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Performing Authorship in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals (Transits: Literature, Thought & Culture, 1650-1850)

Manushag N. Powell

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Performing Authorship in Eighteenth-Century Periodicals discusses the English periodical and how it shapes and expresses early conceptions of authorship in the eighteenth century. Unique to the British eighteenth century, the periodical is of great value to scholars of English cultural studies because it offers a venue where authors hash out, often in extremely dramatic terms, what they think it should take to be a writer, what their relationship with their new mass-media audience ought to be, and what qualifications should act as gatekeepers to the profession. Exploring these questions in *The Female Spectator*, *The Drury-Lane Journal*,*The Midwife*, *The World*, *The Covent-Garden Journal*, and other periodicals of the early and mid-eighteenth century, Manushag Powell examines several “paper wars” waged between authors. At the height of their popularity, essay periodicals allowed professional writers to fashion and make saleable a new kind of narrative and performative literary personality, the eidolon, and arguably birthed a new cult of authorial personality. In *Performing Authorship in Eighteenth-Century Periodicals*, Powell argues that the coupling of persona and genre imposes a lifespan on the periodical text; the periodicals don’t only rise and fall, but are born, and in good time, they die.

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