

Leigh Hunt Letters

Special Collections & University Archives



David Cheney's Transcriptions



David Cheney—Brief biographical sketch

Dr. David R. Cheney, retired professor of English, taught at the University of Toledo for 27 years (1965-1992). Born on January 23, 1922 at Castle Dale, Utah, he was the son of Silas and Klara Cheney. He served in the South Pacific during World War II as a company clerk and member of the Armed Service Forces Band. He graduated from the University of Utah in 1948, and married Patricia Anne Snow the same year. He then earned M.A. degrees from both Utah (1949) and Harvard (1951), a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1955), and did postdoctoral work at the University of Alberta, Canada, in 1958.

Dr. Cheney became interested in Leigh Hunt while studying at the University of Iowa, where the largest Hunt collection in the world is held. Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) was a noted English journalist, essayist, poet and critic. In 1806 he and his brother, John Hunt, founded "The Examiner," a London newspaper containing literary works, news and opinion. From 1819-1821, he edited and wrote for "The Indicator," a literary publication. Though Hunt is remembered as a poet and journalist, he is most famous for his friendships with noted writers of the time, especially Shelley and Keats. He was also acquainted with Dickens, Lamb and the Brownings.

At Iowa, Cheney was asked by Dr. Warner Barnes to help edit the Hunt letters in that collection. Soon after he started, Barnes was transferred to another university and abandoned the project. Cheney decided to stay on and subsequently increased the scope of the project to include all of the Hunt letters still in existence. He spent the next 15 years traveling and collecting the letters from libraries and individuals in many countries around the world, including the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Norway.

Dr. Cheney has published numerous articles and several books, including *Monsters in Medieval and Renaissance Travel Literature: a Study in Credulity and Skepticism* (1949), *Animals in a Midsummer Night's Dream* (1955), *Musical Evenings: or, Selections, Vocal and Instrumental* (1967), *Leigh Hunt's Efforts to Encourage an Appreciation of Classical Music* (1968), and *The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt and Charles Ollier in the Winter of 1853-54* (1976).

Dr. Cheney died of pneumonia June 18, 2006, at Foundation Park Care Center in South Toledo.

Biographical sketch courtesy of [The Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections](#) at The University of Toledo.

David Cheney's Transcriptions

Dr. David R. Cheney (1922-2006), lifelong Hunt scholar, intended to publish a complete edited edition of Hunt's correspondence. The transcriptions used for the majority of the letters in *Leigh Hunt Online: The Letters* come from his work, which is held by the Ward M. Canaday Center at The University of Toledo Libraries. Permission for the use of Dr. Cheney's work was granted by his wife, Mrs. Patricia Cheney, and Dr. Cheney's materials have been generously loaned by Toledo for the project.

Many of the transcripts had been entered into an early computer system; however, all that remains are typed copies of the transcripts that were printed out at some point in various stages of editing. The typed transcripts are scanned and edited with OCR software to make them accurately reflect his work. Dr. Cheney's name is noted in the "Transcript by" field in the document description for each letter where his work has been included.

For more biographical information on David Cheney, please see the brief [Biographical Sketch](#), courtesy of the Ward M. Canaday Center.

The following introduction, editorial principles, and bibliography of publications included on transcriptions were presumably intended for the first volume of Hunt's letters that Dr. Cheney was to publish, covering the years 1790-1819.

[Introduction](#)

[Editorial Principles](#)

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Introduction

By Dr. David Cheney

I entered the project of editing the Leigh Hunt letters in 1965 when I was invited by Dr. Warner Barnes to be co-editor of the letters in the Luther A. Brewer collection at the University of Iowa. However, we had made only a few transcriptions when Warner transferred to another university and retired from the project. I subsequently enlarged the scope to include all the extant Hunt letters, thus taking over the project Dr. David Bonnell Green had begun shortly before he died. The enlarged project was given considerable impetus when Mrs. Green graciously sent me the Hunt materials her husband had already collected including some rather obscure locations of letters.

