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Contents

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

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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), I, 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/cockneycoteries.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~~ ideot, 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'lling mirth of dying royalty~~
> ~~The sapless sheets of fading royalty~~
> ~~The dancing death of sinking royalty~~
> The fond neglect of sinking royalty[15]

[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: Cunning, 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 glowling [*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* XLVII (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 pay, 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 I', 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.

Lamb, Virgil, and "Tears shed for the frail estate of human kind"[1]

By RICHARD W. CLANCEY

AS A MASTER OF THE FAMILIAR ESSAY, Charles Lamb hardly would seem closely related to Virgil -- the Virgil who bespeaks epic, empire, and the high cost of real commitment. And yet Virgil has another side, the pathetic, a heroism and a humanism which, according to one critical school, embodies a "pre-Christian sensitivity and compassion."[2] Bowra points to Virgil's characterization of Aeneas as being both Stoic and reflective of Virgil's own "warm-hearted, compassionate temperament"; "pity" is made to be a main feature of Aeneas's personality.[3]

Lamb famously recoiled from Coleridge's admiring epithet "gentle-hearted," and yet most readers of Lamb would heartily second Coleridge. There is a warmth in Lamb, especially in the Elia persona, which is universally acknowledged. I would argue that this warmth, this powerful affect in Lamb, finds an analogue and major inspiration in Virgil. Like every Christ's Hospital classical scholar, Lamb knew his Virgil thoroughly, especially the *Aeneid*, with large sections undoubtedly mastered by heart.[4] Barnett illustrates how the use of quotation is a main feature of Lamb's style. Virgil was his most quoted classical author, with "sixteen uses" of the *Aeneid*, and a few quotations from other Virgilian texts.[5] What is crucial in Lamb's use of quotations is that they are integrated into his text; they are truly a part of what he says, not decorative frills added for the sake of elegance. Virgil becomes a direct part of Lamb's own utterance.[6]

There are, of course, instances where Lamb quotes Virgil simply as a part of his playful commentary. In "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago," in the persona of Coleridge, Lamb laments the fact that the children's meals were severely diminished before their eyes as they stood in the great dining hall. Staff members toted off platters destined for the children, and all the children could do was stare at the great portraits on the walls picturing well-fed Christ's Hospital scholars of years past. In this context Lamb offers an English translation of a line from the *Aeneid,* I.464. Here Aeneas and Achates stand in the temple Dido is building in Carthage. In frescoes before them, they see recorded the story of the fall of Troy. Line 464 says that Aeneas feeds his soul on a mere picture. Lamb appropriates the line to himself and his Christ's Hospital fellow scholars. The food is hauled off, and they are left "To feed our mind with idle portraiture."[7]

[1] I wish to thank my colleague Professor Donald Poduska for reading this essay and offering valuable comments.
[2] W. R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's* Aeneid (Berkeley, 1976) 9.
[3] C. M. Bowra, *From Virgil to Milton* (London, 1967) 65.
[4] George L. Barnett, *Charles Lamb* (Boston, 1976) 112.
[5] George L. Barnett, *Charles Lamb: The Evolution of Elia* (Bloomington, 1964) 216-230. For the reference to Virgil see 221.
[6] Barnett, *Evolution* 220.
[7] Virgil, i, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6;* ii, *Aeneid 7-12, The Minor Poems,* rev.; trans. H. R. Fairclough (Cambridge, MA, 1934-35); The Latin text of the *Aeneid* will be identified by book and line numbers in parentheses in the text. Translations will be mine except where otherwise noted. Charles Lamb, *Elia and the Last Essays of Elia* ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford, 1987) (hereafter Bate), 17 (Page numbers of this volume will hereafter be given in the text.)

Another humorous use of Virgilian material comes in the same essay where Lamb recounts the easy-going ways of Field, the Under Master at Christ's. From the other side of the school hall, Lamb could hear the pains expressed by the students in the upper-school as they were disciplined by the sadistic Boyer for their academic failings. Lamb tells us that "[w]e occasionally heard sounds of the *Ululantes,* and caught glances of Tartarus" (22). Lamb's reference is to Aeneas's descent into the underworld in Book VI.548-647, where he catches sight of Tartarus and hears the wails of its suffering inmates.

