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NETWORKS OF RECEPTION IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH PRESS AND LAURENCE STERNE

Mary Newbould
Kazimierz Wielki University



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Networks of Reception in the Eighteenth-Century British Press and Laurence Sterne

Elements in Eighteenth-Century Connections

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Mary Newbould
Kazimierz Wielki University

Author for correspondence: Mary Newbould, mcn23@cam.ac.uk

Abstract: Criticism and creativity characterised literary reception in eighteenth-century Britain. The press – periodicals, newspapers, and magazines – harboured the reviewing cultures belonging to the emerging professionalisation of literary criticism. It also provided a highly fertile ground for creativity, including imitative items inspired by new publications, while critical reviews often incorporated parody. The press fostered experimentation among often anonymous reader-contributors, even while it facilitated the establishment of ‘classic’ works by recirculating well-known authors’ names. Laurence Sterne’s reception was energetically shaped by the interaction between critical and creative responses: the press played a major role in forging his status as an ‘inimitable’ author of note.

Keywords: reception, newspapers, magazines, adaptation, Laurence Sterne

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