In the next fifteen years I wrote hundreds of letters and traveled thousands of miles to locate nearly 2,000 letters in nearly a hundred libraries and private collections in a dozen countries around the world. I made transcriptions from the original manuscripts of the majority of the letters and from Xerox, microfilm, or photo copies of the rest of the located letters. A few of the letters, of course, are available only from printed sources. The accuracy of the transcriptions, which has been a major concern, should be improved by the fact that I am editing the letters with the help of a computer. With a typewriter it is difficult to achieve an error-free transcription, but the computer makes it possible. I do not claim perfect transcriptions, but they are certainly closer to that ideal than if I had not used the computer. The computer has also eased much of the chore of formatting and preparing an index and annotating. By bringing all references to each person together, identification is made easier, and by bringing all references to the same work together, research time is shortened. For example, in this first volume of letters, Hunt refers to more than three dozen different articles in *The Examiner*. The computer brought the references together arranged in chronological order so that research on all of them using microfilm of *The Examiner* was completed in one day.

One may well ask why Leigh Hunt's complete letters have not been edited before. It is not that he is insignificant. True, he was not a great poet, but many of his poems were popular in his time. Some lyrics such as "Abou Ben Adhem" and "Jenny Kissed Me" are still frequently anthologized. He was also not so distinguished an essayist as Hazlitt or Lamb, but he was second only to them, and in one of the great ages of

the familiar essay he contributed many noteworthy essays that are still delightful to read. He was also not really a theoretical critic, but he was a pioneer in objective drama criticism. For practical criticism, perhaps only Hazlitt was his superior. In addition, probably no critic in any time has been more successful than Hunt in the early identifying of great talent. Witness, for example, his spotting of Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson, among others. Moreover, Hunt was also an editor and journalist of note. *The Examiner*, of which he was editor from its inception in 1808 till he went to Italy in 1822, was a very influential weekly, and Hunt, himself, was a man of considerable power. But *The Examiner* was only his most successful effort. He established and edited several journals. *The Liberal* is no doubt the best known, but there were also, *The Reflector*, *The Indicator*, *The Companion*, *The Tatler*, and others -- all fairly short-lived. Unfortunately, Hunt's best work was done in the essay and as a journalist, and essays are no longer popular and his journalistic efforts were ephemeral. But despite the fact that his reputation deteriorated shortly after his death, Hunt's achievement in anyone of the areas in which he worked should have ensured that his letters would be edited.

In addition to his own claim to fame, Hunt probably has a greater number of famous correspondents than any other writer. He had correspondence, often extensive, with many of the major Romantic and Victorian authors: Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Hazlitt, Lamb, Macaulay, Carlyle, Thackeray, Browning, Dickens, Tennyson, and Hawthorne. He also corresponded with a number of other lesser, but still well-known writers: Thomas Moore, Thomas Campbell, Mary Shelley, Hogg, Peacock, Landor, Coventry Patmore, Mrs. Gaskell, Bulwer-Lytton, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In addition, among his correspondents were several lesser known writers: Richard Hengist Horne, Bryan Waller Procter, Charles Oilier, Chares Cowden Clarke, John Forster, Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, James Robinson Planche, and William Harrison Ainsworth. He also corresponded with notable painters Benjamin West, Benjamin Robert Haydon, and William Havell; notable musicians Vincent Novello, Samuel Webbe, Jr., and John Whitaker; and philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. His correspondents also included such public figures as Lord Brougham, the Duke of Devonshire, and Queen Victoria. Most of these letters, except the one to Queen Victoria, reveal a more or less friendly relationship. They reveal a close relationship with the Shelleys, Carlyle, Moore, Oilier, Novello, Clarke, Procter, Forster, Haydon, Horne, Brougham, Talfourd, Webbe, and the Duke of Devonshire.

Even with these compelling reasons for editing the letters, if they were dull, one could understand a reluctance to publish them. But they are not dull. Hunt does not self-consciously hide his feelings with any of his correspondents so that the varied interests of this interesting man find their way into his letters: the political situation, literature --English, foreign, and ancient -- history, nature, people, etc. In fact, most of the letters have intrinsic interest, and his fluent style makes all but the most perfunctory pleasant to read.

There are, of course, a considerable number of letters -- nearly 2,000 --and they are spread over Europe and North America with a few in Australia, New Zealand, and Russia. Granted, it is a daunting prospect to think of collecting so many letters so widely dispersed. But the correspondence of other writers with more letters which are even more widespread have long since been edited, in some cases several times, those of Dickens and Carlyle, for instance.

