



Poetry and the Idea of Progress, 1760–90

By John Regan

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An exploration of under-examined relationships between poetry and historiography between 1760 and 1790.

‘This bold and fundamentally progressive contribution to current debates in poetics will not only bring a rich, historically informed perspective to the field, it will also prompt a more humane and humanly responsive interrogation of the resources of literary art.’

—Peter de Bolla, Professor of Cultural History and Aesthetics, University of Cambridge, UK

‘This splendidly far-reaching book brings together two intellectual strands that are seldom taken together: eighteenth-century prosody and the “stadial” theory of human development. Through a series of bravura readings of canonical and obscured thinkers, Regan brilliantly demonstrates the centrality of verse culture to larger philosophical debates, while complicating the perceived virtues of “polish” and “refinement” as they emerged within neo-classicism.’

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This is a wide-ranging, discriminating book, which moves skilfully between diverse fields and critical approaches’

—Fiona Milne University of York, [‘The British Association of Romantic Studies Review,’](#) No. 52 (Autumn 2018).

‘Poetry and the Idea of Progress, 1760–1790’ explores the role of poetry in eighteenth-century thinking on human progress. Its central contention is that the textural, verbal characteristics of poetry were a crucial form of response to ideas of human development. That is, the aesthetics of verse – how poetry appeals to the senses as well as to the intellect – constitute inadequately appreciated forms of response to the ideas of progress which were developing and gaining popular traction in Britain in the period 1760–1790.

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About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

John Regan is a research fellow in English literature at the University of Cambridge, UK. His research interests centre on the cultural dialogue between poetics and historical writing in the long eighteenth century.

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