

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

October 2001

New Series No. 116

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From Dante to the Romantics: The Reception History of Leigh Hunt's *The Story of Rimini*

By MICHAEL EBERLE-SINATRA

1816 WAS ARGUABLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT YEAR in Leigh Hunt's career as a Romantic poet. After a two-year imprisonment, he had spent much of 1815 going back to the theatre and seeing Edmund Kean, the actor whom Hazlitt had praised so highly in the pages of *The Examiner*. Hunt had also begun the 'Round Table' series with Hazlitt in January 1815, and published the second edition of *The Feast of the Poets* and *The Descent of Liberty*. However, Hunt's most concerted efforts in 1815 were devoted to revising and finishing one of his most important poems: *The Story of Rimini*. The publication of the poem in duodecimo format at the end of January 1816, as Blainey remarks, 'proclaimed [Hunt's] poetic ambitions to the public and, despite censure for obscurity and quaintness, it won a generous measure of favour'.¹ In this essay, I will trace Hunt's debt to Dante and the issue of vernacular language in *The Story of Rimini*, and then provide the first detailed reception history of the contemporary reception of Hunt's poem. *The Story of Rimini* remains one of Hunt's major works, and it had far-reaching historical repercussions for the whole second generation of Romantic poets.

I. DANTE AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

Hunt wrote most of *The Story of Rimini*,² a narrative poem based on Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca (*Inferno*, Canto V, ll. 127-38), during his imprisonment at Surrey Gaol from 1813 to 1815. As he recalls in his *Autobiography*:

[L]ooking among my books for some melancholy theme of verse, by which I could steady my felicity, I unfortunately chose the subject of Dante's famous episode. I did not consider, indeed at the time was not critically aware, that to enlarge upon a subject which had been treated with exquisite sufficiency, and to his immortal renown, by a great master, was not likely, by any merit of detail, to save a tyro in the art from the charge of presumption, especially one who had not yet even studied poetical mastery itself, except in a subordinate shape.³

I would like to thank Jonathan Wordsworth, Nicholas Roe, Lucy Newlyn, David H. Stam, and Patricia Eberle for the various contributions they made to this article.

¹ Ann Blainey, *Immortal Boy: A Portrait of Leigh Hunt* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), 88.

² For the text of *The Story of Rimini*, I use *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt*, ed. H. S. Milford (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by canto and line number.

³ *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, ed. J. E. Morpurgo (London: The Cresset Press, 1949), 257-8.

Hunt's contemporaries much appreciated Dante's story, although in 1816 the *Divine Comedy* had not yet reached the peak of its popularity during the Romantic period. It was Dante's concise style in this episode—Hunt himself described it as 'a long tragedy in half-a-dozen lines'—that typically attracted critical praise.⁴ The passage from the *Inferno*, with Francesca narrating her story to Virgil and Dante the Pilgrim, runs as follows in Henry Francis Cary's translation:

One day,
 For our delight we read of Lancelot,
 How him love thrall'd. Alone we were, and no
 Suspicion near us. Oft-times by that reading
 Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
 Fled from our altered cheek. But at one point
 Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
 The wished smile so rapturously kiss'd
 By one so deep in love, then he, who ne'er
 From me shall separate, at once my lips
 All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both
 Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
 We read no more.⁵

As Cary notes in his edition, 'Mr. Leigh Hunt has expanded the present episode into a beautiful poem, in his "Story of Rimini".'⁶ These specific lines formed the basis for the third canto of *Rimini*; the rest of the poem describes the first meeting of Paolo and Francesca, their journey to Rimini, and the fatal duel between Giovanni and Paolo.

It is worth noting that Dante puts the abridged version of the story in the mouth of Francesca herself, and then allows Virgil and Dante the Pilgrim to offer their rather different comments. In his retelling of Dante's story, Hunt, by contrast, speaks more in his own voice and offers more in the way of his own interpretative commentary. Hunt's presumption in giving such prominence to his own poetic voice, and his use of colloquial language in treating these great historical and literary figures, must have offended many readers. Also offensive must have been his portrayal of the two lovers acting out of natural human feelings, in contrast to Dante's *amor*, an almost supernatural force that invades Paolo and Francesca and compels them into action.

At the same time, by expanding and elaborating the background behind the famous story in the first two cantos of *Rimini*, Hunt also made the motivation of the characters more comprehensible and hence sympathetic to his audience. Dante tells the reader nothing of Francesca's feelings before the famous kiss and nothing about her arranged marriage to the older brother. He does sketch some of the socio-political background of the story of Paolo and

⁴ Leigh Hunt, *Stories from the Italian Poets, with Lives of the Writers*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846), 1, 67.

⁵ Dante Alighieri, *Hell* canto V, ll. 123–35, *The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory, & Paradise of Dante Alighieri*, translate by the Rev. Henry Francis Cary, A. M. – *With the Life of Dante, Chronological View of his Age, Additional Notes, Etc. From the Last Corrected London Edition; with the Translator's Latest Corrections and Additions*, trans. Henry Francis Cary (New York: Hurst & Co., 1844), 76.

⁶ *The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory, & Paradise of Dante Alighieri*, 75.

Francesca in canto XXVII of *Inferno*, where he portrays the father of Francesca's husband as a cruel and aggressive ruler.⁷ The sympathy Francesca seems to inspire in Dante's poem is for some readers undermined by her speech, with its superficial glamour and intrinsic incoherence.⁸ Furthermore, although Dante's poetic treatment shows some sympathy for the lovers, his consignment of both of them to the *Inferno* does suggest his view that God condemned their illicit passion. Hunt's treatment of the story moves in the other direction by enlisting the reader's feelings on the side of the lovers. It also implies a common cause between the right to self-determination—a politico-legal issue of much importance in the wake of the French and American revolutions and during the time leading up to the Reform Bills of the 1830s—and the right to romantic love, presented as a fundamental human universal. Hunt, who had himself been imprisoned unjustly (as he must have believed since, in his eyes, his attack on the Prince Regent was justified), was naturally disposed to take a sympathetic view of the story. In his version, Francesca serves to illustrate the absence of freedom experienced by wives, as well as non-conformist liberal writers. She is first described as

. . . Ravenna's pride,
The daughter of their prince, [who] becomes a bride,
A bride, to crown the comfort of the land:
And he, whose victories have obtained her hand,
Has taken with the dawn, so flies report,
His promised journey to the expecting court
With hasting pomp, and squires of high degree,
The bold Giovanni, lord of Rimini.

(Canto I, ll. 29–36)

Hunt chooses to characterise her status as a commodity with the line, 'A bride to crown the comfort of the land'. Francesca is an object, a crown, to be used for the benefit of the country, but Hunt also subverts the symbolic dimension of the crown and its royal associations by emphasizing what the role of kings should be: to serve their people. This view is reinforced a few dozen lines later when Hunt writes:

Till, as she views the countless gaze below,
And faces that with grateful homage glow,
A home to leave, and husband yet to see,
Fade in the warmth of that great charity;
And hard it is, she thinks, to have no will;
But not to bless these thousands, harder still.

(Canto I, ll. 111–16)

⁷ Dante describes him as '[t]he old mastiff of Verruchio . . . / That tore Montagna in [his] wrath' (*The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory, & Paradise of Dante Alighieri*, canto XXVII, ll. 43–4; 188).

⁸ See Robin Kirkpatrick, *Dante's Inferno: Difficulty and Dead Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 82–94 for an analysis of the language used by Francesca and the light it sheds on her and on Dante. See also Patrick Boyde, *Perception and Passion in Dante's 'Comedy'* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 295–301.

Lacking control over her destiny ('And hard it is, she thinks, to have no will'), Francesca upholds her responsibility to 'these thousands', 'the countless gaze'. Hunt thus cunningly comments on the monarchy and its patriarchal principle (Francesca is after all given to Giovanni by her father Guido, 'fond from habit of intrigue and art, / And little formed for sentiments' [Canto II, ll. 32–33]). In fact, as Greg Kucich argues, the puns, jaunty rhymes, spry neologisms, and loosened couplets of *Rimini* 'intrude upon the stateliness of the poem's formal measure, the heroic couplet, while forwarding various critiques of aristocratic hierarchy and established moral propriety.'⁹

Thus, one of the major differences between the story of Paolo and Francesca in the *Inferno* and in Hunt's poem lies in the fact that, in Nicholas Roe's words, 'the emphasis has shifted from sin and damnation to a sympathetic understanding'.¹⁰ Vincent Newey further notes that '[t]he poem . . . was intended to inculcate a sense not only of true justice but also of possible improvement in human affairs'.¹¹ Hunt's *Examiner* articles published from 1808 to 1816 demonstrate the very personal interest he had in the general improvement of his contemporary society. Yet his poetry is often viewed primarily as an exercise in imaginative escapism: this view is especially common in the case of a poem such as *Rimini*, with its descriptions of processions, forests, and other natural settings. However, a close reading of the language of the opening scene of *Rimini* suggests another possible approach:

The sun is up, and 'tis a morn of May
 Round old Ravenna's clear-shewn towers and bay,
 A morn, the loveliest which the year has seen,
 Last of the spring, yet fresh with all its green;

 'Tis nature, full of spirits, waked and springing:—
 The birds to the delicious time are singing,
 Darting with freaks and snatches up and down,
 Where the light woods go seaward from the town;
 While happy faces, striking through the green
 Of leafy roads, at every turn are seen[.]