There are instances when Lamb is far more serious in his classical evocations. In his essay "The Praise of Chimney Sweepers," Lamb tells us how as a child he would identify with the poor creatures condemned to the horrors of their trade: "[T]o see a chit no bigger than one's-self enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed to be the *fauces Averni* . . ." (124). This is a reference to the gates of hell, *Aeneid* VI.201, which Aeneas encounters at the beginning of his adventures in seeking the golden bough and going into the underworld.

His essay takes on a more humorous cast as he recounts how, in Arundel Castle, a young sweep somehow ended up in one of its resplendent bedrooms. There, spying one of the "state-beds" which lay under a "ducal canopy," and

> unable to resist the delicious invitement to repose, which he there saw exhibited; so, creeping between the sheets very quietly, laid his black head upon the pillow, and slept like a young Howard. (127-28)

Lamb argues that, since so many chimney sweeps seem so handsome in feature, they surely were well-born and kidnapped and forced into their grimy enslavement (127). Lamb concludes that was the case of the lad napping in the ducal chamber. He must have been

> allured by some memory, not amounting to full consciousness, of his condition in infancy, when he was used to be lapt by his mother, or his nurse, in just such sheets as he there found, into which he was now but creeping back as into his proper *incunabula,* and resting-place. (128)

Lamb points out that the lad was "folded between a pair of sheets whiter and softer than the lap where Venus lulled Ascanius" (127). The allusion is truly adroit. The young Ascanius, when so lapped by the goddess -- actually his grand-mere -- was something of an orphan himself. The reference comes from *Aeneid* I.691-4. In this context Venus, the mother of Aeneas, has sent Cupid in disguise as Aeneas's son Ascanius. The purpose of the disguise and her holding back and tenderly cherishing the boy Ascanius is to allow Cupid the lap of Dido and thus have him enflame her heart with love for Aeneas. In this way her beloved Aeneas can repose safely in Carthage as Dido's consort and not have to face the travail of founding Rome, an endeavor marked constantly by the avenging terrors of Juno. Venus herself is a perfect foreshadowing model for what Lamb perceives in the gentility of the chimney sweeps. She revealed her divinity to her son simply by the turn of her elegant neck (*Aeneid* I.402).

One of Lamb's most movingly personal Virgilian allusions comes in the essay "Blakesmoor in H----shire." Here we have another grandmother and Lamb's first tangential claim to gentility. Jonathan Bate points out that Lamb's grandmother had been a housekeeper in a manor in

Hertfordshire (343). It is his experiences when visiting that manor house as a child and later when he returns to find the house torn down which Lamb reflects on in this essay.[8] Lamb's technique is simple and poignant, personal appropriation and elegy:

> I do not know a pleasure more affecting than to range at will over the deserted apartments of some fine old family mansion. The traces of extinct grandeur admit of a better passion than envy: and contemplations on the great and good, whom we fancy in succession to have been its inhabitants, weave for us illusions, incompatible with the bustle of modern occupancy, and vanities of foolish present aristocracy. (174)

Lamb's time frame is dual. The present is emphasized because he now discovers the house demolished, "I was astonished at the indistinction of everything." Even death hardly reduces humans to so little so quickly (175). But the past dominates the essay as Lamb reconstructs the manor before our eyes and invests its rooms, grounds, and appurtenances with his own reading of their character, and thus affectively identifies them with himself. He talks of how he crept about as a child and came to know "every apartment, . . . every nook and corner, [how he] wondered and worshipped everywhere" (175). A "strange passion for the place possessed me in those years," a "spell which bound me to the house" (176). "[T]he present owners of the mansion . . . . had long forsaken the old house of their fathers for a newer trifle . . . (177). Thus Lamb became "the true descendant," and thus "Mine was that gallery of good old family portraits, . . . giving them in fancy my own family name . . ." (177). "Mine too, BLAKESMOOR, was thy noble Marble Hall, . . ."; and "Mine too, thy lofty Justice Hall, . . ."; and "Mine too -- whose else? [T]hy costly fruit-garden, with its sun-baked southern wall . . ." (178). He becomes heir, proprietor, owner, and lord.

