

3

English Romantic Verse

INTRODUCED AND EDITED BY

David Wright

I561.2
W948

English Romantic Verse

INTRODUCED AND EDITED BY

David Wright

PENGUIN BOOKS

PENGUIN BOOKS

Published by the Penguin Group
27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ, England
Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010, USA
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 2801 John Street, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 1B4
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand
Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

First published 1968
Reprinted in Penguin Classics 1986
5 7 9 10 8 6 4

Copyright © David Wright, 1968
All rights reserved

Made and printed in Great Britain by
Hazell Watson & Viney Limited
Member of BPCC Limited
Aylesbury, Bucks, England
Set in Monotype Garamond

Except in the United States of America,
this book is sold subject to the condition
that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise,
be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of
binding or cover other than that in which it is
published and without a similar condition
including this condition being imposed
on the subsequent purchaser

WATSON

PENGUIN BOOKS

PENGUIN



CLASSICS

ENGLISH ROMANTIC VERSE

David Wright's collected poems, *To the Gods the Shades*, appeared in 1976. He has edited *The Penguin Book of Everyday Verse*, *Longer Contemporary Poems*, *Thomas Hardy: Selected Poems*, Edward Thomas's *Selected Poems and Prose*, Trelawny's *Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author* and De Quincey's *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* for Penguins. He has also translated *Beowulf* and *The Canterbury Tales*, and published an autobiography, *Deafness*.

INTRODUCTION

What used to be called the Romantic Revival in English poetry was sometimes reckoned to have begun with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 and to have more or less ended with the death of Byron in 1824. By then Shelley and Keats' were dead, and Wordsworth and Coleridge mainly silent. Since most English poetry labelled 'Romantic' – which includes some of the best English poetry ever written – belongs to this period, that view was tenable, convenient, and misleading. For the Romantic Movement manifested itself before Wordsworth and Coleridge collaborated to produce *Lyrical Ballads*, and went on long after Byron died at Missolonghi. Under many and various metamorphoses it may even be said to have continued to our own day.

The term 'Romantic' obfuscates. It asks for comparison, always partisan, with its mirror-image, the 'Classical'; the first being seen as the antithesis of the second. A ding-dong battle – so far as writing about writing is concerned – has gone on between Romantic and Classical. This debate is really a side-issue – perhaps it would not be too much to claim that the Classical is an essentially Romantic concept largely introduced, so far as England is concerned, by Matthew Arnold. The glosses given to the two epithets have been many and confusing. They have become, as often happens in the field of literary criticism and poetic theory, terms of abuse. But generally the Romantic is held to signify the daemonic, subjective, personal, irrational, and emotional; the Classical to indicate whatever is objective, impersonal, rational, and orderly.

'*Klassisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke,*' * said Goethe. For T. S. Eliot the difference between them was

* *Classicism is health, Romanticism sickness.*

INTRODUCTION

'the difference between the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic'. * All of which is true enough if one is thinking chiefly of what Wyndham Lewis calls 'the extremist wing of Romanticism' to which Professor Mario Praz devoted a good deal of his well-known book, *The Romantic Agony*. Too much value has been given to the Romantic decadence, just as too much attention has been paid to the more obvious and vulgar manifestations of the Romantic sensibility – its gothic sensationalism and its later cult of the horrible. When these largely secondary symptoms of Romanticism are contrasted with an opposing temperament called 'Classical' much of the real significance of the phenomenon known as the Romantic Movement goes out of the window. And when Professor Grierson in his lecture *Romantic and Classical* goes back it would seem to the very beginning of western culture to claim Plato and St Paul as the first Romantics, against Aristotle as the first Classical, the line-up of the two teams becomes a game: e.g. Shakespeare is Romantic, Ben Jonson Classical; or if you like, Marlowe is Romantic, Shakespeare Classical, and so on ad infinitum.

