

8-31-2013

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### Recommended Citation

Christie, William (2013) "The Modern Athenians: the Edinburgh Review in the Knowledge Economy of the Early Nineteenth Century," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 39: Iss. 1, 115–138.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol39/iss1/12>

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## **THE MODERN ATHENIANS: THE *EDINBURGH* REVIEW IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY OF THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY**

*William Christie*

Morals and metaphysics, politics and political economy, the way to make the most of all the modifications of smoke, steam, gas, and paper currency; you have all these to learn from us; in short, all the arts and sciences. We are the modern Athenians.

Thomas Love Peacock, *Crotchet Castle*<sup>1</sup>

OVER twenty years ago now, David Riede suggested that the first quarter of the nineteenth century, generally referred to as the “Romantic Period,” could as easily and should perhaps more accurately be entitled the “Age of Reviews.”<sup>2</sup> Picking up on Riede’s revisionary suggestion, and because Ian Duncan’s notion of a “post-Enlightenment” by its very name plays down the powerful continuities between the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment and some of their literal and metaphorical pupils in the nineteenth,<sup>3</sup> I want to suggest calling it the “Periodical Enlightenment.” My choice of title is ironic, of course, not to say provocative, given that the Reviews are generally understood to have been deeply antipathetic to Romanticism. What the student of Romantic literature tends to know about periodical reviewing is that Francis Jeffrey thought Wordsworth’s *Excursion* would never do and that John Gibson Lockhart and John Wilson Croker killed off Keats; reading more widely, he or she would learn of the Reviews’ “relentless politicization of discourse,” to quote

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<sup>1</sup> *The Novels of Thomas Peacock*, ed. David Garnett, 2<sup>nd</sup> impr., 2 vols (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), II:657.

<sup>2</sup> David G. Riede, *Oracles and Hierophants: Constructions of Romantic Authority* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 262.

<sup>3</sup> Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 23ff.

Kim Wheatley on how the Reviews were perceived by their contemporaries, “their reliance on (and abuse of) anonymity, their indulgence in so-called ‘personality’ or personal attacks and, last but not least, their sway over public opinion.”<sup>4</sup>

What interests me in this article (and my reason for suggesting we rename the period) is this last: the “sway over public opinion” assumed and enforced by the big Reviews – by the *Edinburgh Review* (begun in 1802) and the *Quarterly Review* (1809) – insofar as this sway confirmed their role in the culture of knowledge in early nineteenth-century Britain. Because it established the form, I will concentrate on the *Edinburgh*, on its multi-disciplinary approach to the organization and publication of knowledge and on the way it functioned in the knowledge economy of the period relative to other institutions and enterprises: relative to the universities and academies and lecturing institutions and what historians of science call “invisible colleges;”<sup>5</sup> relative to the professional, intellectual, and learned societies and clubs; relative to the public and circulating libraries and commercial publishing houses.

During the publishing revolution of the eighteenth century, readers had looked to the selections and recommendations of book reviews to help them make better informed choices, and in 1749 the *Monthly Review* had been established, to be followed not long after by the first and short-lived *Edinburgh Review* and the more durable *Critical Review*, in 1755 and 1756 respectively. Many more Reviews were to follow, but however exigent the commercial pressures on the establishment and development of Reviews, their centrality and influence was never limited to promoting books as commercial objects. From the beginning, they were also engaged in the culture of ideas, information, and ideologies in ways that ensured the dissemination of current knowledge, while at the same time contributing to the political and cultural debates that became more open and antagonistic after the French Revolution. Indeed, it was to realize both the intellectual *and* the political potential of reviewing that the *Edinburgh Review; or, Critical Journal* was launched in October 1802. Some clever, scathing, but well-informed and well-argued reviews saw the *Edinburgh* erupt into the intellectual life of early nineteenth-century

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<sup>4</sup> Kim Wheatley, ed., *Romantic Periodicals and Print Culture* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 3.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g. Joel Mokyr’s definition “Informal scholarly communities spanning different countries,” in his *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002), 56.

Britain. Before the end of its first year, Francis Jeffrey had been installed as editor and the *Review* was on its way to becoming both a successful commercial publishing venture and a cultural phenomenon.

### ECONOMIES AND KNOWLEDGES

Before embarking on the *Review*'s intellectual genealogy and institutional network, however, I need briefly to explain the ways in which I am using the term *knowledge economy*, because all the many definitions and associations that the term carries with it in the early twenty-first century are relevant to the *Edinburgh* as a knowledge enterprise. If by *knowledge economy* we mean an economy *dependent on knowledge*, for example – an economy of proliferating vocational specializations that require information and training in specific areas of expertise – we are reminded that behind the *Edinburgh* lay an elite of professional intellectuals. Far from being the “free-floating intelligentsia” envisaged by Karl Mannheim,<sup>6</sup> the intellectuals who devised and drove its agenda were self-consciously professional, most of them engaged and implicated in vocationally specific, as well as more broadly civic, institutions and activities – lawyers, in the first instance, but also doctors, academic philosophers, ministers of religion (less often), and what we would call scientists: Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Francis Horner, John Archibald Murray, Henry Brougham, Thomas Thomson, John Allen, John Thomson, Thomas Brown, Alexander Hamilton, John Playfair. “It may even turn out that the paradigm of the ‘modern’ author is not independence in the sense of having no occupation other than writing for publication,” writes Richard Sher, “but rather independence in the sense of integration into appropriate professions and professional institutions.”<sup>7</sup> Any such characterization of modern authorship would necessarily privilege the Scottish writers and intellectuals of the Enlightenment and periodical Enlightenment.

Secondly and more directly, the phrase *knowledge economy* can refer to an economy “marked by the expansion of knowledge-producing or knowledge-disseminating occupations” and institutions – as, indeed,

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Kegan Paul, Routledge, 1936), 137-8.