His entitlement is first argued by the power of creative insight:

> To have the feeling of gentility, it is not necessary to have been born gentle. The pride of ancestry may be had on cheaper terms than to be obliged to an importunate race of ancestors; and the coatless antiquary in his unemblazoned cell, revolving the long line of a Mowbray's or De Clifford's pedigree, at those sounding names may warm himself into as gay a vanity as those who do inherit them. The claims of birth are ideal merely, and what herald shall go about to strip me of an idea? Is it trenchant to their swords? (176)

It is his imagination that has warmed him into the "vanity" of his inheritance. But more than this, he enhances his claims by reaching back into Virgilian pastoral and identifies himself with one of its poetic voices. He speaks of his meditations as a child on a "tattered and diminished 'Scutcheon" that hung on the wall along the "princely stairs" of the manor. The family motto, "'Resurgam,'" so stirred him that "every dreg of peasantry purging off, I received into myself Very Gentility. . ." (177) Further on he claims, "This is the only true gentry by adoption . . ." (177). Here he invokes Virgil, *Eclogues* III.2, the contest between Menalcas and Damoetas.

[8] For a detailed treatment of Lamb's nostalgia, see: James B. Misenheimer, "Aesthetic Universality: The Nostalgia of Elia 150 Years After," *CLB* NS 53 (January 1986) 128-41. For the elegiac element, see Gerald Monsman, Confessions of a Prosaic Dreamer: Charles Lamb's art of autobiography (Durham, NC, 1984) 128-44. Monsman notes how Lamb seeks recovery of his loss through art, 134.

Demoetas challenges Menalcas initially by asking whose flock Menalcas tends. The flock is that of Aegon, the gentry figure who employs Menalcas. But much more is at stake here than mere classical allusion. Lamb constructs his claim to Blakesmoor via the family escutcheon in quite a recondite way. The shield reflects great family achievements done centuries before Lamb's own time. Lamb speculates:

> [W]hat if my ancestor at that date was some Damoetas -- feeding flocks, not his own, upon the hills of Lincoln -- did I in less earnest vindicate to myself the family trappings of this once proud Aegon? -- repaying by a backward triumph the insults he might possibly have heaped in his life-time upon my poor pastoral progenitor. (177)

Farrell, in his study of Virgilian intertext, points out that Virgil is speaking of more than swains engaged in a singing contest. Menalcas challenges Damoetas with respect to the ownership of the flock he pastures: "It is no great stretch to see in the image of this transference a special relevance to Virgil's project of imitating Theocritus, . . . the imitative poet . . . accused of living off another's property."[9] Virgil's deliberate recall of Theocritus is clear from his use of "Aegon," "the only name in the Theocritean passage that Virgil leaves unaltered. . . ."[10] "[T]he contest itself ends in a draw. The eclogue can thus be read metapoetically as at least a moral victory for the imitative poet. The proemium of *Georgics* 3 is even more self-assertive. . . . Virgil . . . assert[s] hegemony over his poetic forebears. . . ."[11]

Lamb, given the thoroughness of his classical course at Christ's, would have known the eclogue's relevance to the issue of Virgilian imitation and supersedence over Theocritus. Farrell notes that this was a constant consideration in Virgilian criticism.[12] Lamb's victory over the feudal owners of Blakesmoor and his title of possession echo Virgil's mastery of Theocritus. Lamb is able to take such absolute possession of Blakesmoor now because, by his power of text, he has become its living creator and curator. Monsman argues that Lamb's attempt to recreate "the original plenitude of Blakesmoor" in words is something of a failure, "a hoax; but it is an impressive hoax."[13] I would credit Lamb with much more success, especially when the rich evocations of the Virgilian echo are accounted. Lamb *realizes* the manor anew as he contemplates its starkness as rubble and raises its walls and chambers to new fictive elegance by the alchemy of Elian affection and elegiac rumination. As text, paradoxically Blakesmoor is more alive than it ever was as a creaking manor house. The Virgilian intertext gives Lamb's artistic construction a sturdy, brocaded texture.

