines how the reconfigurations of the literary market and the publishing context transformed the ways poets conceived of their audience and the forms of poetry itself. Through readings of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Hemans, and Tennyson, and with close attention to key literary, political, and legal debates, Franta proposes a new reading of Romanticism and its contribution to modern conceptions of politics and publicity.

Andrew Franta is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Utah.
This series aims to foster the best new work in one of the most challenging fields within English literary studies. From the early 1780s to the early 1830s a formidable array of talented men and women took to literary composition, not just in poetry, which some of them famously transformed, but in many modes of writing. The expansion of publishing created new opportunities for writers, and the political stakes of what they wrote were raised again by what Wordsworth called those “great national events” that were “almost daily taking place”: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic and American wars, urbanization, industrialization, religious revival, an expanded empire abroad, and the reform movement at home. This was an enormous ambition, even when it pretended otherwise. The relations between science, philosophy, religion, and literature were reworked in texts such as *Frankenstein* and *Biographia Literaria*; gender relations in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Don Juan*; journalism by Cobbett and Hazlitt; and poetic form, content, and style by the Lake School and the Cockney School. Outside Shakespeare studies, probably no body of writings has produced such a wealth of response or done so much to shape the responses of modern criticism. This indeed is the period that saw the emergence of those notions of “literature” and of literary history, especially national literary history, on which modern scholarship in English has been founded.

The categories produced by Romanticism have also been challenged by recent historicist arguments. The task of the series is to engage both with a challenging corpus of Romantic writings and with the changing field of criticism they have helped to shape. As with other literary series published by Cambridge, this one will represent the work of both younger and more established scholars, on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere.

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In memory of Maggie Rose Franta
## Contents

**Acknowledgments**

Introduction: The regime of publicity  
1 Public opinion from Burke to Byron  
2 Wordsworth’s audience problem  
3 Keats and the review aesthetic  
4 Shelley and the politics of political poetry  
5 The art of printing and the law of libel  
6 The right of private judgment

**Notes**

**Bibliography**

**Index**
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