CONTENTS

Acknowledgements xi
Introduction xiii
A Note on Monetary Values xxvii
Myth 1 Romanticism began in 1798 1
Myth 2 English Romanticism was a reaction against the Enlightenment 8
Myth 3 The Romantics hated the sciences 17
Myth 4 The Romantics repudiated the Augustans, especially Pope and Dryden 29
Myth 5 The Romantic poets were misunderstood, solitary geniuses 40
Myth 6 Romantic poems were produced by spontaneous inspiration 49
Myth 7 Blake was mad 58
Myth 8 Blake wrote ‘Jerusalem’ as an anthem to Englishness 66
Myth 9 Lyrical Ballads (1798) was designed to illustrate ‘the two cardinal points of poetry’, using poems about everyday life and the supernatural 74
Myth 10 Wordsworth’s Preface to Lyrical Ballads was a manifesto for the Romantic revolution 82
Myth 11 Wordsworth had an incestuous relationship with his sister 90
Myth 12  Tory Wordsworth  98
Myth 13  The person from Porlock  108
Myth 14  Jane Austen had an incestuous relationship with her sister  115
Myth 15  The Keswick rapist  124
Myth 16  Byron had an affair with his sister  132
Myth 17  Byron was a great lover of women  140
Myth 18  Byron was a champion of democracy  149
Myth 19  Byron was a ‘noble warrior’ who died fighting for Greek freedom  156
Myth 20  Shelley committed suicide by sailboat  166
Myth 21  Shelley’s heart  175
Myth 22  Keats’s ‘humble origins’  185
Myth 23  Keats was gay  193
Myth 24  Keats was killed by a review  203
Myth 25  Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote Frankenstein  212
Myth 26  Women writers were an exploited underclass – unknown, unloved, and unpaid  220
Myth 27  The Romantics were atheists  232
Myth 28  The Romantics were counter-cultural drug users  242
Myth 29  The Romantics practised free love on principle  251
Myth 30  The Romantics were the rock stars of their day  261
Coda  270
Further Reading  277
Index  283