Lamb's essay ends with a moving elegiac evocation: "I sometimes think that as men, when they die, do not die all, so of their extinguished habitations there may be a hope -- a germ to be revivified" (178). The nostalgic character of this essay has been emphasized, but it also has strong ties to the themes of mortality and the elegiac.[14] These are constant in Lamb. Here Lamb

[9] Joseph Farrell, "The Virgilian intertext." *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil.* ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge, 1997) 231.
[10] Farrell 231-32.
[11] Farrell 232.
[12] Farrell 222-33.
[13] Monsman 141.
[14] Monsman 128; Barnett, *Evolution* 48.

echoes one of the most famous passages in Virgil, the "lacrimae rerum" of the *Aeneid,* I.462. This theme haunts much of the work of Lamb. In his essay "On the Genius and Character of Hogarth," Lamb quotes this passage from Virgil and gives it a widely humanistic and even Romantic interpretation. Lamb contends that Hogarth, even in such works as *The Rake's Progress,* is not essentially negative. He always offers a positive element, "some figure is . . . introduced upon which the moral eye may rest satisfied."[15] Building on this kind of positive presence in Hogarth, Lamb points out how powerful the positive element can be, "One 'Lord bless us!' of Parson Adams upon the wickedness of the times, exorcises and purges off . . . [a] mass of iniquity. . . ."[16]

Lamb further insists:

> But of the severer class of Hogarth's performances, enough, I trust, has been said to shew [sic] that they do not merely shock and repulse; that there is in them the "scorn of vice" and the "pity" too; something to touch the heart, and keep alive the sense of moral beauty; the "lacrymae rerum," and the sorrowing by which the heart is made better. (330)

My title comes from Wordsworth's incomplete translation of the *Aeneid,* Book I. Wordsworth renders the famous line "sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt" (line 462 in the Loeb), as "'Tears for the frail estate of human kind / Are shed; and mortal changes touch the mind'" (line 633 in the Wordsworth translation).[17] Here Wordsworth catches especially both the pathos in Virgil and the moral efficacy that Lamb assigns to the meaning of this passage.

At this point it may be well to recall the full context of the Virgilian line. In Book I of the *Aeneid,* Virgil recounts the travails of the Trojan prince Aeneas who for six years has been in tortuous exile after the fall of Troy. He is destined to found the city of Rome, but the goddess Juno torments him and foils his every step. He is shipwrecked in Libya and fears he has lost over half his companions. At the urging of his mother, Venus, he comes to Carthage and enters a newly constructed, magnificent temple. There blazoned on the walls is the pictographic account of the fall of Troy.

The critical commentary on this section of the *Aeneid* is rich and complex.[18] But we should especially note, as Clausen reminds us, that, after Aeneas has alerted Achates to the poignancy of what they behold, the narrative voice then tells in detail *only* what Aeneas himself sees as he tearfully ponders the representations of the destruction of his city and nation. Here Virgil develops the figure of "ecphrasis: the description for literary purposes, of an imaginary work of art."[19] Aeneas is a "spectator," here; everything is seen "as through his eyes, colored by his passion."[20] The narrative voice tells us how Aeneas's heart is moved. It is Aeneas, gaping and in tears, who sees Achilles in all his terror and Troilus defeated by him; suppliant Trojan women

[15] Charles Lamb, "Hogarth," *Lamb as Critic* ed. Roy Park (London, 1980) 330.
[16] Lamb, "Hogarth" 330.
[17] William Wordsworth, *The Poems* ed. John O. Hayden (New Haven, 1981) ii 532.
[18] For a sampling see Bowra, 65-66; Johnson, 99-107; Wendell Clausen, *Virgil's* Aeneid *and the Tradition of Hellenistic Poetry* (Berkeley, 1987) 15-18.
[19] Clausen 17-18; Alessandro Barchiesi, "Virgilian narrative: ecphrasis," *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge, 1997) 271-81.
[20] Clausen 17.

pleading uselessly before Juno; Hector slain and dragged about the walls of Troy; old Priam begging for the body of his son; Aeneas himself in fierce combat; the Amazon warrior Queen Penthesilia determined to battle against men in arms. All this we see too, but only through Aeneas, sighing and in tears (Loeb lines 466-95). Very shortly Aeneas is called from his transfixed reverie by the coming of Dido. The rest of the narrative unfolds with Aeneas receiving help and hospitality from Dido, and eventually even her passionate love.