<sup>7</sup> Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 10-11.

eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain most certainly was – suggesting a complex, interrelated, largely autonomous *industry*.<sup>8</sup> Like all industries, the knowledge industry of the early nineteenth century was often competitive (financially, ideologically, intellectually, rhetorically) rather than cooperative, with its own attempts at exclusion and protectionism and monopoly – the last often masked as “authority.” One need think only of Constable versus Blackwood and the establishment of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, but it was just as true of the world of education and public enlightenment as it was of the more obviously commercial world of publishing. The more we look into the extensive, complex, crisscrossing culture of eighteenth-century public lecturing, for example, where most of the lecturers were sole traders, the more aware we become of the appropriateness of the term *industry*.<sup>9</sup>

If by *knowledge economy*, on the other hand, we mean an economy in which the sale of information and ideas through educational institutions makes a substantial contribution to the gross domestic product, then to a qualified extent this was also true of Scotland over the course of the long eighteenth century, when the universities offered a curriculum that in the United Kingdom was uniquely various, and in the case of medicine, exclusive. In the Napoleonic period (our period), moreover, Scotland became an alternative destination for tertiary students denied access to some of the official and unofficial Continental educational centres. Beyond this, however, the involvement of Scots in the production and sale of knowledge through pedagogy and publishing in post-Union Britain is generally recognized as at once disproportionate and distinguished.

The phrase *knowledge economy* can also refer, analogically and originally, to the “economy of knowledge”: the internal organization, management, distribution, and maintenance of knowledge; how knowledge is gathered, processed, classified, ordered, stored, shared, preserved, handed out and handed down. It is in this sense, as I hope to show, that the name “periodical Enlightenment” becomes apposite. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, “general periodicals probably played a far greater role than books in shaping the public understanding

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: Polity; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Alan Osler, *The Rise of Public Lecturing in England* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2007).

of new scientific discoveries, theories, and practices”—indeed, a far greater role than books in shaping *all* public understanding.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, the expression *knowledge economy* invokes the notion of “cultural capital” in the sense developed by Pierre Bourdieu: “all the goods material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation.”<sup>11</sup> Strictly speaking, of course, cultural capital is neither exclusive to a knowledge economy nor in any sense commensurate with it, but in knowledge-related institutions and vocations “intellectual renown constitutes the only kind of capital and profit which is specifically their own.”<sup>12</sup> This is perhaps the least debatable sense of the term when applied to the *Edinburgh’s* enterprise, for individually and collectively the Review very early garnered cultural capital for its contributors and, in turn, conferred cultural capital upon its readers.

In all these definitions, knowledge features or functions as a negotiable commodity – something that can be acquired and traded for its own sake and for the sake of other material and immaterial benefits. In 1799, the “idea broke in upon” Francis Horner, one of the original *Edinburgh* reviewers and a strong moral and intellectual force behind the enterprise, that “with respect to diffusion among the community at large, knowledge may be considered in the light of a commodity, prepared by a separate profession, and consumed and enjoyed by the community as a luxury.”<sup>13</sup> This was not startlingly new, as it happens, for not only had Adam Smith got there before him, but “The idea of knowledge as property (*possessio*),” to quote Peter Burke, had been “formulated by Cicero.”<sup>14</sup> For our purposes, the significance of Horner’s epiphanic moment is that it occurs in the lead up to his collaboration on the

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<sup>10</sup> Gowan Dawson, Richard Noakes, and Jonathan Topham, in the introduction to Geoffrey N. Cantor et al, *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 1-34 (1-2).

<sup>11</sup> As quoted in Richard Harker, “Education and Cultural Capital,” in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory*, ed. Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar, and Chris Wilkes (London: Macmillan, 1990), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1988), 74.

<sup>13</sup> Francis Horner, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner, M.P.*, ed. Leonard Horner, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1843), 1:96.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 1:21-1; Burke, as in n. 8 above, 150.

*Edinburgh Review*: “For Jeffrey and Horner, for the *Edinburgh Reviewer* as a corporate identity,” writes Mark Schoenfield, “the interpenetration between economic and intellectual value was a primary justification for the *Review* and its commitment to Horner’s ideals of an analytic organization of knowledge.”<sup>15</sup>

It is not just the concept of *economy* that begs discrimination and definition, of course; the word *knowledge* can be and has been used to refer to any one of a number of things, from the most abstract *liberal* or *academic knowledge* to the “facts” resulting from experimentation and observing the material universe (*useful knowledge*). I take it as axiomatic that the “selection, organization and presentation” involved in all forms of knowledge “is not a neutral, value-free process” (to quote Peter Burke), and that, as “the expression of a world-view supported by an economic as well as a social and political system,” systems of knowledge are constantly undergoing Kuhnian or paradigmatic change.<sup>16</sup> “The categories of human thought are never fixed in any one definite form; they are made, unmade and remade incessantly,” as Durkheim suggested early in the twentieth century: “they change with places and times.”<sup>17</sup> The nineteenth century, it should be said, understood that *science* in both senses of the word was in constant metamorphosis, just as they understood the informing presence of what we would call *ideology*: “sentiments and impressions which float unquestioned and undefined over many an understanding,” to quote Francis Jeffrey, “and give a colour to the character, and a bias to the conduct, of multitudes, who are not so much as aware of their existence.”<sup>18</sup>

Ideas, information, and opinions – which is to say, *knowledge* – was, as I said, the social currency of the expanding eighteenth-century public sphere and it was no less apparent to them than it is to us that “Progress in exploiting the existing stock of knowledge,” to quote Joel Mokyr, “will depend first and foremost on the efficiency and cost of *access* to knowledge.”<sup>19</sup> Already by 1726, Daniel Defoe was celebrating “the

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Schoenfield, *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The “Literary Lower Empire”* (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan, 2009), 67.

<sup>16</sup> Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, as in n. 8, 176.

<sup>17</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Collier, 1965), 28.

<sup>18</sup> Francis Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, 2nd ed, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1846), 1:80.

<sup>19</sup> Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena*, 7.

spreading of useful Knowledge in the World, and making the Accession to it cheap and easy.”<sup>20</sup> By the early nineteenth century, the production and consumption of knowledge in Britain’s thriving lecture and print culture testified to an economic and emotional investment in *both* liberal *and* useful knowledge. How much of this could be called “intellectual voyeurism,” to use Daniel Headrick’s phrase for the vogue of encyclopedias, and how much intellectual congress or conversation is irrelevant.<sup>21</sup> Knowledge was in demand and the demand was being amply supplied, not least by the big Reviews.

