



Literature and the Marketplace: Romantic Writers and Their Audiences in Great Britain and the United States

William G. Rowland Jr.

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Literature and the Marketplace addresses one of the great ironies of nineteenth-century British and American literature: the fact that authors of that era, in voicing their alienation from middle-class readers, paradoxically gave expression to feelings of alienation felt by those same readers. As William G. Rowland Jr. points out, romantic writers “thought of the market as conspiring against ‘imagination’ (Blake) or ‘telling the truth’ (Melville)” and consequently felt frustrated with literary institutions. Yet their “frustrations,” writes Rowland, “helped to energize romantic work and explain its subsequent and continuing appeal.”

The book opens with a survey of reading publics in Great Britain and the United States in the early years of the nineteenth century. Rowland then presents individual writers—including Wordsworth, Shelley, Hawthorne, Poe, and Emerson—and their relations to their readers. Finally, Rowland shows how the idea of genius was developed by writers as different as Coleridge, Blake, Whitman, and Dickinson and how that idea evolved as an antidote to the commercial literary marketplace of the nineteenth century.

A wide-ranging and provocative book, *Literature and the Marketplace* describes the relations between important British and American authors and the audiences and publishing industries of their era—relations that were troubled, uncertain, and remarkably productive of literature.

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