The meaning of Aeneas as hero is declared in a special way in this context. In Books II and III, he recounts for Dido and her court the story of the fall of Troy, but the picture of Aeneas there is always filled with the pathos he shows here in his self-portrayal. As Bowra points out, "pity" is a crucial feature in the character of Aeneas: "For many readers this is the most Virgilian of all qualities, the most typical and most essential feature of the *Aeneid.*"[21] In commenting on the "lacrimae rerum" passage, Bowra further notes that it does not mean that life is "nothing but tears," but that even in this out-of-the-way place, Carthage, "here too" is recorded, in the scenes Aeneas ponders, "not only the glory but the pathos of life."[22]

Unfortunately Wordsworth omits translating an important line in this context, line 463 (in the Loeb). We should examine lines 461-63 (in the Loeb) together:

> "en Primaus! sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi,
> sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.
> solve metus; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem."

Fairclough translates: "Lo, Priam! Here, too, virtue has its due rewards; here, too, there are tears for misfortune and mortal sorrows touch the heart. Dismiss thy fears; this fame will bring thee some salvation." (Loeb 273)

The omitted line, "Dismiss thy fears; this fame will bring thee some salvation," is crucial in this context, especially for us. Achates is both heroic companion to Aeneas and our presence as audience in the text. Barchiesi notes that the use of ecphrasis to record the fall of Troy, events which Aeneas both was a part of and now views, emphasizes Virgil's artistic purpose of recovering in some way the Greek Epic Cycle and its account of the Trojan War. His task was to redesign it for a new, an Augustan goal, "a Roman epic poem which is also a charter myth for Roman epic."[23] Such a reading of the function of ecphrasis in this context would answer Johnson's protest that he cannot understand what it is that Aeneas has to be hopeful about: "art," "politics and history," each ultimately "deludes . . . and betrays."[24] As Barchiesi reminds us, however, history is on the side of Aeneas and his descendants.[25] Aeneas's optimism is grounded in the pictures he sees before him. It is this artistic rendering, itself beyond history and politics, and even beyond in its way the will of the gods, that allows Aeneas the ardor and hope and high sense of vocation that impell him into becoming the new hero of a new Troy and a new culture. Johnson holds that the *Aeneid* ends equivocally,[26] and that "[n]ear the core of Vergil's

[21] Bowra 65.
[22] Bowra 66.
[23] Barchiesi 273.
[24] Johnson 100.
[25] Barchiesi 276-8.
[26] Johnson 105.

imagination is a fascination for the processes of ‘disastrous twilight,’ the sudden flaring of a glory that exists to reveal the darkness that encloses the sublunar world.”[27] Thus for Johnson, the pathos in Virgil moves with a bleak, permeating insistence. I read Virgilian pathos quite differently. Vigil has Aeneas constantly aware, and constantly showing by way of his tears, how “frail [the] estate of human kind is,” and thus Virgil constructs a hero who is both noble in his response to duty yet human in his awareness of the pain involved. But pathos is not the same as the tragedy. By its nature it offers hope, a hope fed by the power to care.

Lamb clearly perceives the energy and promise in these lines. In speaking of the “sense of moral beauty” and “sorrowing by which the heart is made better” in Hogarth, he captures the positive impulses in the Virgilian “lacrimae rerum.” It is not too much to say that Blakesmoor, even as a ruin, acts as a factive power of ecphrasis for Lamb. Like Aeneas, he rightfully reads into and beyond what he sees. The art of his affective verbal conjuring brings life, beauty, and heart to what had been domestic architecture ghosted in a fading family history; like Virgil, his art takes supersedence and breathes optimism.

Our final illustration of Lamb’s use of Virgil comes from Lamb’s warmly humorous essay “Amicus Redivivus” (237-42). The essay purports to give an account of Lamb’s rescue of his friend George Dyer (1755-1841), who had preceded Lamb at Christ’s, went on to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, earned a degree, and devoted his life to research and poetic endeavors. Dyer, having paid Mary Lamb a Sunday visit at noon marched sans spectacles directly out of Lamb’s door into the New River which runs in front of Lamb’s house in Islington: “A spectacle like this at dusk would have been appalling enough; but, in the broad open daylight, to witness such an unreserved motion towards self-destruction in a valued friend, took from me all power of speculation” (238).