### EDINBURGH INNOVATIONS

From the start, thanks to Sydney Smith, the *Edinburgh Review* paid well – astonishingly high payment compared with the rate being offered in the eighteenth century – a fact that very soon became part of its reputation and central to its status and role in the knowledge economy. “Constable,” writes Ian Duncan, “was able to reclaim the tradition of a professional rather than merely commercial class of men of letters by paying unprecedentedly high fees to his editor and contributors: and investment that saved their status as gentlemen and, conversely, cast the publisher himself as an enlightened person rather than a tradesman.”<sup>22</sup> With comparative independence and a dramatic increase in financial remuneration came a dramatic rise in the status of the reviewer. “Gentility itself,” to quote James Secord, “was to be redefined around notions of intellectual leadership. The major quarterlies, especially the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, played a crucial part in defining this new role for the author.”<sup>23</sup>

Financial reward and a new sense of self-importance also encouraged a natural inflation in book reviewing itself—though it should be said that Sydney Smith, in a letter to Lady Holland in 1819, put it down to a characteristically Scottish historical expansiveness and verbosity: “The Scotch, whatever other talents they may have, can never condense; they always begin a few days before the flood, and come gradually down to the reign of George the third, forgetful of nothing but the shortness of

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel Defoe, *An Essay upon Literature; or, An Inquiry into the Antiquity and Original of Letters* (London: Thomas Bowles, 1726), 114.

<sup>21</sup> As quoted in Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena*, 69.

<sup>22</sup> Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> In the introduction to his edition of Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology* (London: Penguin, 1997), xii.

human life, and the volatility of human attention.”<sup>24</sup> Whatever the cause, reviews were soon running to twenty or thirty, even as much as fifty and sixty pages. More to the point, the priorities of book reviewing changed, as the reviewer and his ideas on the topic in question took more and more precedence over the publication under review, which often became merely the occasion for a reflective article or essay. It was not just that the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* had barely concealed political priorities – that their “Right leg [was] politics,” as Jeffrey said, looking back on the enterprise – though this was certainly true.<sup>25</sup> The *review essay*, as it now became, saw its responsibility as one of offering an intellectual and historical context for the work under review, and discussion of the text had to await generalizations that, when not openly argumentative, were often unapologetically didactic, with the reviewer affecting a kind of omniscience and assuming greater authority than both the author and the reader: “he establishes his own claims in an elaborate inaugural dissertation *de omni scibile et quibusdam aliis* [about every knowable thing, and even certain other things]”, wrote William Hazlitt, “before he deigns to bring forward the pretensions of the original candidate for praise.”<sup>26</sup>

*Every knowable thing*: we will come across the phrase again. To get a sense of what Hazlitt had in mind, witness the advice Jeffrey asked John Allen to pass on to the Italian exile, Ugo Foscolo, “in reviewing the literature of Italy”:

it would certainly be desirable that he showed so much acquaintance with that of other countries—as to give his judgment authority with their natives—He should recollect in short that he is writing to foreigners whose habits and prejudices must be attended to even when he undertakes to correct them of error—The more he mixes too of philosophy and *general* speculation the better—the more he can connect peculiarities of taste with peculiarities in the history and governments of different nations—or trace back the operation of these great causes that are the common sources of whatever distinguishes one people from another—I conceive in short that such a discourse on Italian literature as might do for an Academy in that country would not

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<sup>24</sup> *The Letters of Sydney Smith*, ed. Nowell C. Smith, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 1:327.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, 1:xvii.

<sup>26</sup> *Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, 9 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), 6:192.

be fit for the Edinbr R—and that Mr F. will do most justice to his own talents and principles in going as often as he can beyond the narrow boundaries of mere literature.<sup>27</sup>

An introduction or digression might aspire to being a self-contained, miniature essay, harking back to the more formal essays of Hume or Johnson, or the French *Encyclopédistes*. The publication of Walter Scott's edition of Swift, for example, elicits from Jeffrey not just an exasperated psychopathology of Swift himself and an extended characterization of "that generation of authors," but a cultural history of "the present times—in which the revolution in our literature has been accelerated and confirmed by the concurrence of many causes":

The agitations of the French revolution, and the discussions as well as the hopes and terrors to which it gave occasion—the genius of Edmund Burke, and some others of his country—the impression of the new literature of Germany, evidently the original of our lake-school of poetry, and of many innovations in our drama—the rise or revival of a general spirit of methodism in the lower orders—and the vast extent of our political and commercial relations, which have not only familiarized all ranks of people with distant countries, and great undertakings, but have brought knowledge and enterprise home, not merely to the imagination, but to the actual experience of almost every individual.—All these, and several other circumstances, have so far improved or excited the character of our nation, as to have created an effectual demand for more profound speculation, and more serious emotion than was dealt in by the writers of the former century, and which, if it has not yet produced a corresponding supply in all branches, has at least had the effect of decrying the commodities that were previously in vogue, as unsuited to the altered condition of the times.<sup>28</sup>

When discussing change in cultural commodities, as Jeffrey does here in the article on Swift, the *Edinburgh* invariably betrays a sense of its *own* commodity interest and value – in this case, its cultural semiotic *technique* or *know how*, from which its "audience," to quote Jon Klancher, "learns to operate those interpretive strategies through which it can read a social world, a symbolic universe, a textual field, and to discover its own purpose within them."<sup>29</sup> The high status and role of the

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey to John Allen, 15 June 1817, British Library Add. MS 52,181, f. 98.

<sup>28</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 27 (September 1816): 8.

<sup>29</sup> Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 51-2.

Reviews was bound up with their self-elected cultural function as the observers and decoders of historical signs, masters of interpretative techniques and purveyors of “the knowledge.”