Which is to miss the point. Romanticism is a historical phenomenon that should be approached as such. When did it begin? The word 'romantic' itself dates from the middle of the seventeenth century. 'The revolutionary character of the 1650's might almost be demonstrated from the history of one word – the word *romantic*,' writes F. W. Bateson in *English Poetry*. He goes on: 'Until 1650 no need seems to have been felt for an adjective for the common word "romance". But between 1650 and 1659 the word *romantic* is used by no less than seven writers. . . . On most of these occasions the word would seem to have been an independent creation.' Now, as Eliot remarked in a famous essay, it was in the seventeenth century that 'a disassociation of

* 'We have here, you will observe, a chronological interpretation: "classical" or "romantic" are merely names for the same thing (or person) at different stages of his (or its) career.' – Wyndham Lewis, *The Term 'Classical' and 'Romantic'*.

INTRODUCTION

sensibility from which we have never recovered' set in. 'The language became more refined, the feeling more crude,' he says. 'The feeling, the sensibility expressed in *The Country Churchyard* (Gray) is cruder than that in *To his Coy Mistress* (Marvell). . . . The sentimental age begins early in the eighteenth century.'

What Eliot noted was the first symptoms of a difference in outlook which separates the modern from what – for want of a better term – one may call the pre-Newtonian sensibility.* For the seventeenth century was a watershed, not merely in English history but in human evolution. It was in this century that simultaneous and interacting breakthroughs in the fields of science and technology led to a scientific and technological revolution that has been accelerating in geometrical progression ever since. By the second half of the eighteenth century, about the time Wordsworth was born, the first fruits of those break-throughs – the Industrial Revolution and the hardly less radical Agricultural Revolution – were both under way. They made possible the kind of conglomerate rather than organic society we now live in, of which the nineteenth century was to see the birth. Among other things the Industrial Revolution destroyed the family as an economic unit and converted the working individual into an impersonal labour force to be used, as W. H. Auden put it, 'like water or electricity for so many hours a day'. The organic society of small towns and villages where everybody knew his neighbour began to be replaced by vast congeries in which individuals lost identity. Our mass society was being born; a mass society fed and clothed by mass-production and informed – if that is the word – by mass-communications. Nor was that all. Up to the seventeenth century man had believed he was living in a stable universe with himself in the middle; since

* In his book *The Sleepwalkers* (Hutchinson, 1959), Arthur Koestler, tracing the history of the development of scientific thought and discovery, has remarked: 'If one had to sum up the history of the scientific ideas about the universe in a single sentence, one could only say that up to the seventeenth century our vision was Aristotelian, after that Newtonian.'

when he has been pushed to the periphery of an illimitable and apparently expanding universe.

That is to say, it was the spiritual and metaphysical implications of the scientific and technological revolution which began in the seventeenth century and which was going at full throttle by the end of the eighteenth, together with the changed and changing view of man's place in the universe, that sparked off the Romantic Movement. In other words, the more sensitive and serious intelligences, which usually turn out to belong to poets and artists – 'the antennae of the race' in Pound's phrase – began to react, and in most cases to record disquiet.* The Romantic Movement, if we are to understand what it really was about, should be viewed in its relation to the Industrial Revolution and its consequences.

There was in fact no such thing as a Romantic 'revival'. It was rather a birth of a new kind of sensibility which had to do with the new kind of environment that man was in the process of creating for himself. If the individual was on the way to being regimented, then poets and artists, with as it were intuitive prescience, began to seek to balance the scale by giving the greatest value to individual consciousness. In doing so they exalted Imagination as the noblest of human faculties.

In parenthesis, one reason why the French Revolution of 1789 was a central experience to Romantic poets is that they saw it as essentially a revolution to emancipate the individual. 'The outward form of the inward grace of the Romantic imagination was the French Revolution, and the Revolution failed.'† And the realization of its failure most affected those who, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, most hoped and believed in it. Some have even claimed that this

* Which was not always acceptable to their contemporaries. No other period exhibits so high a proportion of poets neglected in their day who achieved *posthumous* recognition – e.g. (in England alone) Chatterton, Blake, Shelley, Clare, Keats, Beddoes; while Wordsworth and Coleridge did not begin to receive their due until long after they had written their best work. This was a new phenomenon.