Lamb does not tell us exactly how he rescued Dyer. He cannot even say how he “found [his] feet. . . . Some spirit, not my own, whirled me to the spot” (238). He remembers seeing only Dyer’s “good white head” in the water and close to it a staff which pointed up, but he could not see Dyer’s hand. “In a moment (if time was in that time) he was on my shoulders, and I -- freighted with a load more precious than his who bore Anchises” (238).

The rescue, especially if one recalls that Dyer was a much larger man than Lamb, is rightly characterized by Monsman as “in one sense a mock-heroic joke reminiscent of Pope’s Lord Petre.”[28] Lamb’s account goes on in great humor to describe how a crowd formed, a supposed doctor was called who neither “studied at the college” nor “truckled to the pedantry of a diploma” (238). This character, named Monoculus because he has only one eye, had won fame, some income and a medal from lying about in a nearby public house with attentive ear; he was always ready to spring to the cries and the rescue of victims who ended up somehow falling into the river. Given to the heavy use of spirits himself, Monoculus’s characteristic treatment of such victims as Dyer was, after rubbing and warm clothes, to ply them with plenteous doses of cognac and hot water. Dyer, a non-drinker and ordinarily a gentle soul, went quite out of his head and had to be restrained as he thrashed on the couch in Lamb’s parlor. The next day, sober at last, a much chastened and apparently unharmed Dyer went off with his spectacles fixed securely on his nose (239-42).

[27] Johnson 114.
[28] Monsman 87; see also note 11, 158-9.

What is amazing is that most of what Lamb claims to have done is a sheer fabrication. True enough, Dyer witlessly fell into the New River, but he was rescued by someone -- but not by Lamb -- and was cared for by a tippling local pretending to be a doctor. He ended up on Lamb's sofa quite undone by drink. There he was found hours later by Lamb upon returning home. Lamb, as Barnett notes, characteristically intrudes himself into his essays and will "adopt for his own the incidents and anecdotes of others."[29] Barnett also points out, "Almost the whole latter half of the essay is concerned with classical allusions and with admonitions to Dyer."[30]

Monsman, as we saw, notes the mock-heroic character of the essay and that Dyer "is accorded an almost mythic status as holy fool."[31] But what interests us is the reference to Anchises and the tone that allusion evokes in consideration of Lamb's relationship to George Dyer. We have seen that Lamb's echoes of Virgil can, upon occasion, be simply humorous. Here, despite the provenance of so much mock-epic, elegiac detail (the headnote is a quotation from "Lycidas" 237), Lamb is most serious in his use of Virgilian material because he has such a strong affection for George Dyer. Granted that in the letter Lamb sent to Sarah Hazlitt recounting the true details of Dyer's fall into the river, he acerbically comments: "[If] a lunatic chooses to walk into a river with his eyes open at midday," the neighborhood should not be forced to fence off the river.[32]

"Lunatic" is hardly a friendly term, but it does not at all reflect Lamb's feeling for Dyer. Closer to the truth is his comment in a letter to Coleridge, 14 August 1800. He speaks of Dyer's newly published book of criticism whose attempted critical arguments hardly impress Lamb. Lamb first humorously intones, "O George, George, with a head uniformly wrong & a heart uniformly right," and then declares that were it in his power, he would rouse all the "Gentry of thy native Island . . . to stand in thy List of Subscribers."[33] In another letter to Coleridge, 26 August 1800, Lamb comments in the following way:

> George Dyer is the only literary character I am happily acquainted with. The oftener I see him, the more deeply I admire him. He is goodness itself. -- If I could but calculate the precise date of his death, I would write a novel on purpose to make George the Hero. I could hit him off to a hair.[34]

At this time Lamb had known Dyer only for four years. The bond of friendship grew stronger with the years, despite Lamb's continued bemusement at Dyer's scholarship and poetic efforts. A few years before Lamb's death, in a letter to Edward Moxon, 3 February 1831, Lamb characterizes Dyer in this way: G[eorge] was born I verily think without original sin, but chuses to have a conscience, as every Christian Gentleman should have. . . . When he makes a compliment, he thinks he has given an affront."[35]

[29] Barnett, *Evolution* 52.
[30] Barnett, *Evolution* 51.
[31] Monsman 86.
[32] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1905) vii 626.
[33] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr. (Ithaca, NY, 1975) i 226.
[34] *Letters* ed. Marrs, i 235.
[35] Lucas vii 866.