The sustained, argumentative review of an idea or phenomenon considered to be of cultural significance would become a staple of the complex knowledge economy of the nineteenth century, in every sense of the phrase. The decision by the *Edinburgh* friends to express themselves collectively in a Review set a precedent for the collaboration of the universities, professions, and learned societies, on the one hand, and journalism on the other. The same interpenetration would prove crucial to the creation and legitimation of “higher journalism” in the Victorian period and to the evolution of a British intellectual caste. To this day, what we might call the culture of knowledge (scholarly research) and the culture of informed opinion (journalism) remain in an uneasy, if parallel, overlapping, and inextricable relationship. “It would be hard to exaggerate the part played by Scotsmen in the development of the English periodical press,” as Eric Gross has said; not only did they help to create both the big Reviews (Walter Scott and a second generation Scot, the publisher John Murray, were behind the *Quarterly*), “but the weeklies as well: the first editors of the *Spectator*, the *Economist*, and the *Saturday Review*, for example, were all Scotsmen. And right through the nineteenth century critics and essayists made their way south across the border.”<sup>30</sup>

### KNOWLEDGE AT A DISCOUNT

All the changes introduced by the *Edinburgh* – its selectivity and generous remuneration; its extended treatments, Olympian historicity, and intellectual arrogance – joined with the critical severity for which it was renowned to establish a rhetorical attitude of “superior cultural authority.”<sup>31</sup> The often antagonistic attitude taken by the nineteenth-century Reviews played a crucial role in reinforcing the self-consciousness of authorship in the Romantic period. Indeed, as Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* makes abundantly clear, it was the

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<sup>30</sup> John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: English Literary Life since 1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> Judith Newton, “Sex and Political Economy in the *Edinburgh Review*,” in her *Starting Over: Feminism and the Politics of Cultural Critique* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1994), 97-123 (97).

proliferation of periodical opinionation – identified by Coleridge as a form of false knowledge – that helped to precipitate the Romantic exaltation of “poetry” as a uniquely gifted imaginative form.<sup>32</sup> But Coleridge’s privileging of poetry is a reminder that we need to expand the scope of our enquiry. What, after Coleridge, we call “literature” – poetry, fiction, drama – while respected as one of society’s significant endeavours, was for the *Edinburgh* only one endeavour among many, all of them with a strong civic function to perform. The word “literature” still meant letters – writing – and did not privilege creative works in the way that the more specialized discipline of “English,” only then coming into being, would eventually do. Whole issues of the *Edinburgh* appeared without any reviews of current poetry or fiction. (The *Quarterly* made a point of covering more than its predecessor, but still creative literature had to take its place.)

Any adequate understanding of the criticism of the *Edinburgh*, then, requires the context of the whole enterprise, which brings us back to its role in the knowledge economy. In line with the production and consumption of knowledge taking place in Britain’s lecture and print culture, the *Edinburgh* conceived of itself as “among the legitimate means by which the English public both instructs and expresses itself”,<sup>33</sup> – and, it should be said, *entertains* itself, because ideas and information bring with them a gratification that is also and simultaneously sensual: the pleasure of thinking and understanding, or simply of knowing something one did not know before. (As Daniel Headrick’s term “intellectual voyeurism” suggests, we need an erotics of knowledge, no less than of reading, from which it needs to be discriminated.) “The distinctive character of the *Edinburgh Review*, as an intellectual enterprise,” writes Biancamaria Fontana, “was exactly that of a popular encyclopaedia of both natural and moral sciences, a principled digest of philosophical and scientific opinions for the consumption of the educated middle classes.”<sup>34</sup>

Sydney Smith certainly thought so: “every man takes up a Review with a lazy spirit, and wishes to get wise at a cheap rate,” he wrote to

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<sup>32</sup> See William Christie, *The Edinburgh Review in the Literary Culture of Romantic Britain: Mammoth and Megalonyx* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), 101-22.

<sup>33</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 23 (April 1814): 39.

<sup>34</sup> Biancamaria Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: The ‘Edinburgh Review’ 1802-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 94-5.

Jeffrey in 1812.<sup>35</sup> Another way of evaluating the same phenomenon would be to see it as part of a laudable campaign “to break down the old and unfortunate distinction between the wisdom of the academician and the wisdom of the man of the world,” as the social and legal philosopher, John Millar, had been able to do, according to Jeffrey.<sup>36</sup> The *Edinburgh* fulfilled the function prescribed for periodicals by Dugald Stewart in his propædeutic *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (1793), adapting to “the rapid, and often capricious changes of general curiosity” and communicating, “even to the indolent and dissipated, some imperfect knowledge of the course of political events, and of the progress of scientific improvement.”<sup>37</sup> Not that Jeffrey himself was always sanguine about the changes taking place in the new knowledge economy: “The age of original genius, and of comprehensive and independent reasoning, seems to be over,” he wrote in a review of Mme de Staël’s *De la littérature dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* in 1813: “Instead of such works as those of Bacon, and Shakespeare, and Taylor, and Hooker, we have Encyclopædias, and geographical compilations, and county histories, and new editions of black letter authors.”<sup>38</sup>

However ambivalent, even contradictory, Jeffrey’s own thoughts on the explosion of information might have been, the *Edinburgh* continued to map traditional disciplines, like philosophy and classical literature, along with various emerging knowledges: the latest “sciences” (as they would soon be called), historiography, anthropology, sociology, foreign policy, education, political economy – and to map them often in novel and provocative ways that justified its incursion into an already crowded market. As Maurice Cross put it in the “Preliminary Dissertation on the Progress of Periodical Literature; and the History, Principles, and Tendency of the *Edinburgh Review*,” prefixed to his selection of *Edinburgh* articles in 1833:

Our Reviews, no longer the repositories of stale facts, of vapid gossip, and an ‘asylum for destitute authors’, aspired to instruct their readers in science, philosophy, and government; and the master spirits of the age, intent upon the wonderful scenes passing around them, employed them as the most appropriate channels for conveying to the people

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<sup>35</sup> *Letters of Sydney Smith*, 1:220.

<sup>36</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 9 (October 1806): 87.

<sup>37</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Creech, 1793), 61.

