

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Eighteenth-Century Connections

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PHILOSOPHICAL CONNECTIONS

*Akenside, Neoclassicism,
Romanticism*

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Philosophical Connections

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Abstract: Neoclassical and Romantic verse cultures are often assumed to sit in an oppositional relationship, with the latter amounting to a hostile reaction against the former. But there are in fact a good number of continuities between the two movements, ones that strike at the heart of the evolution of verse forms in the period. This Element proposes that the mid-eighteenth-century poet Mark Akenside and his hugely influential *Pleasures of Imagination* represent a case study in the deep connections between Neoclassicism and Romanticism.

Akenside's poem offers a vital illustration of how verse was a rival to philosophy, and promotes a new perspective on philosophic problems of appearance, or how the world 'seems to be'. What results from this is a poetic form of knowing that foregrounds feeling over fact, that connects Neoclassicism and Romanticism, and that Akenside called the imagination's 'pleasures'.

Keywords: Neoclassicism, Romanticism, philosophy, verse, Akenside

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