The delay in editing Hunt's letters could not be due to the difficulty of reading his handwriting. True, his writing is sometimes wavering when he is ill, or splotted when he has a bad pen or ink, or scrawled when he is hurried. Certainly it is difficult to read the passages which he tries to squeeze into little space. At such times, which fortunately are not frequent, the miniscule writing becomes all but undecipherable. But most of the time Hunt wrote a fairly clear hand, once one is familiar with its idiosyncracies.

Is the delay due to the fact that the letters cover such an extended period of time -- seventy years from 1790 to 1859 -- and that scholars are too specialized to wish to edit letters that run through the Romantic and a great part of the Victorian periods? Probably many factors conspired, as Hunt would say, to prevent earlier editing.

In any case, the only publications of his letters have been the two volumes published by his son, Thornton, in 1861 of 432 letters and the volumes published by Luther Brewer in 1935 of 422 (many of these are only the remainder of letters that Thornton had printed partially). Neither of these collections was properly edited. Thornton's accuracy of transcription is good, but he silently leaves out parts of many letters, and Brewer misreads numerous words. Neither edition is annotated except for occasional casual comments which, particularly in Brewer's case, are not always accurate. Several additional letters have been published singly or in small groups in journal articles and in earlier editions of the letters of Hunt correspondents, such as in Prothero's edition of the Byron letters. There have also been two larger projects. Hunter Pell McCartney in 1958 wrote a dissertation in which he edited the forty-one Hunt letters written from 1816 to 1825 then in the

Luther A. Brewer Collection at the University of Iowa, but it was never published. And Kenneth Neill Cameron and Donald H. Reiman have included a number of Hunt letters in their *Shelley and His Circle*. The letters are thoroughly edited and many of them are important, but they are the scattered manuscripts that happen to be in the Pforzheimer Library. The fact is, that for whatever reason, Leigh Hunt's collected letters have never previously been edited.

The present volume includes the letters from 1790 to 1819. The first letter was written to a maternal aunt in America when Hunt was only five and half years old, certainly one of the earliest preserved letters of any writer. In the following year and a half, he wrote two more letters to the same aunt. The next letters come a dozen years later when Hunt was nineteen and submitting some poems to the *Monthly Mirror* and *Poetical Register*. Also, in that year, 1801, Hunt became acquainted with and then engaged to Marianne Kent whom he married in 1809. The dozens of letters written during his courtship of Marianne include not only his frequent expressions of love but also describe in detail his visits to friends at Oxford, Nottingham, Lincoln, and their environs. In fact, probably the most notable quality of these early letters is the detailed descriptions, some of which are several pages long. Many of the letters are also fascinatingly full of his adventures, background history, and miscellaneous comments on people he met.

One might be surprised that there are so few references during these years to matters outside his private life, particularly to the Napoleonic Wars. After all, Hunt was a clerk in the war office from 1805 to 1808, and in 1808 he became editor of *The Examiner* for which he wrote many stories concerning the war as well as other important contemporary events. But most of the letters from this period were written to Marianne, and Hunt, as he said in a letter to her, did not think he should speak of worldly matters to a young lady. Other letters, and there are several of them, reprove Marianne for carelessness in writing. In one letter, for example, he wrote, I expect your letters "to be without any wrong spelling, and interlineations, and deficiencies of words. . . . *Always prefer scratching out to hasty blots and rescriptions*, as you see I do myself: if neatness is not immediately to be obtained, carefulness always may." For a time Marianne seems to have written even worse letters in rebellion, but eventually wrote letters that Hunt found acceptable and even praiseworthy.

After his marriage to Marianne on July 3, 1809, there naturally were fewer letters to her. There were some notes in the fall of 1809, when they were living in Beckenham, excusing himself for having to stay in town to see a play. There was a series of longer letters describing Cambridge University when he visited his old school friend Scholefield, and there was another series describing Bath when he went in the summer of 1812 to Taunton for his health and to borrow money.