<sup>38</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 21 (February 1813): 20.

their opinions upon every question affecting the freedom and happiness of the species.<sup>39</sup>

Cross's characterization of the *Edinburgh* here might as easily have been written of Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*. Before it is objected that an encyclopedia has a less tendentious function than the *Edinburgh* with regard to the organization of knowledge, it is worth calling to mind the *Encyclopédie* and reminding ourselves that "Encyclopaedias have in truth long been convenient vehicles for unpopular or advanced opinions and ideas."<sup>40</sup> Closer to home, there are striking similarities between the *Edinburgh* and some of the formal practices of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The *Britannica*, notoriously, did not carry the chart or tree or "View of Knowledge" that had become conventional by 1768 when it began. What it offered instead, in the interests of coherence, was a "new plan": "larger treatises on major subjects, although still in alphabetical order, and short entries as satellites to the treatises."<sup>41</sup> From the 1790s onwards, flourishing under the editorship of Macvey Napier (editor, 1813-1847), these treatises (called "systems") fulfilled the promise of the second edition to synthesize and contextualize, covering the "History, Theory, Practice" of each of the different sciences or disciplines in a way Sydney Smith would have identified as characteristically Scottish – and in a way that, as we saw, was expected of an *Edinburgh* reviewer.<sup>42</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, many of the reviewers went on to develop their reviews into articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. John Playfair contributed a two-part "Dissertation on the Progress of Mathematical and Physical Science since the Revival of Letters in Europe" to the *Supplement* to the fourth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1816. For the *Supplement* to the fourth, fifth, and sixth editions in 1824, Walter Scott contributed "An Essay on Romance," which had begun its life in 1803 as a review of two translations of *Amadis de Gaul*, and Jeffrey's essay on "Beauty" in the same *Supplement* was an adaptation of his 1811 review of Archibald Alison's *On the Nature and Principles of*

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<sup>39</sup> Maurice Cross, ed., *Selections from the Edinburgh Review; Comprising the Best Articles in the Journal from Its Commencement to the Present Time*, 4 vols (London: Longmans, 1833), xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Collison, *Encyclopaedias: Their History throughout the Ages* (New York and London: Hafner, 1964), 4.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), 179.

<sup>42</sup> Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 186.

*Taste*.<sup>43</sup> (Jeffrey also contributed to this *Supplement* an article on Playfair himself, who had died in 1819.) The cross-fertilization between Reviews and encyclopedias was extensive, and it would not be unreasonable to add Reviews to the “flood” of compendia regretted by Jeffrey in his article on Mme de Staël – the almanacs and companions and dictionaries and encyclopedias that comprised the database of the flourishing knowledge economy of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, “when information came of age.”<sup>44</sup> Not only did the *Edinburgh* and the *Britannica* share a publisher from 1812, but on Jeffrey’s retirement in 1829 the editorship of the *Edinburgh* would be taken over by the editor of the *Britannica*, Macvey Napier, who would edit both of them simultaneously until his death in 1847.

Taking just one issue of the *Edinburgh* by way of example, we get some intimation of the spread of liberal and useful knowledge, as well as of the *Edinburgh*’s extraordinarily cosmopolitan literary resources:

*Edinburgh Review*, vol. 11, no. 22 (January 1808)

1. La Place’s *Traité de Méchanique Céleste* [John Playfair] mathematical astronomy
2. Lord Byron’s *Hours of Idleness* [Henry Brougham] poetry
3. John Barrow’s *Life of Lord Macartney* [Brougham] biography/travel
4. Françoise Huber on bee [Francis Jeffrey] natural history
5. Robert Ingram on the increase of Methodism [Sydney Smith] religion
6. Charles Hoyle’s *Exodus: An Epic Poem* [Thomas Campbell] poetry
7. Southey’s mock-Spanish *Letters from England* [Jeffrey] social history
8. Humphry Davy’s Bakerian lecture on electricity [Brougham] chemistry
9. William Lisle Bowles’s edition of Pope [Jeffrey] poetry
10. *Works of Sallust*, trans. Henry Steuart [Joseph Phillimore] classical history
11. William Spence’s *Britain Independent of Commerce* [Thomas Malthus] political economy
12. Sophie Cottin’s *Elisabeth, ou les Exilés de Sibérie* [John Playfair] fiction
13. On Wellesley and the Carnatic Question [Robert Grant/Horner] colonial affairs
14. The Orders in Council and war with America [Brougham] foreign policy

<sup>43</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 3 (October 1803): 109-36; 18 (August 1811): 1-46.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel R. Headrick, *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 143.

Individually and collectively, the big Reviews aspired to authority across as broad a range of disciplines as possible – “all the arts and sciences,” as Mr McQuedy says in my epigraph from Peacock’s *Crochet Castle* – seeking, like George Eliot’s auctioneer, Mr Borthrop Trumbull, to bring “the universe under [their] hammer.”<sup>45</sup> “Remember my joke against you about the moon and the solar system,” Sydney Smith wrote to Jeffrey on 25 February 1807: “Damn the solar system! bad light—planets too distant—pestered with comets—feeble contrivance;—could make a better with great ease.”<sup>46</sup> We may identify “the universe” that the *Edinburgh* created as both intellectually and ideologically circumscribed, and we may deplore the Review’s unapologetic elitism and arrogance as it controls and modifies knowledge in the act of selecting, criticizing, and diffusing it, but its aspiration to disciplinary comprehension and coherence was nonetheless genuine:

The *Edinburgh* Reviewer proposes to complete the diffusion of knowledge by liberalizing the periodical industry, making it the master industry of knowledge that would encourage and regulate other producers. As a theoretical standard, the *Edinburgh* would maintain the rate of this engine by evaluating the reliability of productions and the reasonableness of consumer desires (in aesthetic terms, of consumer taste). Such a standard would not depend upon any specific data, but would arrange all relevant facts within a systematic understanding.<sup>47</sup>

This aspiration to comprehension also affects the way we read – or the way we should read – individual contributions:

What is lost reading individual contributions outside the orbit of the periodical is not simply an immediate context for the work but a mode of emergence which radically affects the meaning of a particular essay, review, poem, or novel....a work in such a setting enters a variety of relations with other articles and ongoing institutional concerns that give subtle inflection to its meaning.<sup>48</sup>

Too often, the *Edinburgh*’s review essays have been discussed in disciplinary isolation as contributions to a specific area of knowledge, sacrificing the encyclopedic aspirations and ideological coherence of individual volumes, let alone of the enterprise as a whole. Conceptual and

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<sup>45</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London: Penguin, 1994), 604.

<sup>46</sup> *Letters of Sydney Smith*, 1:121.