Dyer was a figure of fun, but Lamb truly cherished his friendship. One of the warmest tributes paid by Lamb to Dyer is found in "Oxford in the Vacation." Lamb recounts how he enjoyed visiting the universities when both he and the students are on holiday. Very probably because of his stammer, he was denied the chance for a scholarship,[36] and thus he was "defrauded" (10) of the chance for university study. But he enjoys visiting the universities and playing the scholar as he ambles about the solemn academic precincts. On one occasion, Lamb encountered Dyer lost in his research: "I found [him] busy as a moth over some rotten archive, rummaged out of some seldom-explored press, in a nook at Oriel. With long poring, he is grown almost into a book" (11).

The first thing we notice is the deprecatory way Dyer and his work are characterized. Both seem hardly to be taken seriously. But Lamb goes on to describe him hagiographically as living like "a dove on the asp's nest" "'in calm and sinless peace'"(12). The second accolade comes from *Paradise Regained* (IV.425). To harm Dyer would be to "'strike an abstract idea'"(12). Now he is Chaucer's Clerk; he is Bede; he is the saintly, earnest academic and perennial student. He is the modern-day Schoolman cleric, his Unitarian affiliations notwithstanding.

Lamb's next step is a comic aside as he recounts one of the many instances of Dyer's bumbling forgetfulness. But even this redounds to a benevolent, if abstracted picture of Dyer as both man and scholar. Dyer is "present with the Lord," "he is on Mount Tabor -- or Parnassus -- or co-sphered with Plato --, or, with Harrington, framing 'immortal commonwealths' . . . ." Though certainly he is "one of the Shepherds" from *Pilgrim's Progress*, the spiritual man par excellence, what is crucial for us to realize is that Dyer is most at home at the universities: "The Cam and the Isis are to him 'better than all the waters of Damascus'"(13).

We must remember that Dyer was able to do what Lamb was "defrauded" of: he was able to go on and earn a degree. Though he did much hack work, he also did fine scholarly texts like his history of the colleges of Cambridge. No wonder in "Amicus Redivivus" Lamb seized the opportunity to read himself into the events of Dyer's rescue from the New River. Dyer is a kind of Anchises for Lamb, a father figure whom Lamb carries in his heart as the older man carries with him the ancient household gods of their common culture. The Virgilian references are particularly rich in this essay. Lamb upbraids the river which, though shallow and hardly threatening, almost took Dyer's life:

> Waters of Sir Hugh Middleton [the "projector" of the New River][37] -- what a spark you were like to have exstinguished for ever!. . . Mockery of a river -- liquid artifice -- wretched conduit! [H]enceforth rank with canals, and sluggish aqueducts. Was it for this, that, [as a small boy] . . . I paced the vales of Amwell to explore your tributary springs. . . ? (240)

Here Lamb echoes the scene in the *Aeneid* when Aeneas is pleading with his father Anchises to flee Troy. The city is in flames and the bloody victory of the Greeks immanent. Anchises refuses to leave his home and begs Aeneas to escape without him. In desperation Aeneas cries out to Venus, "Was it for this, gracious mother, that thou savest me amid fire and sword, to see

[36] Barnett, *Charles Lamb* 24.
[37] Francis Sheppard, *History of London* (Oxford, 1998) 182.

the foe in the heart of my home, and Ascanius, and my father, and Creusa at their side, slaughtered in each other's blood?"(II.664-67; Fairclough translation, 339). Jove sends omens and thus they know that they are all to flee Troy. From this tense scene comes the beginning of the adventures of Aeneas and the eventual founding of Rome. Wordsworthians will recognize the expressive question, "hoc erat," "Was it for this?" Lamb uses this echo with special care. His text is not autobiography, but it is a warm, personal tribute to a friend.