Among the more interesting letters written to other correspondents during this period are the letters to Benjamin Robert Haydon encouraging his painting. There is also a letter to his brother John in 1812 outlining and explaining in detail Hunt's frightening indebtedness. There are letters to Dr. William Knighton about his and Marianne's health, and also one in which Hunt is in a quandary as to whether to congratulate Knighton on his appointment as a doctor to the Prince of Wales because at the time Hunt was sharply attacking the prince in *The Examiner*. There is even one to Knighton applying for a loan. There is a very long letter to Samuel Webbe, Jr. explaining in great detail his reasons for not wanting to meet an actress because it might compromise his objectivity as a dramatic critic. There is a letter to Thomas Mitchell chiding him for making jokes at other people's expense when he could not take a joke on himself. There are two letters showing his genuine delight at a visit from Jeremy Bentham. Finally, there are several letters each of politician Henry Brougham and to poet Thomas Moore, in great part discussing Hunt's poetry, particularly his translations of Latin lyrics which he was then publishing in *The Examiner*.

Leigh Hunt went to prison in February 1813. The first letter from there is an amazing one to the director of the prison requesting that Hunt's family be allowed to live with him in the prison and that his friends be allowed to visit frequently. Even more amazing is the fact that the requests were granted. Hunt even had a private garden and a piano and was allowed to redecorate the rooms in which he stayed. Consequently, he papered the walls with trellised roses and the ceiling with billowy clouds and sky which astonished all who came to visit and caused Lamb to write that there were no such rooms anywhere else but in fairy tales. During the two periods when Marianne was forced to leave Hunt for the sake of her own and her children's health, Hunt wrote frequent and long letters to her that give a very good description of his life in prison. He wrote about editing *The Examiner*; writing on *The Story of Rimini*; visiting with Byron, Lamb, and Bentham; dining with Haydon, Charles Cowden Clarke, Thomas Barnes, Thomas Mitchell, and Sir John Swinburne; and playing shuttlecock with his nephews Henry and Marriott Hunt and his brother Robert. During the two years Hunt also continued writing to his attorney Brougham who was much interested in literature, to Haydon exulting with him over the success of

his huge painting "Judgment of Solomon" which Haydon later set up in Surry Jail for Hunt to see, and to Byron, Moore, Clarke, and others.

After Hunt was released from prison, he went to Hampstead where he had long dreamed of living. There, a few months later, he met Keats and Shelley. Unfortunately, there are few letters to Keats extant, and none of them appear in this volume. There are many to Shelley tracing the friendship which became very close. In fact, Hunt and his family lived for several months with Shelley in the spring and summer of 1817 and spent the last night with him and Mary before the Shelleys departed for Italy. Most of the letters to Shelley in this volume were written after the Shelleys went to Italy. The letters were long and gave the Shelleys news of interest from England including how their books were selling and announcing various Hunt projects such as *The Indicator*, the *Harry Brown* letters, and the finishing of a tragedy about the Cid which was never produced.

During the summer and fall of 1819, letter after letter noted the progress of preparing a box of clothes for the anticipated birth of Mary's baby, and, after all, the box did not arrive in time. Beginning in December of 1815 and running through 1816 and much of 1817 is a series of letters to booksellers Gale and Fenner, John Murray, Archibald Constable, and John Taylor trying to arrange for the sale of the copyright of *The Story of Rimini* and for the printing of the second edition. In long letters to Moore and Constable, Hunt explained in detail all of the difficulties surrounding publication of the poem that had allowed him to pay his fine of £500 and get out of prison. Also, during this period Hunt met musician Vincent Novello and book publisher Charles Ollier, both of whom became lifelong friends, and there are several friendly letters to each of them including a series to Novello early in 1817 arranging for a piano at Marlow for Shelley and ending with a long description of Marlow in the manner of his earlier letters to Marianne. It was, of course, during the years 1817 to 1819 that the famous "musical evenings" at Novello's took place.

Other letters of note during the period 1815 to 1819 include one to Moore in May 1816 commenting on the attack on Hunt and the Cockney School of Poetry in *The Quarterly Review* and one to Jeffrey in November 1817 commenting on the attack in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Also increasing in volume is the life-long series of letters asking for loans from friends. In the post-prison years, there are several addressed to Haydon, Ollier, Novello, and Brougham. There are also interesting letters on various topics to Byron, Clarke, Hogg, and others. The volume ends with the letters of 1819, just before Hunt started making plans to join the Shelleys in Italy.