† Harold Bloom: *The Visionary Company*, Doubleday.

INTRODUCTION

is what lay behind the attenuation of their later poetry. Be that as it may, both wrote crucial poems whose theme was the failure or withdrawal of the imaginative vision. Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality* and Coleridge's *Dejection: A Letter** – the two key poems to the Romantic sensibility – were begun about the same time; some of Coleridge's poem may have been written partly as an answer to Wordsworth's. The interaction of the two poems on one another is illuminating.

But to return to the new sensibility of which Romantic poetry was the expression. It is most obvious in the new feeling for nature; a feeling which does not resemble that found in poetry written earlier than the eighteenth century. The attitudes are fundamentally different. Roughly speaking, where earlier poets – like Shakespeare or, say, Chaucer – accept and enjoy, Romantics elegize and idealize. Nature is seen by Romantics to be consoling or morally uplifting; a kind of spiritual healer. Mountains and wildernesses are admired rather than the evidences of fertility, usefulness, or of human cultivation. Nature is invested with personality; human moods and moral impulses are seen reflected from it. Romantics see nature through lenses of emotion, usually coloured with melancholy, nostalgia, regret. The favourite season is autumn.†

The change of attitude sprang from the changed relation between man and nature. Up to the seventeenth century it had been more or less a balanced partnership. After that the scientific and technological revolution gave man the upper hand and he began to dominate. He became the exploiter of nature and eventually its destroyer. When

* Better known as *Dejection: An Ode*, the title which Coleridge gave to the shortened version that appeared in his lifetime. The much longer original poem, in the form of a letter to Wordsworth's sister-in-law Sara Hutchinson, was first published by E. de Selincourt in 1947 and is the version printed in this anthology.

† Autumn is the theme of two of the best poems of Keats and Hood, as it is of Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. A curious remark by Keats about one of the Romantic forerunners is in his *Letters*: 'I always associate Chatterton with autumn.'

INTRODUCTION

nature is no longer to be feared by man he can afford to see mountains and wildernesses as sublime or picturesque, instead of, as hitherto, desolate or appalling. Before the eighteenth century and the publication of poems like James Thomson's *Seasons* and John Dyer's *Grongar Hill* there was really no such thing as 'nature poetry', no cult of nature. The Romantics were in a position to feel sentimental about it, as did Cowper in the verses beginning 'The poplars are fell'd'. This well-known poem takes for theme a subject which was afterwards to be treated often enough but for which it is difficult to find a companion piece written before the eighteenth century. And it was perhaps an intuitive foreboding of the more widespread depredations which were to come that was at the back of Wordsworth's odd hobby – for his time – of intervening to save trees and even rocks and stones from destruction at the hands of his Westmorland neighbours. Certainly it lies behind the poignancy of John Clare's *Remembrances*:

And spreading Lea Close Oak, ere decay had penned its will,
To the axe of the spoiler and self-interest fell a prey,
And Crossberry Way and old Round Oak's narrow lane
With its hollow tree and pulpits I shall never see again,
Enclosure like a Buonaparte let not a thing remain,
It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill . . .

Nor, before the eighteenth century, is there any such imaginatively interpretive fellow-feeling for an animal, not even in John Skelton's *Philip Sparrow* or Andrew Marvell's *Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn*, to compare with Robert Burns's verses to a field-mouse or Christopher Smart's portrait of his cat in *Jubilate Agno*. Not to make too much of it, one may as well remember that Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* is about a man who kills a bird, and that the explicit moral of the poem is

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.

INTRODUCTION

The point is that with the Romantics nature is for the first time no longer taken for granted: it is valued, as we always value something we realize we might lose.