<sup>47</sup> Schoenfield, *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity*, 69.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 3.

ideological meaning can be seen to evolve out of the *relationship* obtaining between the many and various disciplines covered by the Review—the *Edinburgh*'s defence of the French school of algebra and of female mathematicians, of James Hutton's geology and Joseph Lancaster's monitorial education system, for example, is of a piece with its attacks on Oxford, on what it sees as the anti-social poetry of the Lake poets, and on the Chinese resistance to foreign access and free trade.

### THE QUESTION OF EXPERTISE

The aspiration of the *Edinburgh* to generality and coherence was not necessarily characteristic of all its individual reviewers, it should be said. The *Edinburgh* numbered amongst its contributors a host of original writers whom we could argue were already specialist practitioners in their chosen areas of knowledge. Indeed, the congregation and orchestration of experts was part of the Review's success (just as it had become a part of the success of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under Napier).<sup>49</sup> Walter Scott and Thomas Moore and William Hazlitt reviewed imaginative literature and, for politics, there was James Mackintosh, James Mill, Lord John Russell and occasionally Lord Grey. Henry Hallam, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, and Francis Palgrave reviewed culture and history, Peter Elmsley and Charles Blomfield classical literature, Alexander Hamilton matters oriental, and Thomas Malthus and J. R. MacCulloch political economics. For mathematics and science, the *Edinburgh* could boast John Playfair and John Leslie – both teaching at the University – Humphry Davy of the Royal Institution, Leonard Horner and (before his premature death) Gregory Watt. Derek Roper is keen to point out that this expertise had been true of reviewing from its beginnings in the eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

It is worth remembering, however, that the modern meaning of the word "expert" only dates from 1825. Along with specialization went generalization, and it was the combination that ensured the *Edinburgh*'s success as a knowledge enterprise. Many of its reviewers, and certainly those who helped distinguish and lend the *Edinburgh* coherence, were "*gens de lettres*" as characterized by the *Encyclopédie*: "capable of

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<sup>49</sup> Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 250.

<sup>50</sup> Derek Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh 1788-1802* (London: Methuen, 1978), 21-2.

entering these different fields even if they could not cultivate them all.”<sup>51</sup> The bulk of the reviewing was carried out by professional intellectuals who were not expert *practitioners* in the areas in which they reviewed so much as expert *critics*.

Certain reviewers stand out as especially polymathic—or, at the very least, as polygraphic. Between them, Henry Brougham, Francis Jeffrey, and Sydney Smith account for over forty per cent of the *Edinburgh* in the early years. As well as the articles on Scott and Swift and Burns and Wordsworth and Baillie and Southey and Byron and Crabbe and Edgeworth and Moore and Hemans for which he is known to literary scholars, for example, Jeffrey writes on the influence of the *philosophes* on the French Revolution, on associationist aesthetics, on geological vulcanism *versus* neptunism, on the economic and political state of the British nation, on China and Chinese penal laws, on the impotence of metaphysical speculation, on travels in Egypt and Africa and Russia and South America, on slavery and on Quakerism and on slavery *and* Quakerism, on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and changes in literary culture since the Elizabethan period, and so on, and so on: 230 review articles in about 5,000 pages. “Jeffrey [sic] is an extremely clever little man who will write *de omni Scibili*” [that expression again: “on every knowable thing”], declared Sydney Smith in the letter he wrote to James Mackintosh foreshadowing the Review and inviting members of the King of Clubs “to barbicue a poet or two or strangle a metaphysician.”<sup>52</sup>

Smith, too, could turn his hand to most topics – writing hilariously and controversially on the Methodists, Catholic Emancipation, missionary activity in India, public schools, prisons, chimney-sweepers, the proceedings of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, the Game Laws, and Botany Bay – and Brougham, more prolific even than Jeffrey, was no less various, hammering away on fluxions, foreign affairs, glaciers, optics since Newton, the slave trade and slavery, oxymuriatic acid (chlorine), Britain’s trade policy, liberty of the press, the Mechanics’ Institutes, English criminal law in articles characterized by Smith as “long yet vigorous like the penis of a jackass.”<sup>53</sup> The sheer extent and variety of the intellectual interests and professional commitments of these men militated against an expertise in any one area. Their reviews attest to

<sup>51</sup> As quoted in Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, 28.

<sup>52</sup> See Alan Bell, “Sydney Smith’s letter to James Mackintosh, 13 January 1802,” *Times Literary Supplement*, April 9, 1970, 888.

<sup>53</sup> *The Letters of Sydney Smith*, 1:178.

an argumentative competence in an impressive range of pursuits, but it is precisely this, and not an expertise in any one specific area, that represents their critical strength.

### IN THE CONTEXT OF THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The *Edinburgh's* financial success and cultural authority, the paradigmatic function it performed in nineteenth-century intellectual journalism, and its direct contribution to current intellectual debate across a variety of disciplines, all reflect its engagement with and influence on the knowledge economy. The university culture out of which the *Edinburgh* reviewers emerged is the most recognized, but still the most relevant source of this engagement: “*The Review* benefited considerably from its becoming in effect a mouthpiece of the Scottish educational system,” according to Joan Milne and Willie Smith.<sup>54</sup> Their intellectual and ideological debts to the conjectural historians, moral philosophers, and political economists of the Scottish Enlightenment and, in the cases of Horner and Brougham, their discipleship to Dugald Stewart (Jeffrey’s formative tertiary experience took place at Glasgow under George Jardine) have been well documented and discussed by Henry Cockburn, in the first instance, and then by a host of twentieth-century and more recent commentators.<sup>55</sup> “Historically configured to provide their youthful

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<sup>54</sup> Joan Milne and Willie Smith, “Reviews and Magazines: Criticism and Polemic,” in *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol. 3: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1988), 189-202 (190).