(Canto I, ll. 1–4, 15–20)

The nature described so beautifully here is not the passive object of the escapist's gaze but a site of much activity ('full of spirits'), of many creatures with 'happy faces', who live in a world of their own and not merely to give pleasure to those who view them. Hunt's presentation of nature is not as a contrast or alternative to human society but the site of a busy social environment of a similar kind.

⁹ Greg Kucich, "'The Wit in the Dungeon': Leigh Hunt and the Insolent Politics of Cockney Coteries', *Romanticism On the Net* 14 (May 1999) 15/5/1999 <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/cockneycoteriers.html>>.

¹⁰ Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 120.

¹¹ Vincent Newey, 'Keats, History, and the Poets', in *Keats and History*, ed. Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 169.

In 1847 William Howitt reported, in his recollection of famous British poets, how he came to read *The Story of Rimini* in the company of two friends in Sherwood Forest: 'A hasty peep into it had led [us] to believe it would blend well in the perusal with the spirit of the region of Robin Hood and Maid Marian'.¹² The setting of *Rimini* could easily bring to mind Sherwood Forest, but it is also the political dimension of the poem that evokes Robin Hood and the political connotations associated with the myth of Robin Hood. As Roe argues, by the end of the eighteenth century Robin Hood 'had been transformed into a revolutionary, a proto-Jacobin opposed to the social and political establishment'.¹³ Several poems were written during the Romantic period in which Robin Hood embodied the authors' political views. Roe further argues that several sonnets written by John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats, and Hunt in 1818 contain the same political subtext in their evocation of the myth of Robin Hood. And *Rimini*, although published two years before, also invites such a reading. In fact, contemporary reviews of *Rimini* show 'how poetry of retirement and the natural world which may seem bland and uncontroversial to modern readers was perceived as immoral, seditious, and traitorous by some of its first readers'.¹⁴ Hunt's poem was thus attacked not only because of its author and his political creed, but also because it depicted a dangerous story of rebellion against authority within a world that embodied the ideals of revolution.

Although it permeates the poem in many ways, Hunt's political outlook is not directly expressed in the poem, or at least, not in its published version. In the manuscript version of *Rimini*, however, Hunt included the following stanza, which would have appeared at the beginning of the poem:

For not [merely] by contrast lov'd was Guido's heir
Nor the mere dotage of a realm's despair,
No pamper'd prodigal, unshamed in waste,
Whose childishness remains when youth is past,
No smirking ~~idler~~ idiot, trusting for its throne
To custom and a worn out race alone,
Nor aught that makes an old head shake to see
~~Sure signs of an expiring royalty~~
 smitten
~~The driv'ling mirth of dying royalty~~
~~The sapless sheets of fading royalty~~
~~The dancing death of sinking royalty~~
The fond neglect of sinking royalty¹⁵

¹² William Howitt, *Home and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), II, 346.

¹³ Roe, 145.

¹⁴ Roe, 132.

¹⁵ Quoted in Clarice Short, 'The Composition of Hunt's *The Story of Rimini*', *Keats-Shelley Journal* XXI-XXII (1972-73): 209.

Clarice Short rightly reads this passage as containing a strong political message, as it could easily be seen as a commentary on George III or, more likely in light of Hunt's imprisonment, the Prince Regent. Consequently, as Short suggests, 'Discretion may have deterred him from running the risk of jeopardizing the poem's success by beginning it with an attack on inadequate rulers'.¹⁶ Hunt decided to delete these lines after his release from prison, and he may have been motivated by a desire to avoid another direct legal confrontation with supporters of the royal family.

Hunt's time in prison may have influenced the poem in other ways as well. Spending what he calls 'long / And caged hours' while rains '[w]ash[ed] the dull bars', Hunt certainly found some comfort in reading and writing about Italy. James R. Thompson asserts that Hunt 'wrote poetry, even his satires, as a kind of therapy; the poem's primary significance lay in the act of creation itself.'¹⁷ Yet even the touching lines that open the third canto suggest that more than poetic self-therapy is at work, and the consolations offered by poetic imagination are not merely escapist:

Now why must I disturb a dream of bliss,
Or bring cold sorrow 'twixt the wedded kiss?
Sad is the strain, with which I cheer my long
And caged hours, and try my native tongue;
Now too, while rains autumnal, as I sing,
Wash the dull bars, chilling my sicklied wing,
And all the climate presses on my sense;
But thoughts it furnishes of things far hence,
And leafy dreams affords me, and a feeling
Which I should else disdain, tear-dipped and healing;
And shews me,—more than what it first designed,—
How little upon earth our home we find,
Or close the intended course of erring human-kind.

(Canto III, ll. 1–13)

Though most of Hunt's contemporaries appreciated his version of this famous story, modern critics tend to neglect *The Story of Rimini*. In critical studies of John Keats, *Rimini* is discussed only as an illustration of Hunt's influence on the early Keats in terms of style and content, as in Walter Jackson Bate's biography *John Keats* or in Richard Cronin's article 'Keats and the Politics of Cockney Style'.¹⁸ The only notable exception is John O. Hayden's 1987 article 'Leigh

¹⁶ Short, 209, 211.

¹⁷ James R. Thompson, "'Mild Singing Clothes": The Poetry of Leigh Hunt', *Books at Iowa* 40 (1984): 23.

¹⁸ Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1963); Richard Cronin, 'Keats and the Politics of Cockney Style', *Studies in English Language* 36.4 (1996): 785–806. Similarly, Robert Gittings writes: 'Poor Hunt succeeded in producing some ludicrous effects in this poem [*Rimini*], by a mixture of naïvety and over-confidence; but he was certainly read and quoted, sometimes even with approval, by his young disciple [i.e. Keats]' (*The Mask of Keats: A Study of Problems* [Melbourne, London, Toronto: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1956], 128). For the perceived influence of Hunt in contemporary reviews of *Endymion*, see Andrew Bennett, *Keats, Narrative and Audience: The Posthumous Life of Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 145–6. For a discussion of the influence of *Rimini* and *The Descent of Liberty* on Keats's *Endymion* and *Hyperion*, see Newey, 165–93. For a discussion of Hunt's influence on Keats's writings, and in particular 'On First

Hunt's *Story of Rimini: Reloading the Romantic Canon*, which argues persuasively and in detail for a new appreciation of the poem.¹⁹ Hayden's reading differs from the earlier view of Oscar Kuhns, who severely criticises Hunt's poem, protesting specifically against

the infinite distance there is between the extraordinary conciseness, the heart-piercing pathos, and the refined reticence of Dante and all this long-drawn-out mawkish sentimentality. In the whole four cantos there are but few reminiscences of the language and figures of Dante; there is none of his atmosphere. Hunt tells us but little more than he found in the *Inferno* [...]²⁰

However, as T. S. Eliot once remarked, 'the important debt to Dante does not lie in a poet's borrowings, or adaptations from Dante'.²¹ Kuhns misses the point of *Rimini* when he criticises Hunt for imitating Dante badly. In fact, Hunt uses Dante's story as a point of departure for a poem of his own. The verse form of *The Story of Rimini* makes a similar departure from tradition with Hunt's distinctive use of the rhyming couplet, a move away from Pope's style in order to have a freer use of the heroic couplet and of feminine endings.

As Wordsworth observes, 'every author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed',²² and Hunt's linguistic innovations were not readily accepted by his immediate contemporaries. An instructive comparison can be made between Hunt's poetic language in *Rimini* and Dante's account of his own attempt to create a new language for poetry in his unfinished treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (written in 1303–04). As Blunden remarks, '[*Rimini*] pointed the way to a flexibility of style in verse, and the necessity for the poets of a strongly advancing race to acquire expression through the medium of significant daily speech'.²³ Dante was the first defender of the (embellished)

Looking into Chapman's Homer', see Richard Marggraf Turley, 'Handy Squirrels and Chapman's Homer: Hunt, Keats, and Romantic Philology', *Romanticism* 4.1 (1998): 115–8. Of course, Keats himself worried in October 1817 about having the reputation of being Hunt's *élève* (*The Letters of John Keats, 1814–1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958], I, 170). One may also note that Keats slightly misquoted two lines from *Rimini* in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats, dated 14 October 1818: 'And had been kept from men of pleasure's cares / By dint of feeling still more warm than theirs' (Canto III, ll. 121–2). It is indicative of Keats's ambivalent feelings about the influence of Hunt that he misattributes these lines to Byron, and commends them as 'one of the finest things [Byron] has said' (*The Letters of John Keats, 1814–1821*, I, 396). See also Andrew Franta's article, 'Keats and the Review Aesthetic' (*Studies in Romanticism* 38.3 [1999]: 343–64), for an alternative reading of Keats's reactions to reviews of his poems and of his relationship with Hunt.

