Abstract

The paper provides an account of changes which occurred in eighteenth century English periodicals in terms of content and targeted readers. Women’s periodicals are of special interest as a literary phenomenon with the content specially designed to attract women as primary intended readers. Women’s roles are sought to be reconsidered and illustrate a shift in narrative agency from subject to participant in eighteenth century England. In particular, it explores the conditions under which the Female Spectator, the first periodical written by a woman and for women, emerged as a social fact discussing women issues of low possibilities and limitations – thereby targeting at how women might act effectively despite the existing restrictions and what they should know. Focusing on the movement of enfranchisement of women and containment, female readers are separated from the male audience shaping so called feminine reading.

Keywords: women periodicals, feminity, women’s roles, the Female Spectator, feminine reading