THE ENGLISH LINE

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Poetry and the Sociological Idea (1981)

Wordsworth's Language of Men (1984)

Raymond Williams (1981)

The Poetry of R. S. Thomas (1987)

To Get Clear (poems) (1981)

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THE ENGLISH LINE

Poetry of the Unpoetic from Wordsworth to
Larkin

John Powell Ward

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Preface

Writing on several poets at once, one draws on many resources. For intellectual stimulus and their patience and support in various ways, times and places, I am indebted to Dannie and Joan Abse, Peter Forbes, Jeremy Hooker, Sue Roe, Gordon Stuart and John Turner; to Beverley Tarquini, Carolin Egar, Alison Kelly and Sue Cope of Macmillan; to my wife and sons, as always; to University of London extramural students at Ongar, Essex; and most of all (because the idea for the book came from their stimulus) to the students who took my course on twentieth-century poetry at University College Swansea, in 1985–8.

JOHN POWELL WAR

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Hardy's poems belong to an English tradition that goes back to Romantic poets like Wordsworth and John Clare, and beyond them to the anonymous beginnings of the English lyric in the Middle Ages. It is a poetry, essentially, of normative experience: plain, low-pitched, physical and abiding. It says that life goes on, and that human beings think and feel in much the same way from one generation to another, and from one century to another, and that because they think and feel, they are capable of tragedy, and of poetry. It is the principal tradition in English verse.

Samuel Hynes

La mélancholie n'est pas française

Julia Kristeva

He is the poet of unpoetical natures

John Stuart Mill (on Wordsworth)

O woe, woe, etcetera

Ezra Pound (on Housman)

Some time ago I agreed to judge a poetry competition – you know, the kind where they get about 35,000 entries, and you look at the best few thousand. After a bit I said, where are all the love poems? And nature poems? And they said Oh, we threw all those away. I expect they were the one I should have liked.

Philip Larkin

Does the land wait the sleeping lord
or is the wasted land
that very lord who sleeps?

David Jones