¹⁹ See this valuable study in *Durham University Journal* 48, 2 (1987): 279–87.

²⁰ Oscar Kuhns, *Dante and the English Poets from Chaucer to Tennyson* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1904), 148–9.

²¹ T. S. Eliot, 'What Dante Means to Me', *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings by T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 132.

²² 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface [of 1815 *Poems*]', *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1974), III, 80.

²³ Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt: A Biography* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1930), 103. Jeffrey N. Cox also notes that '[Hunt's] *Story of Rimini*, with its assault upon established poetic convention in the stronghold of the heroic couplet, not only pushed further Wordsworth's innovations in prosody but also paved the way for *Endymion* and *Epipsychidion*' (*Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 41).

vernacular language, rather than Latin, for poetry. For Dante, the vernacular is 'the language which children gather from those around them when they first begin to articulate words; or more briefly, that which we learn without any rules at all by imitating our nurses.'²⁴ In the second book of *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante goes on to restrict the thrust of his argument by specifically advocating 'the illustrious vernacular', which does not include 'words that are childish because of their simplicity, . . . nor those that are feminine because of their softness, . . . nor those that are rustic on account of their hardness, . . . nor those urbane words that are glossy or bristly'.²⁵ Although Hunt's earliest published poems self-consciously evoked a classical education, composing in Latin was not really an option for poets of his time. In using colloquial language in *Rimini*, however, Hunt was announcing a departure from the ostentatiously learned Latinate poetry of Dryden and Pope. Thus, he goes further than Dante and his advocacy of 'vernacular' language by using colloquial language in *Rimini*, as well as simple, feminine, and urbane words. Hunt's urbane sense of language implies an espousal of lower-class values as opposed to the elevated, higher-class values associated with classical language. Hunt would be criticised chiefly for this urbane sense of language in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and in the *Quarterly Review*. Interestingly, Dante himself did not actually follow the 'refined and selective language of his treatise' when he began writing the *Divine Comedy* a few years later. He preferred to use 'his more varied and vigorous native Florentine mingled with other external elements'.²⁶ Therefore, in its use of the vernacular, Hunt's poem continues a project begun by Dante, that of bringing the language of the poet even closer to the language spoken by the readers.

Notwithstanding the potentially controversial nature of Hunt's commentaries on society and the political content of *Rimini*, reviewers focused their attacks principally on the use of colloquial language and on the incestuous implications of the content.²⁷ Hunt did ultimately achieve his goal of 'unsettl[ing] the "authorized" complacencies of Regency life',²⁸ but the consequences were more far-reaching than Hunt and his circle had anticipated. For their part, his friends predicted that the poem would be a success, and they welcomed its publication with high praise.²⁹

²⁴ Dante Alighieri, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, First Book, I, in Marianne Shapiro, *De Vulgari Eloquentia – Dante's Book of Exile* (Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1990), 47.

²⁵ Dante, 79.

²⁶ Cecil Grayson, 'Dante and the Renaissance', in *Italian Studies Presented to E. R. Vincent on his Retirement from the Chair of Italian at Cambridge*, eds. C. P. Brand, K. Foster, and U. Limentam (Cambridge: Heffer, 1962), 70–1.

²⁷ It is worth noting that, as late as 1857, S. Adams Lee felt the need to justify the subject of *The Story of Rimini* to his American readers, asserting that '[I]t may be a question whether such a story is to be told at all, but if told, it certainly ought to embody the emotions which naturally belong to it' ('Introduction', in *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt. Now first entirely collected, revised by himself, and edited with an introduction by S. Adams Lee*, ed. S. Adams Lee, 2 vols. [Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1857], I, xix).

²⁸ Roe, 122.

²⁹ See, for instance, Benjamin Robert Haydon's letter, dated 25 September 1815: 'I think you have exquisite poetical feeling and I think that your present *Story of Rimini* will stamp you on the heart of the World' (*My Leigh Hunt Library: The Holograph Letters*, ed. Luther A. Brewer [Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1938], 97). And William Hazlitt's comments:

I have read the story of Rimini with extreme satisfaction. It is full of beautiful and affecting passages. You have I think perfectly succeeded. I like the description of the death of Francesca better than any. *This will*

II. CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS OF *THE STORY OF RIMINI*

The reception of *The Story of Rimini* in the contemporary periodical press clearly indicates that it was without any doubt Hunt's best-known poem of the Romantic period. The British edition received no less than ten reviews between March and September 1816. These were followed a year later by the first two articles on the Cockney School written by 'Z', i.e. John Gibson Lockhart, and published in the October and November 1817 issues of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The American edition of *Rimini*, also printed in 1816, was reviewed in the *North American Review* in July of the same year. The *North American Review* was one of the four major American literary magazines in the 1810s,³⁰ and it was considered, according to Julia Power, '[t]he chief organ of New England opinion for the first half of the nineteenth century'.³¹

The ongoing reception of the poem was somewhat mixed, although with all this attention in the periodicals, it might not seem surprising that the poem went through a second edition in late June 1817,³² and a third one in 1819.³³ Yet repeated publication did not mitigate the attacks in the press from Hunt's political enemies. Writing about *Rimini*, Edmund Blunden notes that

[w]hile this spirited, sensuous, uncertain and extravagant narrative was hailed in the highest terms by such friends as Hazlitt and Byron . . . its public effect was perhaps unfortunate for its author. It gave him a definite rank, but it exposed him through its mannerism of indifferent ease and tropical colour to the savagery of the opposite faction in politics and poetics.³⁴

Hunt himself describes the 'savagery of the opposite faction in politics and poetics' in his *Autobiography* when he writes of 'the wrath of the Tory Critics':

[*Rimini*] would have met with no such hostility, or indeed any hostility at all, if politics had not judged it. Critics might have differed about it, of course, and reasonably have found fault; but had it emanated from the circles, or had been written by any persons not obnoxious to political objection, I believe there is nobody at this time of day, who will

do. You are very metaphysical in the character and passion, but we will not say a word of this to the ladies. (*The Letters of William Hazlitt*, ed. Herschel Moreland Sikes [New York: New York UP, 1978], 153)

³⁰ As Neal L. Edgar indicates, nearly all studies recognise four periodicals as the best early American literary magazines: *Port Folio*, *Monthly Anthology*, *Analectic Magazine*, and *North American Review* (*A History and Bibliography of American Magazines 1810–1820* [Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow P, Inc., 1975], 18).

³¹ Julia Power, *Shelley in America in the Nineteenth Century: His Relation to American Critical Thought and His Influence* (New York: Haskell House, 1964), 53.

³² The edition appeared with the imprint of Taylor and Hessey, R. Triphook, and C. and J. Ollier; see David E. Kaser, 'Two New Leigh Hunt Letters', *Notes & Queries*, new series 2, 3 (March 1955): 123–4.

³³ The third edition of *Rimini* was published by C. and J. Ollier in duodecimo format.

³⁴ Edmund Blunden, 'Leigh Hunt', *The Times Literary Supplement* (16 November 1922): 733–4.

not allow, that the criticism in all quarters would have been very good-natured, and willing to hail whatever merit it possessed.³⁵

Indeed, even though the contemporary reviews were on the whole positive, the impact of the reviews published in the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* did not earn Hunt any poetical credentials during the Romantic period, but rather a negative public image that would take years to dissipate. In a letter to Byron dated 26 May 1816, John Cam Hobhouse neatly summed up the treatment of the poem in the January issue *Quarterly Review*, actually published in May of that year: '*Rimini* is bedevilled.'³⁶

Under the editorship of Dr. Watkins, the *New Monthly Magazine* published a short review of *Rimini* on 1 March 1816. The anonymous reviewer had no real interest in the poem itself, which he summarily dismisses with the following sentence: 'Of the book itself we shall only say, that the subject is taken from an episode in Dante; but most miserably expanded in the present version.'³⁷ Besides the two reviews previously mentioned, this is the only review that makes no positive comment on the poem, not even on the opening lines often praised by other reviewers. In fact, the main part of the review is concerned with the dedication to Byron, or, to quote from the review, the 'very pleasant piece of chit-chat, the object of which is, to shew on what a footing [the author] stands with some of the nobility'³⁸. The reviewer quotes the beginning of Hunt's well-known dedication:

My Dear Byron, You see what you have brought yourself to by liking my verse. It is taking you unawares, I allow; but you yourself have set example now-a-days of poet's dedicating to poet; and it is under that nobler title, as well as the still nobler one of friend, that I now address you.³⁹

Following this quotation, the reviewer goes on to attack: 'The easy impudence of this address, and the ungrammatical vulgarity of language, cannot but bring to our recollection the polished manner of Tom Shuffleton in the comedy.'⁴⁰ In one sentence this reviewer encapsulates two of the main subjects of all the reviews of *The Story of Rimini*: the daring social equality implied in his dedication of the poem to a peer of the realm and the presumptuous use of colloquial language throughout the poem.

