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978-0-521-89918-5 - The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History

Mike Sanders

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## THE POETRY OF CHARTISM

Between 1838 and 1852, the leading Chartist newspaper, the *Northern Star*, published over 1,000 poems written by more than 350 poets – as the readership of the *Northern Star* numbered hundreds of thousands, these poems were amongst the most widely read of the Victorian era. This book is the first full-length study of the *Northern Star*'s poetry column and offers a complete record of all the poems published. It asks a simple question: why did the writing and reading of poetry play such an important role in Chartism's struggle to secure fundamental democratic rights? It answers this question by analysing the interplay between politics, aesthetics and history in the aftermath of the Newport insurrection (1839), during the mass strikes of 1842 and the year of European revolutions (1848). Additionally, the book theorises poetry's political agency and examines the critical history of Chartist poetry.

MIKE SANDERS is Lecturer in Nineteenth-century Literature and Theory at the University of Manchester.

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organisation, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have re-animated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

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*In memory of my father*  
*Terry Sanders*  
*1943–2008*

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