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers: the Edinburgh Review, 1802-1815* (London, 1957); Philip Flynn, *Francis Jeffrey* (Newark, DE: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1978); Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985); J. W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, as in n. 34 above; Kenneth Bourne and William Banks Taylor, eds., *The Horner Papers: Selections from the Letters and Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Horner, M. P. 1795-1817* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1994); Joanne Shattock, “Reviews and Monthlies,” in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, vol. 3: Ambition and Industry 1800-1880*, ed. Bill Bell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2007), 343-57; Barton Swaim, *Scottish Men of Letters*

and socially diverse student body with a general *and* useful course of education,” writes Clifford Siskin, the Scottish universities

adopted and altered the continental model of a unified diversity. Working with “a sense of the encyclopaedic unity of all disciplines in philosophy,” the Scottish critics—most of whom were associated with the universities—represented themselves, in Gerald Chapman’s words, “as investigating a ‘branch’ of what belongs to a much later, communal investigation of Man, Nature and Society.”<sup>56</sup>

It should come as no surprise, then, as I suggest in my study of the *Edinburgh* in the literary culture of Romantic Britain, that Scotland’s most influential literary forms – from the histories and other essays in civil society of Adam Ferguson, David Hume, John Millar, and William Robertson, Adam Smith’s *Enquiry into the Wealth of Nations* and Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* through Ephraim Chambers’ *Cyclopædia* and the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to the novels of Walter Scott and the *Edinburgh Review* – “comprise a collective national enterprise of historical and cultural *review*.”<sup>57</sup>

What these literary achievements also register are the new opportunities offered by Scottish publishers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: “of late there have appeared some booksellers in Edinburgh, whose names will be recorded to posterity as the best benefactors of science and learning in their country,” wrote John Stark in his *Picture of Edinburgh* in 1806. By 1819, Stark is less coy, singling out “the house of Messrs. Archibald Constable and Co.”:

the appearance of Mr Walter Scott as an author, and the establishment of the *Edinburgh Review*, and the enterprise of the House with which that celebrated publication originated, have procured for Edinburgh, not only the printing of works of native genius, but transferred to this city the printing and publication of books from every quarter of the empire.<sup>58</sup>

Richard Sher is unhappy with the way Constable has been celebrated and his influence exaggerated in book history,<sup>59</sup> but no account of the

*and the New Public Sphere, 1802-1834* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998), 91.

<sup>57</sup> Christie, *Edinburgh Review*, as in n. 32 above, 50.

<sup>58</sup> As quoted in Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book*, as in n. 7 above, 430-1.

<sup>59</sup> Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book*, 430-1, 438.

knowledge economy of the early nineteenth century can afford to ignore the publisher of the *Scots Magazine*, the *Edinburgh Review*, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, *Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland Society of Scotland*, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the Review and its reviewers engage with and influence the knowledge economy is in their commitment to education, and to educational access. “Progress in exploiting the existing stock of knowledge,” to quote Joel Mokyr again, “will depend first and foremost on the efficiency and cost of *access* to knowledge.”<sup>60</sup> Like the knowledge economy to which it contributed, educational reform of the early nineteenth century was all about relationships – networks, if you like – part of what I referred to earlier as “the internal organization, management, distribution, and maintenance of knowledge.” One of the most significant phenomena of the growth of the knowledge economy from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and one which remains underestimated and under-researched in the Romantic period, is that of public lecturing. The programme of public lectures offered by the recently founded Royal Institution for its 1805-6 season in *The Times* is revealing:

Mr [Humphry] Davy, on Chemistry  
 Mr [John] Allen, on Natural Philosophy  
 Rev. T[homas]. F[rognall]. Dibdin, on English Literature  
 Mr [John] Landseer, on Engraving  
 Mr Sydney Smith, on Moral Philosophy  
 Dr [Henry] Reeve, on the Moral and Physical History of Man  
 Rev. William Crowe, on Poetry  
 Mr [John] Opie, on Painting  
 Dr [George] Shaw, on Zoology  
 Rev. John Hewlett, on Belles Lettres  
 Dr [William] Crotch, on Music  
 Rev. Edward Forster, on Commerce  
 Mr [William Marshall] Craig, on Drawing  
 Dr [later Sir James Edward] Smith, on Botany

The first thing that strikes us about the Royal Institution’s programme is its disciplinary variety, in common with that of the *Edinburgh Review*. The second is the role played by *Edinburgh* reviewers themselves. Both Sydney Smith and John Allen were central to the *Edinburgh* enterprise. Allen had delivered his lectures to great acclaim and some controversy in Edinburgh in 1801, before translating to Holland House (his physiology

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<sup>60</sup> Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena*, 7.

was openly materialist, and Allen himself, like Hume, renowned for his atheism).<sup>61</sup> Smith's Royal Institution lectures proved immensely popular, as indeed were Humphry Davy's, with the two of them vying for the honour of having Albermarle Street converted to a one-way system to cope with the traffic.<sup>62</sup> Though not part of the original set, Davy was another *Edinburgh* reviewer – as indeed was Henry Reeve, a physician who matriculated at Edinburgh University in 1800 and (like Jeffrey, Horner, and Brougham) a member of the Speculative Society. He became president of the Royal Medical Society the year the *Edinburgh Review* was founded and his son, another Henry Reeve, would edit the *Edinburgh Review* for 40 years, from 1855 to 1895.

William Crowe, public orator at the University of Oxford, did not review for the *Edinburgh*, but nevertheless was an intimate of Samuel Rogers and Thomas Moore (probably through Holland House). He was against the war with France and, "in politics," an "ultra-whig, almost a republican" (*ODNB*). It was on Crowe's recommendation that the musical prodigy and Professor of Music at Oxford, William Crotch, was invited to lecture at the Royal Institution. Again, while not an *Edinburgh* reviewer, James Edward Smith had been a student of medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where he had studied botany under one of the earliest teachers of the Linnaean system, Dr John Hope. When Smith went to London in 1783 to study under John Hunter and William Pitcairn and meet Sir Joseph Banks, he gave lectures at his own house on botany and zoology and in 1788 established the Linnaean Society, having bought Linnaeus's entire collection. To exhaust the connections: George Shaw was a friend of James Edward Smith's, a great popularizer of natural history, and co-founder with Smith of the Linnaean Society; and Edward Forster, an active supporter of the Royal Institution and its honorary librarian, shared preaching duties at various London chapels with Sydney Smith and Thomas Frognall Dibdin.

Of all the *Edinburgh* reviewers, however, the one whose name had become synonymous with education by the time he became Lord

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<sup>61</sup> See L. S. Jacyna, *Philosophic Whigs: Medicine, Science and Citizenship in Edinburgh, 1789-1848* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), chapter 2.