³⁵ *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, 259.

³⁶ *Byron's Bulldog: The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron*, ed. Peter W. Graham (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1984), 222.

³⁷ [Anon.], ['Review of *The Story of Rimini*'], *The New Monthly Magazine*, 26 (1 March 1816): 149.

³⁸ ['Review of *The Story of Rimini*'], *The New Monthly Magazine*, 149.

³⁹ Leigh Hunt, 'To the Right Honourable Lord Byron', *The Story of Rimini: A Poem* (London: J. Murray; Edinburgh: W. Blackwood; & Dublin: Cuning, 1816), n. pag.

⁴⁰ [Anon.], ['Review of *The Story of Rimini*'], *The New Monthly Magazine*, 149. Tom Shuffleton is a character from the play by George Colman the Younger, *John Bull* (1803). Shuffleton borrows money from everybody, and thus the association of Hunt and a money-borrowing character was made long before Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House*. The reference here, however, has more to do with the language used by Shuffleton than his actual financial habits.

Actually, reviewers more often praised than attacked the language and style of Hunt's poem. Josiah Conder, in his review for *The Eclectic Review*, published in April 1816, opens his article with references to 'the easy grateful style of familiar narrative' one finds in *Rimini*, as well as 'the fresh diction of Mr. Hunt.'⁴¹ He goes on to quote the opening lines of the poem, and he is so enthusiastic about *Rimini* that he continues quoting extensively from it, interspersing comments such as 'The following are but touches, but they are exquisite ones' or 'The description of the bride is, we think, very touching'⁴². The incest theme of the poem is described as 'a criminal passion' but Hunt is given 'full credit for the decency of his representations, [and] for the absence of every thing that can disgust, or seduce, or inflame'.⁴³ Conder, an evangelical nonconformist writing in a periodical with a strong religious background, cannot but note that 'we doubt whether such stories are not likely to do some hurt to the cause of morality'.⁴⁴ He makes his strongest criticism at the end of the review when he attacks Hunt's 'flippant and infidel remark which disfigures [the description of the death of Francesca]'.⁴⁵ That a clergyman would attack lines that throw some doubt on the notion of eternal damnation such as 'The gentle sufferer was at peace in death' (Canto IV, l. 412) is not really surprising, as an American reviewer of the poem pointed out in a note a few months later.⁴⁶

The theme of incest was hardly an original subject in itself when Hunt published *Rimini*,⁴⁷ and in fact, the incest in question in *Rimini* is technical, or conventional, rather than 'natural', since Paolo is the brother of Francesca's husband. Yet, reviewers at the time could not be seen to condone such a theme, and thus praise for any poem dealing with such a subject was by nature precarious. An anonymous reviewer for the London monthly, *The British Lady's Magazine*, succeeds in this delicate task:

in our opinion, [Hunt] could not have set himself a task of greater difficulty and delicacy to execute, than to pourtray [*sic*] the progress of such a fatal passion with the truth which is due to nature, and the moral justice which the laws of society demands. It is by no means in the spirit of flattery that we pronounce our judgment on this performance; but we are absolutely constrained to applaud the execution of a master, though we have some repugnance to approve the subject which calls forth his powers.⁴⁸

The reviewer further asserts:

⁴¹ [Josiah Conder], 'Art. VIII. *The Story of Rimini*', *The Eclectic Review* 5 (April 1816): 380, 381.

⁴² [Conder], 382, 383.

⁴³ [Conder], 381.

⁴⁴ [Conder], 381.

⁴⁵ [Conder], 385.

⁴⁶ See [W. Tudor], '*The Story of Rimini*', *North American Review and Miscellaneous Journal*, 8 (July 1816): 283.

⁴⁷ John Donovan attests the extent to which incest was a fashionable theme between 1815 and 1818 ('Incest in *Laon and Cythna*: Nature, Culture, and Desire', *Keats-Shelley Review* 2 [1987]: 47-90), and Richard Cronin's essay 'Shelleyan Incest and the Romantic Legacy' considers incest in several of P. B. Shelley's poems, and provides a good context for reading Hunt's *Rimini* (*Keats-Shelley Journal* XLV [1996] 61-76). For a more general discussion of incest during the Romantic period, see Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1927), 267-81.

⁴⁸ [Anon.], '*The Story of Rimini*', *The British Lady's Magazine* 16 (April 1816): 239.

In his descriptions of inanimate nature, as well as in his delineation of human passions, the author of 'Rimini' is at once original and correct: neither his scenes nor his characters can be mistaken for copies of former artists, but are evidently new creations of mind, bearing the genuine stamp of sovereign genius!⁴⁹

To support this point, the following two double-column pages consist of a long extract from the first canto (the procession of Paolo into Ravenna) and another one from the closing of the second canto (Francesca's arrival in Rimini).

Another significant review was one by William Roberts, which combined an account of Byron's *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina* with Hunt's *The Story of Rimini*. Between the dedication to Byron and the shared theme of incest in two of the poems under review, these works seemed appropriate for a common appraisal. In fact, as Richard Cronin argues, Byron's *Parisina* may have actually been indebted to Hunt's poem, as '[i]n both poems the husband detects the crime when the wife speaks endearments to her lover in her sleep'.⁵⁰ Although only the last five pages of the review are devoted to Hunt's poem, Roberts had already discussed the incest theme in Byron's *Parisina* before turning to *Rimini*. An evangelical periodical would naturally attack this theme, but it is worth noting that, again, the reviewer praises Hunt for his handling of such a delicate subject:

[I]t must be admitted, to [Hunt's] honour, that the superstructure which he has raised upon it is not a temple to licentious love, and that he has touched with as much decency, as the conduct of the story would admit, the crime which he has painted the consequences in the language of virtue.⁵¹

The section of the review dealing with Byron's *Parisina* is not so positive.⁵² Overall, the review is not very favourable toward Hunt either, especially in what Roberts considers 'the favourite idiom of this writer, [which] degenerates almost into gossip' and the 'silly scheme of poetical reform of which he vainly aspires to be the founder'.⁵³ Hunt's language and his Wordsworthian attempt at using the 'proper language of poetry', the language that he describes in the preface as being 'nothing different from that of real life, and [that] depends for its dignity upon the strength

⁴⁹ 'The Story of Rimini', *The British Lady's Magazine*, 239.

⁵⁰ Richard Cronin, 'Keats and the Politics of Cockney Style', 804. Frederick L. Beaty makes a similar case, arguing that '[s]ince Byron had carefully proofread *The Story of Rimini* in 1815, it is not surprising that Hunt's poem should have influenced *Parisina*, written at approximately the same time' ('Byron and the Story of Francesca da Rimini', *PMLA* LXXV, 4 [1960]: 399).

⁵¹ [William Roberts], 'Art. XVIII. *The Siege of Corinth. A Poem. Parisina. A Poem.* 8vo. London, 1816. Murray. – *The Story of Rimini. A Poem.* By Leigh Hunt. London, 1816. Murray', *The British Review, and London Critical Journal* (May 1816): 466. Referring to the account of Roberts's son in *The Life, Letters, and Opinions of William Roberts*, John O. Hayden declares that 'all of the reviews of Byron's works [in the *British Critic*] were attributed to Roberts' (*The Romantic Reviewers, 1802–1824* [Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1969], 52).

⁵² Roberts declares: 'We solemnly proscribe [*Parisina*] from the English fire-side, and summon all that religion, morality, and policy enjoin, to give authority to the interdict. We are happy to say that in this instance, that the subject is no more objectionable than the poetry is contemptible' ('Art. XVIII. *The Siege of Corinth. A Poem*', 463).

⁵³ [Roberts], 466, 469.

and sentiment of what it speaks',⁵⁴ is once again under attack. Most reviewers took exception to Hunt's colloquial usage and his attempt to describe 'natural things in a language becoming of them'.⁵⁵ They also complained about Hunt's claim to a new poetical system, namely, his wish to use colloquial language and everyday subject matter, a system that Byron himself later criticised as a 'strange style', and in fact a departure from natural language.⁵⁶

If the theme of *The Story of Rimini* was to varying degrees criticised by most reviewers, the anonymous reviewer for the *Augustan Review*, a London monthly claiming no political creed but with a liberal bias in its literary review,⁵⁷ stands apart. This review's distinctive response does not consist in an ardent praise of Hunt's poem, but rather in the unusual way in which he handles, or to be more precise ignores, the incest theme. Indeed, the reviewer offers the following description of the poem:

We seem to feel a sort of property in an idea which is familiar to our own minds, but which we never heard breathed by the voice, nor saw traced by the pen of another; and such passages combine with the charm of novelty in the expression, the interest of old acquaintanceship with the image suggested.⁵⁸

The reviewer never mentions the word *incest*, nor criticises the love between Francesca and Paolo—a unique instance amongst the reviews under consideration. Even the dedication escapes criticism, as the reviewer ends the article: 'The dedication is to Lord Byron. We could not help thinking it rather arrogant, till we had read the poem'.⁵⁹

Again, it is Hunt's language that receives most attention in the anonymous review published in the *Monthly Review; or Literary Journal* in June 1816. Several passages are praised for their descriptions of life and nature, in particular the opening lines of the poem. The reviewer concludes: 'We cannot dismiss this publication without our repeated tribute of applause to the strong interest excited by the author in the fate of his characters, and to his natural and original style of poetic composition'.⁶⁰ On the other hand, Hunt's 'inadmissible freedom in rhythm and phraseology'⁶¹ is denounced with a lengthy reference to the preface in which he discusses poetic language as reflecting the language of real life. The reviewer goes on to enumerate a long list of Hudibrastic heroic couplets used by Hunt throughout the poem, and points out some other lines that, in his opinion, do not make sense or are too irregular.