And this may be why another Romantic trait was a nostalgic looking back at the past, as if there to seek the reassurance of a ruder, but simpler, less complicated way of life than that which the present offered or the future promised. Not only was it a looking-back at a less-civilized bygone age but also an attempt at its imaginative recreation: a new phenomenon altogether. (Renaissance rediscovery and imitation of Roman and Greek art was an effort to resurrect what was recognized as a higher culture. The Romantics were less interested in noble Romans than in noble savages.) The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are notable, where architecture is concerned, for fake medieval antiquities, the building of ornamental ruins,* and of imitations and adaptations of the 'Gothick'—e.g. Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford and William Beckford's Fonthill. In painting, an entirely new mode emerged: the fashion for 'historical painting' which reached, perhaps, its apotheosis in the grandiose forgotten canvases of B. R. Haydon, the friend of Keats and Wordsworth. And Sir Walter Scott, if he did not invent the 'historical novel', certainly established it as a genre.

In poetry this tendency was reflected in the new interest in old ballads and the like. Imitations and even forgeries of Gaelic and medieval literature began to abound. Thomas Gray led off with his adaptations from Norse and Welsh poetry: *The Fatal Sisters*, *The Descent of Odin*, and so on. Then a Highland schoolmaster called James MacPherson made an extraordinary furore with his supposed translations of the supposed epics of a supposed Gaelic poet. His *Works of Ossian* caught the imagination of Europe.† For these 'translations' he invented a sort of incantatory prose—

* See Thomas Gray's *On Lord Holland's Seat, near Margate, Kent* for a satiric comment on the fashion.

† Including that of Napoleon Bonaparte, perhaps the prime exemplar of the Romantic man of action.

INTRODUCTION

poetry, almost unreadable now, though in its day its effect was hypnotic. About the same time Bishop Percy brought out his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, a collection of genuine but often refurbished and 'improved' folk-songs, Border ballads, and other early poetry. Though these ballads belong to the sixteenth century and earlier, it was in the Romantic period that they made their appearance as literature and exercised their greatest influence on written poetry. The publication of the *Reliques* encouraged Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott to refashion old songs and ballads into their own poetry. But it was Thomas Chatterton, the Bristol apprentice (his short and tragic life – he poisoned himself in a garret at the age of eighteen – made him the archetype of the Romantic poet) who perpetrated the most dynamic of the poetic forgeries. He produced, manuscripts and all, the works of an imaginary medieval poet, Thomas Rowley. The Rowley poems are remarkable not because they took in Horace Walpole, but because with their pastiche of Chaucer and Spenser they pointed the way to a poetry of direct utterance, to an escape from the stylized ornamentation of eighteenth-century verse.

This was the beginning of the end of the 'poetic diction' of the Augustans; that 'mechanical device of style' (so Wordsworth called it) which was strangling English poetry.* As F. W. Bateson has observed, when one reads a typical eighteenth-century poem 'the words do not seem to be the expression of its thought so much as its translation into another medium'. Wordsworth gave eighteenth-century poetic diction a knockout blow in his famous *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, one of the great documents of the Romantic Movement. There he laid it down that poetry should be written 'in a selection of language really used by men'. The key word here is 'selection', for Wordsworth in some respects remained essentially an eighteenth-century poet to the end. Any one canto of Byron's colloquial *Don Juan* – and Byron saw himself as the heir of Pope – contains more

* Though in due course Romantic poetry evolved a 'poetic diction' of its own, which Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot were to demolish.

'language really used by men' than *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* put together. In this respect it may be worth noting that the poetry which most consistently obeys Wordsworth's recipe was written by people like Burns (only in his dialect poems however), Blake, and Clare. All three were self-educated.

But the clue to the Romantic movement lies not so much in the abandonment of 'poetic diction', or in the feeling for nature which culminated in the Wordsworthian pantheism (more properly, 'pan-entheism'), or in the half-sentimental half-sensational nostalgia for savage or 'Gothick' bygones. It is to be found in the Romantic accent on the individual as distinct from Man, on personal values, and in its interest in human psychology. Again the poets seem intuitively to have foreseen the threat posed by the growth of a mass-society with its necessary regimentation of the individual, or at the very least its heavy pressure towards spiritual and intellectual conformism,* though it was left to such European Romantics as Heine, Stendhal, Leopardi, and later Baudelaire to make clear the nature of this threat. But:

I wander thro' each charter'd street
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

Thus Blake, whom his contemporaries, even Wordsworth,

* See Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*: 'A multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are almost daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, when the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence barely gratifies.'

