

An analysis of a broad selection of the poetry and philosophical prose of James Beattie within its eighteenth-century context.

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Abstract

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significance and relevant contexts of the collected poems of James Beattie, within a detailed study of his own prose works and wider eighteenth-century intellectual debates. His position on the periphery of the literary canon means that this thesis deals largely with primary material, which permits a more thorough and objective analysis than has been conducted before. The first half of this study deals with Beattie's poetic output. Chapter 1 focuses on Beattie's first volume of poetry, *Original Poems and Translations*. In this chapter I analyse the poems within the context of other eighteenth-century poets, and explore Beattie's engagement with patronage, the eighteenth-century conventions for success as a new poet, and poetic genius. Chapter 2 deals with Beattie's second volume, *Poems on Several Subjects*, to illustrate the evolution in his ideas concerning the usefulness of poetry as a vehicle for philosophical investigation, and his engagement with

eighteenth-century social and political issues. Chapter 3 explores his best known poem, *The Minstrel: Or, the Progress of Genius*. This chapter discusses the poem in its entirety and within the context of Beattie's career as a poet and philosopher. Chapter 5 focuses on Beattie's final volumes of poetry, which represent his desire to control his poetic legacy. The second half of the study deals with selected critical and philosophical works, which provide insight into the development of Beattie's poetry and express in prose many of the subjects in his poetry. The most detailed attention in this section is given to the *Essay on Truth*, although there are also chapters examining other relevant critical works including *Dissertations Moral and Critical. On Poetry and Music and On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition*, and Beattie's collection of "Scoticisms." There are few modern critical studies of Beattie, and many of them are limited to *The Minstrel* and to

specific areas of interest within this work. This study's comparative and interdisciplinary approach to Beattie's poetry and selected prose aims to justify Beattie's inclusion in our study of the eighteenth century. It is also intended to raise awareness of Beattie's importance in the eighteenth-century and to illustrate his influence on three first-generation Romantic poets of generally recognised importance, namely Scott, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

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