⁵⁴ Leigh Hunt, 'Preface', *The Story of Rimini: A Poem*, xv-xvi.

⁵⁵ Leigh Hunt, 'Preface', xviii.

⁵⁶ On 4–6 November 1815, Byron wrote Hunt: 'I have not time nor paper to *attack* your *system*—which ought to be done—were it only because it is a *system*' (Lord Byron, *Letters and Journal*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols. [London: John Murray, 1973-94], IV, 332). And on 1 June 1818, he wrote to Thomas Moore: 'When I saw "Rimini" in MSS., I told [Hunt] that I deemed it good poetry at bottom, disfigured only by a strange style. His answer was, that his style was a system, or *upon system*, or some such cant; and, when a man talks of system, his case is hopeless: so I said no more to him, and very little to any one else' (Lord Byron, *Letters and Journal*, VI, 46).

⁵⁷ John O. Hayden, *The Romantic Reviewers, 1802–1824*, p. 261.

⁵⁸ [Anon.], 'Art. II.—*The Story of Rimini*', *Augustan Review* (May 1816): 478.

⁵⁹ 'Art. II.—*The Story of Rimini*', *Augustan Review*, 479.

⁶⁰ [Anon.], 'Art. III. *The Story of Rimini*', *Monthly Review; or Literary Journal* (June 1816): 142.

⁶¹ 'Art. III. *The Story of Rimini*', *Monthly Review*, 142.

Hunt's poetical experiment in *Rimini* is also the focus of the anonymous review published in the *Dublin Examiner* in June 1816. The poem, according to the reviewer, 'contains a good many harsh and unmusical lines, and the expression sometimes borders upon vulgarity'.⁶² The reviewer also complains of the treatment of incest in *Rimini*, 'one of the blackest crimes under which human nature can sink', and the way Hunt describes it 'in colour so alluring as scarcely to shock the purest and most delicate mind'.⁶³ Nevertheless, the tone of the review is overall very positive, with Hunt's 'half-antiquated, but expressive phraseology' praised alongside his 'language perfectly true to nature, and benefiting the condition of human creatures'.⁶⁴ After numerous quotations from each canto, the reviewer asserts that if readers 'consider [the poem] upon its own merits, we have not much doubt but it will acquire a deserved popularity'.⁶⁵

A friend of Thomas Moore and employer of William Hazlitt, Francis Jeffrey was true to his personal opinion when he published the review of *Rimini* in June 1816.⁶⁶ At the end of May 1816, Moore wrote to Jeffrey, 'I hope you mean to praise Rimini—I would do it *for spite*'.⁶⁷ Moore was implying that Jeffrey should publish a positive review of the poem in order to annoy some of his competitors rather than to please Hunt. After all, Byron had written to Moore two months before about the possibility of Moore writing a review for the *Edinburgh Review*:

Leigh Hunt's poem is a devilish good one—quaint, here and there, but with the substratum of originality, and with poetry about it, that will stand the test. I do not say this because he has inscribed it to me, which I am sorry for, as I should have otherwise begged you to review it in the *Edinburgh*. It is really deserving of much praise, and a favourable critique in the E[dinburgh] R[eview] would but do it justice, and set it up before the public eye where it ought to be.⁶⁸

In his *Life of Lord Byron*, Moore indicates that his response was: 'With respect to Hunt's poem, though it is, I own, full of beauties, and though I like himself sincerely, I really could not undertake to praise it *seriously*. There is so much of the *quizzible* in all he writes, that I never can put on the proper pathetic face in reading him.'⁶⁹ Not surprisingly, Moore's opinion of the poem

⁶² [Anon.], 'The Story of Rimini: a Poem. By Leigh Hunt', *Dublin Examiner* I (June 1816): 143.

⁶³ 'The Story of Rimini: a Poem. By Leigh Hunt', *Dublin Examiner*, 131.

⁶⁴ 'The Story of Rimini: a Poem. By Leigh Hunt', *Dublin Examiner*, 130, 131.

⁶⁵ 'The Story of Rimini: a Poem. By Leigh Hunt', *Dublin Examiner*, 143.

⁶⁶ Many of Hunt's contemporaries believed Hazlitt to be the author of the *Edinburgh Review* article on *Rimini*. Hunt himself thought that Hazlitt was the author of the review, as he declared to Jeffrey: '[N]othing can be falser than what is said [in *Blackwood's*] respecting my having asked and pestered Mr. Hazlitt to write an article upon my poem in the *Edinburgh Review*' (*The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, ed. Thornton Hunt, 2 vols. [London: Smith, Elder and Co., 186], I, 103). Rather surprisingly, Hazlitt wrote to Hunt in April 1821, 'I praised you in the *Edinburgh Review*' (*The Letters of William Hazlitt*, 204) but, as Stanley Jones remarks, '[the] article [was] so drastically revised by Jeffrey that it is usually excluded from the Hazlitt canon' (*Hazlitt: A Life, from Winterslow to Frith Street* [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989], 212).

⁶⁷ Letter to Francis Jeffrey, 23 May 1816 [postmarked 26 May 1816], *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1964), I, 395.

⁶⁸ Lord Byron, *Letters and Journal*, V, 35.

⁶⁹ Thomas Moore, *Life of Lord Byron: with his Letters and Journals*, 6 vols. (London: John Murray, 1854), III, 201.

was slightly different, though still frank in his criticism, in his letter to the author, dated 7 March 1816:

Your Rimini is beautiful—and its only faults such as I know you are aware of & prepared to justify—there is a maiden charm of originality about it— . . . in short, it is Poetry—and notwithstanding the quaintnesses, the coinages and even affectations, with which, *here* and *there* . . . I have only time to say again that your Poem is beautiful—and that, if I not exactly agree with [*sic*] *some* of your notions about versification & language the general spirit of the work has more than satisfied my utmost expectations of you—⁷⁰

Again, the main negative criticism of the poem seems to turn on Hunt's language. Hunt's innovative approach to poetry, as outlined in the preface of *Rimini*, is something that Moore could not agree with; Moore's own poems of that period reveal the extent of his own opinions concerning poetical language, particularly as seen in *Lallah Rook* and *Legendary Ballads*. Moore preferred the poetry and subject of *The Feast of the Poets*, a witty and satirical style that he would himself develop further in his very popular poems *The Fudge Family in Paris* and its 'sequel' *The Fudges in England*.

Jeffrey's review presents a refreshing contrast to the various publications related to *The Story of Rimini*. He finds faults in the poem but is generally positive,⁷¹ and makes a good case for the compliments he pays to Hunt: 'THERE is a good deal of genuine poetry in this little volume; and poetry, too, of a very peculiar and original character.'⁷² His second paragraph, in particular, illustrates the balanced tone of the review:

Though [Hunt] has chosen, however, to write in this style [i.e. a style resembling Chaucer's]; and has done so very successfully, we are not by any means of opinion, that he either writes or appears to write it as naturally as those by whom it was first adopted; on the contrary, we think there is a good deal of affectation in his homeliness, directness, and rambling descriptions. He visibly gives himself airs of familiarity, and mixes up flippant, and even cant phrases, with passages that bear, upon the whole, the marks of considerable labour and study. In general, however, he is very successful in his attempts at facility, and has unquestionably produced a little poem of great grace and spirit, and, in many passages and many particulars, of infinite beauty and delicacy.⁷³

⁷⁰ *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, I, 389.

⁷¹ One may note that, two years later, Jeffrey would still refer positively to *Rimini* in his review of Barry Cornwall's *A Sicilian Story*. At one point, Jeffrey expressed doubt whether Cornwall 'could have written any thing so good, on the whole, as the beautiful story of *Rimini*' ('Review of Barry Cornwall's *A Sicilian Story*', *Edinburgh Review* LXV [1818] 146).

⁷² [Francis Jeffrey], 'Art. XI. *The Story of Rimini*', *Edinburgh Review* XXVI (June 1816): 476.

⁷³ [Jeffrey], 477.