<sup>62</sup> Compare Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (London: Harper, 2008), 291, with *Notes from A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith by His Daughter Lady Holland, with a Selection of Letters*, ed. Sarah Austin, 2 vols (New York: Harper Brothers, 1855), 1:81n.

Chancellor in 1830 was Henry Brougham. Brougham's aspirations towards national and nation-wide education were no less imperial than Napoleon's military aspirations. According to his biographer, Robert Stewart, he "was fond of saying that he desired for his tomb no other epitaph than that he was the founder of the universal education,"<sup>63</sup> giving a special charge to one of his more famous speeches before the House of Commons:

Let the soldier be ever so much abroad, in the present age he could do nothing. There is another person abroad,—a less important person,—in the eyes of some an insignificant person,—whose labours had tended to produce this state of things. The schoolmaster is abroad [cheers]! and he trusted more to the schoolmaster, armed with his primer, more than he did to the soldier in full military array, for upholding and extending the liberties of the country.<sup>64</sup>

Taken together, Brougham's many and various public interests amounted to an attempt comprehensively to induce – indeed, to dragoon – "the people" into a knowledge economy, beginning with harangues in the Speculative Society in the 1790s (during which time he also founded the Academy of Physics in Edinburgh) and continuing in his writing for the *Edinburgh Review*, *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Times*, and numerous other periodicals; in his endless speechifying in both houses of parliament; his campaigning for a national school-system; his establishment of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; his work helping to set up the mechanics' institutes, where he lectured and on a number of whose boards he sat; his work with the Royal Lancasterian Society championing non-denominational schools; his work with Thomas Campbell establishing the new University (College) of London, for which he actively achieved full subscription and which he then helped to organize and staff.

These educational interests were supported throughout by what Brougham and the other liberal Whigs took to be at once the condition and the immediate beneficiary of any public enlightenment: a free and competitive trade, "which supports at once all that remains of liberty

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<sup>63</sup> Robert Stewart, *Henry Brougham 1778-1868: His Public Career* (London: Bodley Head, 1985), 204.

<sup>64</sup> 29 January 1828, *Hansard*, 2nd series, 18:57-8.

beyond the seas, and gives life and vigour to its main pillar within the realm, the manufactures and commerce of England!"<sup>65</sup>

For both utilitarians and liberal Whigs, the emergence of relatively large-scale institutions of adult education in the 1820s, along with the continued growth of reading societies and a popular periodical press, not only gave [Dugald] Stewart's faith in print culture and the diffusion of knowledge a prophetic ring; they also suggested the need for a systematic sociology of knowledge and belief, adapted to the rhythms of early industrial society and predicated upon the insights and arguments of political economy.<sup>66</sup>

The "surest and most voluminous of men," in his friend Jeffrey's deliberately ambiguous phrase,<sup>67</sup> Brougham was second to none in the sheer quantity of what he wrote and published in his own lifetime: a fifth of the *Edinburgh Review* (his own estimate, and he is right); hundreds of pamphlets and books, from ephemeral 30-page publications of his speeches to the 1,000-page *Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers*; a never-ending stream of written support for his own policies and for his own electoral campaigns; dissertations for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; tracts for the Mechanics' Institutes.<sup>68</sup> If what constituted knowledge came with an ideological charge, the question of who was entitled to it, like so much else in the wake of the wars with Napoleon, was a political minefield, and one into which Henry Brougham regularly led the *Edinburgh Review*.

As Brougham's manic reform activity in and out of Parliament and Jeffrey's own legal and political career confirm, the *Edinburgh Review* had work to do outside any narrowly conceived knowledge economy. Whatever the political agenda might have been, however, the dissemination of knowledge was at the centre of the enterprise. The ideological coherence of the "distinct and marked set" that launched and sustained the *Edinburgh* was striking,<sup>69</sup> and unquestionably contributed

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<sup>65</sup> Henry Brougham, *The Works of Henry Lord Brougham*, 10 vols (London and Glasgow: R. Griffin, 1855-1857), 10:55.

<sup>66</sup> Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of 'Culture'* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 76-7.

<sup>67</sup> As quoted in *Memoirs ... of Francis Horner*, as in n. 13 above, 1:278.

<sup>68</sup> See William Christie, "Going Public: Print Lords Byron and Brougham," *Studies in Romanticism*, 38: 3 (Fall 1999): 443-75.

<sup>69</sup> Henry Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey, with a Selection of His Correspondence*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1852), 1:142.

to its success, but there were different emphases and sometimes major disagreements on certain issues. One conviction that the engineers of the periodical Enlightenment did share, however – a conviction inherited from Dugald Stewart and, through Stewart, their Scottish Enlightenment precursors – was that there will always be (to quote John Playfair) “a certain relation between the degree of Knowledge diffused through a nation, and the degree of Political Liberty it enjoyed.”<sup>70</sup>

As it happens, by the time the big Reviews were under way, the educated public implied in early nineteenth-century periodical discourse was already breaking down into distinct areas of amateur and academic specialization, each initiating its own dedicated organ of enquiry or instruction.<sup>71</sup> The *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* were dominating ideas and information at a time when (to quote Jon Klancher) “critical ‘men of letters’ were gradually [being] displaced from command of the whole field of modern educated discourse formerly designated by the category of ‘literature’” and “being clearly distinguished from ‘men of science’ and ‘scholars.’”<sup>72</sup> The periodical Enlightenment marked a late moment before the educated public would cede the custodianship of knowledge to specialists both inside and outside the academy, “under the new cognitive and social regime of specialisation and professionalisation of the nineteenth century.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *The Works of John Playfair, Esq.*, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1822), 4:167-8.

<sup>71</sup> Dawson, Noakes, and Topham, as in n. 10 above, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Jon Klancher, “The vocation of criticism and the crisis of the republic of letters,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 5: Romanticism*, ed. Marshall Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 296-320 (312).

<sup>73</sup> Charles W.J. Withers and Paul Wood, “Science, Medicine, and the Scottish Enlightenment: An Historiographical Overview,” in their *Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2002), 1-16 (9).