Lamb honors Dyer by using this complex of allusions from the *Aeneid.* Even his speaking directly to Middleton and accusing him of wanting Dyer drowned in his river so that through Dyer his stream would have a "tutelary spirit" and a new name, "Stream Dyerian" (240) have an echo in Virgil. The Tiber is named for King Tiberinus of Alba who drowned in its waters (*Aeneid* VIII.72 and 330-3).[38] Granted, these are latticed behind a decorous surface of witty mock epic, but this does not diminish the obvious respect these classical elements reflect on George Dyer. In addition, Lamb claims that Dyer is more precious than Father Anchises (238). In this assertion Lamb reaches for a kind of meta-allusory level. To honor Dyer with classical allusion is to ennoble a highly decent, but hardly elegant gentleman. But to claim that Dyer is somehow above the stature of a major classical figure is to claim special honors for Dyer. It may seem mere playful hyperbole, but, given Lamb's generous avowals of affection for Dyer, we are justified in taking this compliment seriously.

As Lamb says, Dyer is more than Anchises. He is Lamb's friend and even Lamb himself, the formal scholar Lamb was denied to be. Both Aeneas and Lamb were defrauded, both had to read new hope from the history that marched before them. Lamb did not physically rescue Dyer, but in his text he did what the nymphs and muses could not do for Lycidas; and yet Lamb also has done the work of the elegist, he gives Dyer a life in his lyrical tribute. There is no small sentiment in Lamb. Like Virgil, duty came first. What he could not have, he still could generously admire in his friend, even though his friend, saintly and woolly-headed, left Lamb more often smiling, with a warmed heart, than awed in academic respect. Barnett reminds us how much the humor in Lamb "soften[s] the melancholy."[39] Here Lamb's wit and high spirits allow accolades for his friend that masquerade as the stuff of mock epic. And here too Lamb's humorous, yet Virgilian, treatment of Dyer reminds us of the pathos of the too-abstracted scholar, and the pathos, too, of the scholar denied. Here, humorously, are indeed "[t]ears for the frail estate of human kind."

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[38] I thank Professor Poduska for locating these passages in Virgil. See "Tiberis," William Smith, *Smaller Classical Dictionary* rev. E. H. Blakeney and John Warrington (New York, 1958).
[39] Barnett, *Lamb* 113.

Society Notes and News From Members

NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBER

OBITUARY

FRANK LEDWITH (DIED 31st July 2001 aged 94 years)

Frank Ledwith was a pupil at Christ's Hospital from 1918 to 1924, and then had a distinguished career in Marine Insurance, amusingly recounted in his book *Ships that Go Bump in the Night*. He was awarded the Greek Nautical Medal for services to the Greek Mercantile Marine. Frank joined the Charles Lamb Society in 1973 and was CLS representative to Christ's Hospital from 1979 to 1984, and served for a time as council member and auditor. He was particularly helpful in our negotiations with the Charity Commissioners in formulating our 'objects'. He especially enjoyed the Annual Luncheon and the opportunity to meet fellow Old Blues and present-day Grecians. Our sympathy goes out to his family in their loss. M.R.H.

Found:

In Issue 111 (p. 154), David Crosher wrote, of a quote attributed to Lamb in the *Independent*, namely, that 'asparagus inspires gentle thoughts', wondering if anyone could identify the original source. He has, himself, identified the citation, from 'Grace Before Meat" as 'The whole vegetable tribe have lost their gust with me. Only I stick to asparagus, which still seems to inspire gentle thoughts'.

Some that Got Away: In June 2000, Christie's New York offered a six-line autograph poem, signed Charles Lamb. Its title was *The Sisters*, and they were named as Emma, Clara and Cecilia. It was written on a card, 4. ½" x 6. ½", with an embossed decorated border, a type of ephemera which I also happen to collect. The estimate, however, was $3-5,000 (plus everything, of course) and I took the matter no further. D. E. Wickham

> On Emma's honest brow we read display'd
> The constant virtues of the Nut Brown Maid;
> Mellifluous sounds on Clara's tongue we hear,
> Notes that once lured a Seraph from his sphere:
> Cecilia's eyes such winning beauties crown,
> As without song might draw her Angel down.
>
> C. Lamb.