Like Byron, Jeffrey specifically praises the third canto of *Rimini*, 'the most interesting part of the poem',⁷⁴ and he quotes from it extensively. Jeffrey is also particularly persuasive in summarising the pros and cons of Hunt's poetic language. He notes that

[t]he diction of this little poem is among its chief beauties—and yet its greatest blemishes are faults in diction.—It is very English throughout—but often very affectedly negligent, and so extremely familiar as to be absolutely low and vulgar.⁷⁵

Phrases such as 'a clipsome waist' or 'a scattery light', and lines such as 'She had stout notions on the marrying score' are quoted to illustrate his point.

The passages cited by Jeffrey represent Hunt's implicit claim that the conversational language of those who are *not* gentry represents 'natural' language, and thus the more 'elevated' language is construed as 'artificial'. Conservative political opponents might justly object to the attempt by 'Cockneys' to use their accents to promote their own socio-politico-linguistic status, especially since Hunt is not writing about a leech-gather or an 'Idiot boy' but about members of the historical ruling class of medieval Ravenna. Hunt's underlying argument in giving a sympathetic reading, and often colloquially phrased version, of their story is that the romantic experience of the high born is not essentially different from that of ordinary folk. Hunt reinforces this claim through the familiar tone of his address to Byron in the dedication. Hunt's point is that all human beings share a common 'nature' that even 'Cockneys' can understand and express. Behind the theme and language of *Rimini* lies a potentially radical politics, an element largely absent from Dante's version of the story.

It is ironic that Jeffrey praised a poem with Wordsworthian diction, a diction he so vehemently protested in his 1802 review of Southey's *Thalaba*. In any case, Jeffrey's review is most significant as a fair assessment of the contemporary reception of *Rimini* and of Hunt as a poet. Halfway through the review, Jeffrey makes the following statement:

Mr Hunt . . . does not belong to any of the modern schools of poetry; and therefore we cannot convey our idea of his manner of writing, by reference to any of the more conspicuous models. His poetry is not like Mr Wordsworth's, which is metaphysical; nor like Mr Coleridge's, which is fantastical; nor like Mr Southey's, which is monastical.⁷⁶

In June 1816 Hunt was officially of no school of poetry, although his diction evoked the Lakers. Repeatedly labelled as 'original' in his attempt at expanding Dante's famous episode, Hunt found himself on the verge of poetical success, with a second edition in 1817.⁷⁷ However, by October

⁷⁴ [Jeffrey], 482.

⁷⁵ [Jeffrey], 491.

⁷⁶ [Jeffrey], 487.

⁷⁷ It should be noted that being on the verge of poetical success did not equate with financial success. In fact, Hunt spent the advance money he got from Murray to pay off previous debts, and, in 1817, his finances were again in a rather critical condition. This would of course happen repeatedly throughout Hunt's life.

1817 Hunt would be better known as the 'chief Doctor and Professor'⁷⁸ of the Cockney School of Poetry. From then on, his place in the poetical world of the late 1810s and 1820s would not be as an innovative and respected poet, but as the 'King of the Cockneys'.⁷⁹

Although not published in an important or influential magazine,⁸⁰ the review that appeared in the September issue of the *Literary Panorama* confirms an appreciation of Hunt's poem as containing numerous beautiful descriptions.⁸¹ It also praises an originality that distinguishes Hunt from most of his peers—a compliment regularly bestowed on Hunt by his contemporaries, from Byron to anonymous reviewers. Except for a few remarks on the poem's occasional carelessness in versification, the only negative comment has to do with the morality of the poem:

[W]e desire earnestly that a man of such talents would consider whether it were not infinitely to his advantage in every respect, not to awake the mind to poetry only, but to virtue also, not merely to delight the world, but to improve it.⁸²

The reviewer applauds Hunt's talent and ideas, but concludes the article with his injunction that poetry could, and in fact should, contain a moral dimension found wanting in Hunt's work.

The reviews of *The Story of Rimini* published in the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* are among the best known articles published during the Romantic period, together with Jeffrey's review of Wordsworth's *The Excursion*, John Taylor Coleridge's review of Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*, and John Wilson Croker's review of Keats's *Endymion*. The reviews in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly Review* reveal strong poetical and political biases against Hunt, and in fact against everything he represented as the perceived head of a new poetical school. As Alan Lang Strout observes, 'Perhaps there exists no better example of political malignity in the periodical criticism of the early nineteenth century than the reviews in these Tory publications of Hunt's *The Story of Rimini*.'⁸³ An atmosphere of political malignity is certainly present in these reviews; but their aggressive stance also stems, in the case of *Blackwood's*, from the desire to establish a new publication.⁸⁴ Several scholars, including Roe,

⁷⁸ [J. G. Lockhart], 'On the Cockney School of Poetry. No I', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* II, VII (October 1817): 38.

⁷⁹ Lockhart entitled his second letter to Hunt 'Letter from Z. to Leigh Hunt, King of the Cockneys' (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* III, XIV [May 1818]: 196–201). Lockhart particularly attacked the sexual politics present in 'the obscene and traitorous pages' of *Rimini* (201). He also declares: 'No woman who has not either lost her chastity, or is not desirous of losing it, ever read "The Story of Rimini" without the flushing of shame and self-reproach' (200).

⁸⁰ See John O. Hayden's brief description of the *Literary Panorama* on p. 59 of his *Romantic Reviewers*.

⁸¹ Here again the anonymous reviewer praises the opening of *Rimini* very highly: 'Perhaps there never was a more splendid opening than that of the present poem' ('*The Story of Rimini*', *Literary Panorama* 4 [September 1816]: 939).

⁸² '*The Story of Rimini*', *Literary Panorama*, 944.

⁸³ Alan Lang Strout, 'Hunt, Hazlitt, and *Maga*: The Lighter Side of "Cockney-Killing"', *English Literary History* 4 (1937): 151.

⁸⁴ In her detailed study of William Blackwood, Margaret Oliphant remarks that, with the publication of their first issue, John Gibson Lockhart and John Wilson wanted 'something to sting and to startle, and make every reader hold his breath' (*William Blackwood and His Sons, Their Magazines and Friends*, 2 vols. [Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and his sons, 1897], I, 114).

Cox, Kucich, Wheatley, and de Montluzin, have analysed these reviews in depth.⁸⁵ My concern here is with Hunt's reaction to them, as well as with the other comments of his contemporaries.

Leigh Hunt and his brother John responded publicly to these reviews in *The Examiner*, as Hunt explained to Moore in a letter dated 24 March 1818:

You have seen or heard, perhaps, of this anonymous raf who attacked me in a Scotch magazine. My brother, in his over-zealousness for me, unfortunately inserted a paragraph about me in the paper, and then I was obliged to notice [the anonymous reviewer] in the same way. We have not succeeded in dragging or provoking him forth; and he has since, after a certain glowing [*sic*] but always mean fashion, recanted, pretending he did not mean to attack me privately.⁸⁶

Despite three requests published in *The Examiner*, the Hunts were unsuccessful in their attempts to challenge Z, the anonymous reviewer, to 'avow himself; which he cannot fail to do, unless to an utter disregard of all Truth and Decency, he adds the height of Meanness and COWARDICE'.⁸⁷ Hazlitt also responded to these reviews in two publications, and Keats wrote to Benjamin Bailey on 3 November 1817:

⁸⁵ Greg Kucich, "'The Wit in the Dungeon': Leigh Hunt and the Insolent Politics of Cockney Coteries"; Kim Wheatley, 'The *Blackwood's* Attacks on Leigh Hunt', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 47, 1 (1992): 1-31; Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, 'Killing the Cockneys: *Blackwood's* Weapons of Choice against Hunt, Hazlitt, and Keats', *Keats-Shelley Journal* XLVH (1998): 87-107. To quote from but one of these critics, De Montluzin writes:

The resultant literary war launched by *Blackwood's Magazine* against the Cockney poets is justly notorious for its ferocity, its venom, and its journalistic overkill. It was a rhetorical assault clearly out of proportion to the aesthetic needs of legitimate literary criticism, an assault characterized by cruelty, pettiness, mean-spirited conceit, manipulation of the truth, and inexcusable attacks upon personalities. (107)

See also Jeffrey N. Cox's article 'Leigh Hunt's Cockney School: The Lakers' "Other"', *Romanticism On the Net*, 14 (May 1999) 15/10/1999. <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/huntlakers.html>>, and Ayumi Mizukoshi, 'The Cockney Politics of Gender—the Cases of Hunt and Keats', *Romanticism On the Net*, 14 (May 1999) 15/10/1999. <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/cockneygender.html>>. As can be expected, every biography of John Keats contains a discussion of the Cockney School of Poetry, from Walter Jackson Bate's classic *John Keats* to Andrew Motion's recent *Keats* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1997). The Cockney School debate was of course still very much alive in 1821 when *Adonais* was published, as Susan Wolfson demonstrates ('Keats enters History: Autopsy, *Adonais*, and the Fame of Keats', in *Keats and History*, ed. Nicholas Roe [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995], 17-23).

⁸⁶ Reproduced in *Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, vol. VIII, p. 236.