INTRODUCTION

at best regarded as a visionary eccentric. Yet he was the great vatic poet of the Romantic movement. As Eliot has said, Blake's poems have the unpleasantness of great poetry; 'a peculiar honesty which, in a world too frightened to be honest, is peculiarly terrifying'. Blake is the most individual figure of the Romantic movement, whose leading echelon was indeed composed of minds so individual that nearly all who have been classified as belonging to it have also, to adapt Mr Goldwyn, been classified out. It is the penetrating insight of Blake's poems to the spiritual, over and above the human, condition that make them startling. Yet they are, as Eliot also noted, the poems of a man with a profound interest in human emotions, and a profound knowledge of them.

This interest in the psychology, as opposed to the behaviour, of the human being is a specifically Romantic characteristic. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* is on one level a psychological study, while his *Dejection: A Letter* may also be read as a piece of profound self-analysis. Nevertheless the poet whose interest in and knowledge of human emotions was as perspicacious as Blake's is Wordsworth, though this is not an aspect of his genius which is often commented on. *The Borderers* – hopeless as a play and not very much better as a poem – is remarkable as an exercise of psychological imagination in investigating the nature of evil. In it Wordsworth at one point parallels the Marquis de Sade:

Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark,

And shares the nature of infinity.

Hardly less remarkable in this way is the often-derided *Peter Bell*, which is not, as most suppose, a dreary didactic 'moral' poem but a penetrating examination of the psychology of conversion.*

Again it was Wordsworth who wrote the major poem of the Romantic movement. This was of course *The Pre-*

* See Lascelles Abercrombie: *The Art of Wordsworth* (Oxford University Press, 1952) for a fascinating analysis and appreciation of this much under-estimated poem.

INTRODUCTION

lude. Auden has pointed out how appropriate it is that one of its original titles should have been *A Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind*. What else but the individual mind could be the hero of the great Romantic epic? This extraordinary work is the key to Wordsworth. *The Prelude* itself was to be no more than an anté-chapel to *The Recluse*, a gigantic *magnum opus* which he planned but, perhaps fortunately, never carried out. Not only *The Excursion* but all the poems he ever wrote were to form part of *The Recluse*, being associated to the main structure like 'little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses'. But what is unprecedented about *The Prelude* is its subject – the growth of a poet's mind! No less remarkable is the success with which Wordsworth handled so unmanageable a theme. And he succeeded largely because, as Lascelles Abercrombie observed, 'In Wordsworth psychology took the place and performed the function of mythology.'

The other major Romantic poem of which the individuality of the poet may be said to be hero is Byron's *Don Juan*, though at first sight nothing could be further from *The Prelude* in style, purpose, or level of operation. Yet as Auden remarked, 'Don Juan is as much the dramatized story of the education of Byron's mind as *The Prelude* is a direct account of the education of Wordsworth's.' The Don Juan of the poem is not a stand-in for Byron – but then Don Juan is not the hero of the poem. The hero of *Don Juan* is the poet himself, narrating, digressing, commenting, talking about it and about. Its true subject is the personality of Byron; the real man, presented with gaiety and detached realism; a Byron from whom the histrionic sentimentalism of *Childe Harold* has been cauterized.

