



Griffith University and the Humanities Research Centre, ANU  
present a two-day conference

## Politics, Emotions and the Periodical Press, c.1780-1830

to take place in the Lecture Theatre 2.02,  
Sir Roland Wilson Building, 120 McCoy Circuit, at the Australian National University  
11-12 September 2017

### CONFIRMED SPEAKERS:

Jon Mee (University of York)  
Kevin Gilmartin (Caltech)

Kim Wheatley (College of William and Mary, VA)  
Joanne Wilkes (Auckland)

During the Romantic era, periodicals played an important role in the expansion of the reading public. As the number and range of periodicals proliferated in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these diverse publications came to be regarded as crucial agents of social progress, diffusing knowledge and shaping cultural taste. Individually and severally, periodicals embodied an ideal of enlightened public culture, in which principles of reason, moderation, and civility facilitated the smooth exchange of ideas. At the same time, the polarisation of political attitudes in the wake of the French Revolution caused periodicals to become more partisan, agents of combative aggression rather than of refined debate. In addition, the expansion of the reading public was accompanied by its fragmentation, as serial publications of this kind began to specialise in order to appeal to constituencies with particular political affiliations, social backgrounds, and/or cultural and scientific interests. As a consequence, periodicals came to be regarded in an ambivalent light, as both a source of enlightened public discourse and a cause of its erosion.

For this reason, the emotions were imbued with enormous significance in Romantic-era periodicals, since, especially in relation to politics, they could be held either to exacerbate factionalism, resentment, and incivility, or to mitigate such undesirable affective responses. By focusing on the links between politics and the emotions in periodicals, this symposium aims to deepen our understanding of the affective dimensions of this crucial phase in the development of public opinion.

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