⁸⁷ See *The Examiner*, 514 (2 November 1817): 693; 516 (16 November 1817): 729; and 520 (14 December 1817): 788. John Hunt had also written to Robert Baldwin, the London publisher and agent for Blackwood on 3 November 1817:

Mr John Hunt calls upon Mr Baldwin to procure for him the Name and Residence of the Writer of an article in Blackwood's Magazine for October 1817—signed Z containing the most false, malignant, and altogether infamous assertions on the Character of Mr Leigh Hunt, the Editor of the Examiner. (National Library of Scotland, MS 4002. Blackwood Papers 1817; quoted in Roe, 270)

Following John Hunt's visit to their shop, Baldwin and Cradock wrote to William Blackwood:

There has been a flaming attack upon Hunt in the Endinburgh [*sic*] Magazine—I never read any thing so virulent—accusing him of the greatest Crimes—dep[r]eciating his Wife his Poetry—his Habits—his company, his Conversation—⁸⁸

It is clear from these reviews that Hunt's personal and political life were throwing a shadow over his poetry. It is also clear that 'Z was only too ready to yoke the sexual politics of *The Story of Rimini* to the radical programme of the *Examiner*, by way of denouncing both'.⁸⁹

What is less known is that these reviews stimulated the publication of two anonymous pamphlets defending Hunt against the harsh criticism he received. The first was published in 1816, entitled *An Address to that Quarterly Reviewer who touched upon Mr. Leigh Hunt's 'The Story of Rimini'*.⁹⁰ The writer, now identified by John Barnard as Hunt's friend Charles Cowden Clarke,⁹¹ is virulent in his attack on Croker and Gifford's review:

I BELIEVE it is unlikely that any one of ordinary experience and discernment, could read the first twelve or fourteen lines of your article on Mr. Hunt's 'The Story of Rimini,' without thinking them a tissue of falsehood—ill woven to be sure!—but full as malicious as inconsequent.⁹²

We were much surprised and hurt this morning at receiving a visit from Mr John Hunt, complaining on behalf of his brother of an article in your new Magazine signed Z. Not having had time since the arrival of the copies to read the number, we were entirely ignorant of the nature of the article of which he complained; but, on examining it, we certainly think that it contains expressions which ought not to have been used. (letter dated 3 November 1817; quoted in Margaret Oliphant, *William Blackwood and His Sons*, I, 134–5)

⁸⁸ *The Letters of John Keats, 1814–1821*, I, 179–80.

⁸⁹ Roe, 121.

⁹⁰ Byron wrote to Moore on 11 April 1817:

There was a devil of a review of [Hunt] in the Quarterly, a year ago, which he answered. All answers are imprudent: but to be sure, poetical flesh and blood must have the last word—that's certain. I thought, and think, very highly of his Poem; but I warned him of the row his favourite antique phraseology would bring him into. (Lord Byron, *Letters and Journal*, V, 211)

⁹¹ See John Barnard, 'Charles Cowden Clarke and the Leigh Hunt Circle 1812–1818', *Romanticism* 3.1 (1997): 66–90.

⁹² [Charles Cowden Clarke], *An Address to that Quarterly Reviewer who touched upon Mr. Hunt's 'The Story of Rimini'* (London: R. Jennings, 1816), 3. One may note that, though he was certainly no friend of Hunt, Southey objected to Murray about the severe personal attacks printed in the reviews of the *Quarterly*, in a letter dated 8 April 1818:

The cursed system of acrimonious criticism has prevailed too generally and too long: keep it for the culprits of literature, for pretenders in philosophy, incendiaries in politics, scoffers in religion. . . . But any undue severity, any gratuitous attack, any wound wantonly inflicted makes a man your enemy, when he might as well have been your friend. Above all let us do ample justice to those who are most obnoxious: more than justice has been done to Bp Watson . . . this is erring on the right side: less than justice was

Cowden Clarke is referring here to the reviewers' claim at the beginning of the article that

A CONSIDERABLE part of this poem was written in Newgate, where the author was some time confined, we believe for a libel which appeared in a newspaper, of which he is said to be the conductor. . . . [W]e have never seen Mr. Hunt's newspaper; we have never heard any particulars of his offence; nor should we have known that he had been imprisoned but for his own confession. We have not, indeed, ever read one line that he has written, and are alike remote from the knowledge of his errors or the influence of his private character.⁹³

These introductory sentences are indeed hard to believe since the sole reference to Hunt's imprisonment is 'my long / And caged hours' (Canto III, ll. 3-4), and no mention is made of the cause of his imprisonment. Furthermore, as Cowden Clark notes, the reviewers' claim that they have not 'read one line' of *The Examiner* suggests that they must have been out of the country for the preceding nine years.⁹⁴

In fact, Hazlitt accurately describes the reviewers' point for such a claim in *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq.*, published in March 1819,⁹⁵ and again in *The Plain Speaker*, published anonymously in 1826. There, in the essay 'The Periodical Press', he writes:

The first announcement of the work [*Rimini*], in a Ministerial publication, sets out with a statement, that the author has lately been relieved from Newgate—which gives a

done to Leigh Hunt, a conceited writer, and a man of the most villainous principles, but of no inconsiderable powers. Let us differ from the *Edinburgh* as much in our principles of criticism as in every thing else. (*New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols. [New York and London: Columbia UP, 1965], II, 184)

See also his letter to Murray dated 24 August 1816, where he approves of a review 'which may redeem the *Quarterly* from the stigma brought upon it by such articles as those upon Galts Tragedies, and Leigh Hunts *Rimini*' (*New Letters of Robert Southey*, II, 141).

⁹³ [John Wilson Croker and William Gifford], 'Art. IX. *The Story of Rimini*', *Quarterly Review* XV (January 1816): 473.

⁹⁴ The author of another anonymous pamphlet also points out that Z failed in his attempt to minimise the public's knowledge of Hunt: 'Is it credible that such an insignificant trifler as he [Hunt] is represented, would have caused so much spleen? Mr. Z betrays himself; he shows that he thought, that he well knew, the contrary' (*A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, for October 1817* [Edinburgh: John Moir, 1817], 17).

⁹⁵ In *A Letter to William Gifford*, Hazlitt wrote:

In order to give as favourable an impression of that poem as you could, you began your account of it by saying that it had been composed in Newgate, though you knew that it had not; but you also knew that the name of Newgate would sound more grateful to certain ears, to pour flattering poison into which is the height of your abject ambition. (*The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. [London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1930-34], IX, 26)

This description of the reviewer's attack on Hunt is curiously reminiscent of the murder of the King in the garden in *Hamlet*, rather ironic for the 'King of the Cockneys'.

felon-like air to the production, and makes it necessary for the fashionable reader to perform a sort of quarantine against it, as if it had the gaol-infection. It is declared by another critic ['Z'], in the same way, to be unreadable from its insipidity, and afterwards, by the same critic, to be highly pernicious and inflammatory—a slight contradiction, but no matter!⁹⁶

The reviews published in the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* contain numerous instances of thinly disguised personal attacks on Hunt and his political stance as editor of *The Examiner*.⁹⁷ Lockhart thus writes:

The poetry of Mr Hunt is such as might be expected from the personal character and habits of its author. As a vulgar man is perpetually labouring to be genteel—in like manner, the poetry of this man is always on the stretch to be grand.⁹⁸

The personal nature of this attack, and the possibility of a libel case, led Messrs Baldwin, Cradock, & Co., the London booksellers listed as William Blackwood's correspondents for the magazine, to discontinue their association with *Blackwood's* (their names do not appear on the second issue). Although Baldwin and Cradock were shocked by the virulence of Z's attack, they did comment in a letter to William Blackwood dated 3 November 1817 that '[b]eing a convicted libeller himself, Mr Leigh Hunt has little right to complain of such attacks.'⁹⁹ John Richardson, a solicitor from Edinburgh, held a higher opinion of Hunt, but nevertheless condemned *Rimini* in a letter to William Blackwood, dated 20 November 1817:

[W]ith all his affectation, he is in the domestic relations of life most exemplary . . . a *puritan* in morals . . . I do not however think that a man's pure conduct at home entitles him to spread poison abroad: and I have no doubt that the poem must be regarded as reprehensible—Vice is much more readily insinuated by such books as the new *Eloise & Rimini* than by coarser works that call such things more plainly by their names: & it is no justification that Dante first told the story.¹⁰⁰

Richardson wrote again to Blackwood two days later:

⁹⁶ *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, XVI, 236-7.

⁹⁷ Cowden Clark sees the review as '[a] perverse misrepresentation,—[a] real, or affected want of comprehension,—[a] flimsily disguised envy and malignity' (*An Address to that Quarterly Reviewer*, p. 18). Ironically, forty years later, Croker wrote to Lord Russell about the publication of Thomas Moore's *Diary*:

The discretion allowed to an editor is never better employed than in keeping domestic life separate from what you yourself describe as the 'idle gossip and calumnies of the day,'—the squabbles of authorship, and the hot conflict of political parties. (*Correspondence between the Right Hon. J. W. Croker and the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, on Some Passages of 'Moore's Dairy'* [London: John Murray, 1854], 10)

⁹⁸ [John Gibson Lockhart], 'On the Cockney School of Poetry. No 1', 39.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Margaret Oliphant, *William Blackwood and His Sons*, I, 134-5.

