




19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century, No 8 (2009)

Home > No 8 (2009) > Palmer

Font Size:   

Florence Marryat, Theatricality and Performativity

Beth Palmer

Abstract

*This article explores Victorian and modern ideas of theatricality and performativity by examining the work of the sensation novelist, actress, singer, lecturer and magazine-editor Florence Marryat (1833-1899). It uses Judith Butler's work to understand performativity as defining a self-conscious kind of acting or performance that seeks to foster an awareness of the state of performance from a readership or audience. Theatricality, on the other hand, denotes a kind of performance or writing that may question identity by its staginess or artificiality, but does not necessarily refute the idea of a 'true' identity behind that performance. Theatricality and performativity are pressed together in Marryat's writing and this article uses her work to probe the boundaries between the two definitions. To do so it focuses on the various self-constructions of Marryat's early career including her biography of her father, Captain Frederick Marryat, and her early sensation fiction, such as her best-selling *Love's Conflict* (1865). It also makes use of correspondence, recitation scripts and marketing material found in the Marryat archive in the Beinecke Library at Yale and in the British Library. Marryat's fiction and her self-constructions offer us ways of realising the complexity of ideas about authenticity, theatricality and performance operating within the realm of popular culture and sensational fiction in the nineteenth century.*

Full Text: [PDF](#)

[ADD COMMENT](#)

Copyright © by the contributing authors. All material on this collaboration platform is the property of the contributing authors.

Design, development and hosting: [Centre for Computing in the Humanities, King's College London](#)