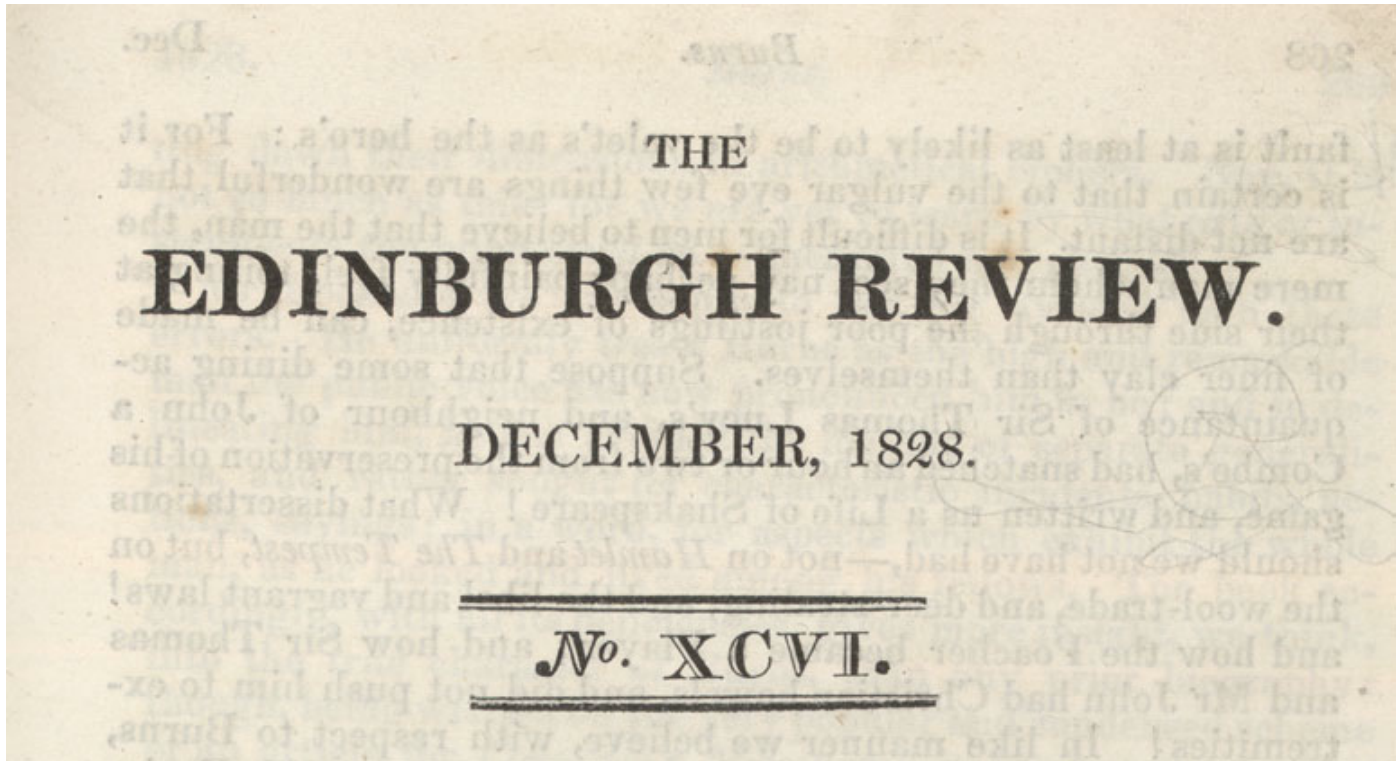


## Scots Reviewers, English Bards, British Politics

Posted At : July 30, 2008 3:14 PM | Posted By : Helen Vincent

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In an exhibition like ours, looking to convey the whole picture of the printed word in Scotland over 500 years, single items have frequently to represent much larger movements or cultural phenomena.



One such is the single volume of the *Edinburgh Review* on display, representative of a moment in time when Scottish journals dominated literary and political culture throughout the British Isles.

It is open at one of the most famous literary reviews of all time: the devastating 1808 critique of [Lord Byron's](#) first poetry collection *Hours of Idleness* (No. XXII, Jan. 1808). Today, one dominant memory of the great Edinburgh review journals is of such virulent attacks on the Romantic poets - 'Who killed John Keats?' I, said the Quarterly', as Byron later wrote.

But in its day, the Edinburgh Review was more famous for its liberal politics. Its editors favoured universal education and the abolition of slavery. An article later in 1808 attacking the aristocratic government of the day and advocating 'reforms' and 'radical improvements' resulted in outraged readers cancelling subscriptions; Walter Scott founded the Tory *Quarterly Review* in response. By the 1820s these two journals had been joined by Blackwood's Magazine, completing the trio of reviews which transmitted Scottish Enlightenment values across the English-speaking world.

At [The Word on the Street](#), part of the NLS [Digital Library](#), you can read a contemporary popular [ballad](#) in praise of Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*.

You can find out more about the *Quarterly Review* at the [Quarterly Review Archive](#). Today the *Edinburgh Review* has resumed publication after a hiatus in the mid-twentieth century. David Finkelstein has a webpage about [Blackwood's Magazine](#), and some issues are available at the [Internet Library of Early Journals](#).