¹⁰⁰ National Library of Scotland, MS 4002. Blackwood Papers 1817; quoted in Roe, 271.

There is no doubt, I believe, that Mr L. Hunt can prove himself individually to be almost if not altogether as pure & correct a man as walks the streets of London—& supposing this to be the case—one question which arises is—is the poem [*Rimini*] of a pure or impure tendency—if a jury will not say that it is impure then you have no case—for if both man & poem be blameless your article is certainly as atrocious a libel as could be penned.¹⁰¹

Kim Wheatley notes that Lockhart attempted to discredit Hunt by 'blurring the identities of the poet and his text' in the first essay on the Cockney School of Poetry.¹⁰² Yet, the equating of poet and poem was common in the period, and the anonymous reviewer of the American edition of *Rimini* reaches a diametrically opposite conclusion by means of a similar kind of equation:

Many persons have judged that Lord Byron must possess a bad heart, because he delights in painting the bad and violent passions almost exclusively. By the same rule, Mr. Hunt should be presumed to have a most amiable character, since he so frequently describes frankness, openness, cheerfulness, &c.¹⁰³

Whereas for Lockhart, Hunt's personal style, finery, language, and his affected descriptions of Italy reflect his lack of an upper-class education, and his overtly familiar dedication to Byron represents an attempt to transcend his social background, the American reviewer defended Hunt's character on the basis of his chosen topic and his style of composition. In the fourth essay on the Cockney School published ten months later, Lockhart attacked Keats in ways that make clear his assumption that a similarity with Hunt's *Rimini* in poetic language indicates a similarity in political views.¹⁰⁴ As Roe notes, '[i]n Lockhart's view of Keats, there was no discrimination of the aesthetic and the political; quite the contrary. For him Keats's poetic language was itself reprobate, an insolent challenge to the establishment.'¹⁰⁵ The remark is equally descriptive of Lockhart's opinion of Hunt as found in his first review of *Rimini* and in the other articles devoted to Hunt.

Lockhart's coarse attack in the first article on the Cockney School of Poetry led to the publication of another defence of Hunt's *Rimini* in a fifty-six-page pamphlet entitled *A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine for October 1817*. The bulk of the pamphlet deals with Lockhart's review of *Rimini*, though the anonymous author also comments negatively on other sections of the October issue of *Blackwood's*, including the 'Chaldee Manuscript' and the review of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. The tone of the pamphlet is as vindictive as that of Lockhart's piece. The author cunningly writes of Lockhart's description of Hunt: 'A mass of rubbish of more gross arrogance, of ridiculous presumption, of weak and silly affectation, we

¹⁰¹ National Library of Scotland, MS 4002. Blackwood Papers 1817; quoted in Roe, 271.

¹⁰² Kim Wheatley, 'The *Blackwood's* Attacks on Leigh Hunt', 12.

¹⁰³ [W. Tudor], 'The *Story of Rimini*', *North American Review*, 281.

¹⁰⁴ Lockhart declares: 'Mr. Keats has adopted the loose, nerveless versification, and Cockney rhymes of the poet of Rimini' ('On the Cockney School of Poetry. N°IV', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* III, XVIII [August 1818]: 522).

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas Roe, 'Introduction', in *Keats and History*, ed. Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 3.

have seldom, nay, we have never seen heaped together.¹⁰⁶ Again following Lockhart's example, he proceeds to an *ad hominem* attack: 'These absurdities could only have emanated from one either totally ignorant of Leigh Hunt's literary character, or, what rather appears the case, from one determined, at every risk, to vilify and misrepresent him'.¹⁰⁷ The author comments in detail on Lockhart's article, answering Lockhart's allegations point by point, in a systematic defence of Hunt. The author concludes by making strong claims for the poem's moral and aesthetic excellence:

Rimini, Mr Reviewer and Messrs Conductor and Publisher, *has been read, and read attentively; there is not one line, one sentiment introduced in that poem, to warrant such assertions. No, the most delicate and sensible mind, after perusing it, longs again to examine all its beauties, to indulge in its fine descriptions.*¹⁰⁸

He also declares that Byron and Hunt were friends while Hunt was in prison and thus 'by common courtesy, as well as habits of intimacy, Mr. Hunt was empowered to call him "My dear Byron"'.¹⁰⁹

The series of articles on the Cockney School of Poetry is perhaps, in the words of Patrick Story, 'the most notorious controversy in British literary history'.¹¹⁰ This series comprised, in any case, the first major negative event of Leigh Hunt's literary career. Hunt had been imprisoned in 1813 for his political beliefs and thus became a political martyr. Because of his views, he experienced calumny and repeated anonymous attacks against him between 1816 and 1825.¹¹¹ As Hunt himself comments in his *Autobiography*, *The Story of Rimini* would have been more of a success 'if politics had not judged it'.¹¹² Following the publication of Croker and Gifford's article in the *Quarterly Review*, Hunt had written to Moore on 21 May 1816:

I was prepared, of course, for a reasonable carbanado from the Government quarters, and even for a good deal of stout objection perhaps from more friendly ones, as far as difference of theory was concerned; but this assault is mere foaming at the mouth.¹¹³

Perhaps more important than the actual reception of the poem, the *Blackwood's* reviews, together with numerous references in articles and reviews published in that journal between 1821 and 1829, linked Hunt definitively with the Cockney School and all the negative connotations

¹⁰⁶ [Anon.], *A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, for October 1817*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ [Anon.], *A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 14, 15.

¹⁰⁸ [Anon.], *A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 22.

¹⁰⁹ [Anon.], *A Review of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 33.

¹¹⁰ Patrick Story, 'A Neglected Cockney School Parody of Hazlitt and Hunt', *Keats-Shelley Journal* XXIX (1980): 191.

¹¹¹ The first piece in the series of articles 'On the Cockney School of Poetry' appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* II, VII (October 1817): 38-41. Another seven articles appeared between 1817 and 1825.

¹¹² *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, 259.

¹¹³ Reproduced in *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, VIII, 215. Hunt also notes in the preface to his 1832 *Poetical Works*: 'Probably these criticisms [against *Rimini*] were not altogether a matter of climate; for I was a writer of politics as well as verses, and the former (two years ago!) was as illegal as the sallies of phraseology' (*The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt* [London: Edward Moxon, 1832], v).

implied by this school for the following decade. This association denied him the chance of popular success for several years. Although it can be argued that negative attention was, as in the case of the *Lyrical Ballads*, better than no attention at all, it did not prepare readers for Hunt's success either then or today. Interestingly, as Kim Wheatley remarks, 'Z never addresses the possibility of his reviews functioning as advertisements for Hunt's poetry, nor does he ask himself why, if Hunt is so worthless, he is wasting his time on him.'¹¹⁴ The answer most likely lies in Lockhart's awareness of the political implications of *The Story of Rimini*, and consequently the need to limit the potential audience by attacking Hunt through calumny of his character and ridicule of the language used in the poem.

In 1818 Hunt published *Foliage*, a volume of poetry consisting principally of translations and short poems, but also containing two of Hunt's greatest poems: 'To T. L. H.' and 'The Nymphs'. Hunt exposes himself to criticism of the religious opinions he expresses in the preface and in several poems, as well as in his defence of the 'moral' of *Rimini*. His controversial political opinions are still apparent throughout *Foliage*, whether in his discussion of the need for a new poetical sensitivity in the preface,¹¹⁵ or in his repeated use of green imagery in various poems as, in the words of Nicholas Roe, 'a lyrical expression of the *Examiner's* oppositional politics'.¹¹⁶ Published in the midst of the first wave of attacks on the Cockney School (which went on until October 1819), *Foliage* received some critical attention, but it was primarily hostile and clearly influenced by the reviews in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly Review* I have discussed.

1819 saw the publication of the first edition of Hunt's *Poetical Works* in three volumes. That this edition was not reviewed in any of the major periodicals of the time is a sign that Hunt the Poet was beginning to be eclipsed entirely by Hunt the Editor and political figure; the absence of reviews may also be another instance of the unfortunate legacy of the 'Cockney School of Poetry' articles. The publication of Hunt's 1819 *Poetical Works* somehow marked a pause in his career as poet, a career that would begin anew in 1832 with the publication of his second *Poetical Works*, which included the revised versions of *The Feast of the Poets* and of *The Story of Rimini*. Although this second edition was well reviewed, and Hunt's position within the London literary scene changed for the better over the following two decades, the stigma of the attacks against *Rimini* lasted much longer than anyone might have anticipated at the time, and Hunt was now more famous for heading the Cockney School of Poetry than for being the author of *Rimini*.

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¹¹⁴ Kim Wheatley, 'The *Blackwood's* Attacks on Leigh Hunt', 8.

¹¹⁵ Leigh Hunt, *Foliage; or Poems Original and Translated* (London: C. and J. Ollier, 1818), 20.

¹¹⁶ Roe, 122.