Now it may be worth noting how often in Romantic poetry the figure of the Solitary – the individual man, antipathetic to what Ortega y Gasset defines as the mass* –

* In *La rebelión de las masas* (The Revolt of the Masses), 1930. He says, 'The mass is all which sets no value on itself – good or ill – based on specific grounds, but which feels itself "just like everybody" . . . The mass crushes beneath it everything which is different, everything

INTRODUCTION

occurs. There is a Solitary in Wordsworth's *The Excursion*, though in that poem the true Solitary is the character Wordsworth calls the Wanderer: the two are indeed different facets of the same figure. (Significantly or not, the title Wordsworth intended to give to his never-completed *magnum opus*, of which *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* are but parts, was *The Recluse*.) Wordsworth may be said to have been more or less obsessed with the figure of the Solitary, who in various guises is the theme of many of his shorter poems – e.g. the Leech-gatherer in *Resolution and Independence* and the Shepherd-lord in *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle*. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* is about a Solitary; the hero of Byron's *Childe Harold* may be said to be another; it is a transcendent Solitary that figures in Blake's *Mental Traveller* and *William Bond*. He is foreshadowed in Cowper's description of himself in *The Task*: 'I was a stricken deer, that left the herd . . .' and most poignantly in *The Castaway*. Sometimes the poet himself is the Solitary, as in Coleridge's *Dejection: A Letter*; or throughout the stark autobiography of John Clare – those poems written in the asylum, like *I Am, Love and Solitude*, *A Vision*, in which the Solitary becomes the Outcast. In his madness Clare used to identify himself with Byron (he gave his long autobiographical poem *Child Harold* one of Byron's titles). In Shelley the Outcast-Solitary* is to be identified with the poet in *Alastor*,

that is excellent, individual, qualified and select. Anybody who is not like everybody, who does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated.' The figure of the Solitary begins to occur in poetry about the same time as the advent of the Industrial Revolution which produced Ortega y Gasset's 'Mass-man'. Almost simultaneously appeared the social phenomenon of the Dandy – the word dates from 1780. The Dandy asserted in dress and behaviour his uniqueness, individuality, and personality.

* This figure, either rejected or rejecting – and sometimes both – haunted the imagination of nineteenth-century poets and can be found in Matthew Arnold's *Forsaken Merman* and *Scholar-Gypsy*; in the nonsense poems of Edward Lear; in the first person singular of *The City of Dreadful Night* by James Thomson ('B.V.'). It may be that his last appearance was as late as the twentieth century in the personae of J. Alfred Prufrock and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.

INTRODUCTION

the 'phantom among men' in *Adonais*, and the 'I' of such poems as *Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples*, *The Question* and *To Edward Williams*. The Outcast-Solitary finds a logical conclusion in *The Last Man*, one of Thomas Hood's best poems (alas too long to include in this anthology).

John Clare, whose stature is only now beginning to be recognized, was perhaps the last of the pure Romantic poets. Like Blake he was neglected in his lifetime (though he did have a few years of precarious fame) and like Blake much of his work was not published until long after his death. He was a nature-poet in a sense to which none of the other Romantics can lay claim: for in his work Clare displays the knowledge and observation of a naturalist as well as a poet.* Clare is unlike any other poet in this book, except perhaps Burns, in that his best work derives directly from the oral tradition of poetry: the ballads and folk songs of rural labourers, of whom he was one. (His father, a thresher, was a ballad-singer with a repertoire of over a hundred songs.) It was as if, at the very moment of change, the anonymous traditional culture of the peasantry had found an individual voice just when it was about to disappear. Clare himself was a victim of the agrarian revolution which altered the rural ways of life that had subsisted for centuries. The enclosure of the common lands and introduction of economic farming (the one prevented cottagers from grazing the livestock which formed part of their subsistence; the other made casual seasonal work scarcer) brought acute poverty to the peasantry in general and to Clare in particular. He could make a living neither as a poet nor a farm-worker; and this helped to drive him mad.

Compared with Clare's, the poetry of Shelley and Keats, two of his contemporaries who belong to what has been called the second generation of Romantics, is self-conscious. Both were masterly technical experimenters – the

* Compare Clare's *The Nightingale's Nest* with Wordsworth's *The Green Linnet*; and for good measure with Coleridge's *The Nightingale* and Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, all of which are included in this anthology.