One of the most common criticisms of Leigh Hunt's writing is that it is too facile, that he had to write so rapidly to pay his debts that he never had time to think deeply about his subjects or to revise carefully. Of course, all of this is true. However, it is the nature of most letters to be dashed off, and Hunt's adeptness at writing well while writing rapidly makes his letters unusually well written – as letters go. His facility is shown by the fact that he recopied only a handful of letters, and yet there are few corrections in any of them. Hunt wrote naturally in an easy, graceful style.

One of the dominant characteristics of these early letters is the descriptions, and some of Hunt's word pictures are detailed and lengthy. For example, he describes an unusual housing project in Nottingham thus:

On the east (of Nottingham) you ascend gradually
Through streets in which cottages are cut out in the
Solid rock. Some of these cottages are singularly
Picturesque about the suburbs: on some of them the
Rock looks like a huge blind garret three times as
High as the house and covered with waving grass:
Over others there are literally gardens: sometimes
The chimnies are mingled with small trees & shrubs &
You see boys playing through the smoke; and there is
A coffee house or rather tea-drinking house, into
Whose gardens you may walk out of the roof trap
Door. Dr. Clarke says, that these rock-rooms, or to
Speak more properly these rooms made in the rock
(for they are roofed inside) are very comfortable in
all weather but snow: the rain clings to and runs
down the rock itself leaving the room untouched, but

the cold of the settled snow strikes through it.

Other descriptions are brief but equally telling: "The sun for more than half an hour was absolutely powerful, but it became cloudy afterwards, a very keen air sprung up, and I got home just time enough to avoid a pelting shower, which has been rattling among the trees ever since."

Sometimes the description includes a touch of humor: "Cambridge butter, as you may have heard, is made in yards, & served up in inches: in this frosty weather you might rule your paper with it; or roll out paste; or peradventure, convert it into an Italian iron."

Sometimes it includes incisive descriptions of people such as the wives of the grandees of Gainsborough: "These ladies make as much noise as a boarding school let loose: they laugh without ceasing, slap the men, tumble over the chairs, and throw water over one another out of large tumblers."

Hunt also uses his narrative talents in his letters. Some of his adventures are amusingly told. In one letter, for example, Hunt tells Marianne of his riding horses with a companion through flooded fields where the water became almost too deep for them to get safely through. Hunt says they would have stayed on the main road instead of taking the shortcut had not an old woman assured them the flood was easily passable. He concludes that the woman must have been getting revenge on a faithless lover in her youth by drowning us poor young men. In another letter, Hunt tells of riding in a coach with a parson who got the better of him. He writes:

All yesterday I was jammed up in a hot coach with a
Silent farmer, a sleepy lispng young man, and a
Reverend Wigsby of the usual dimensions, who railed
Against the Unitarians, and what was worse, gave me
No room for my legs. These three youths soon went
To sleep, and I must own I had no snoring, but the
Parson by the way of caution against cold had almost
Entirely pulled up both the coach-windows; my legs
Felt as if they were in the stocks; and his huge
Beaver, as he nodded, not only played up & down
Before my face in a manner that almost made me
Laugh, but tumbled off upon me every now and then,
So that I expected his wig to follow every instant.
However I waked him with such civility to return his
Hat, and then he used to start, and grin, & snore, &
Smile at me, I suppose by way of apology. I longed
To have all their faces in a vice, as usual. One I
Fondly imagined he was going to be polite, for he
Made me change sides with him and I looked upon this
As no small generosity, as he was on the best seat;
But lo, when I altered my situation, I found the sun
Coming full upon my face. Nothing could have been
Better done. Oh, Mr. Parson!

Sometimes Hunt wrote little playlets in his letters to Marianne and to close friends such as the Shelleys. Usually the characters were himself and the correspondent, but sometimes Hunt and a stranger as in the description of a young woman selling currants who told Hunt that she used to read novels "most greedily."

I. Does your husband read novels?

She. No, Sir, he never reads them at all: he does not like them; he is not fond of reading.

I. His dislike for novels is lucky.

She. (smiling) Why yes, Sir, for then he thinks more of myself and his little ones.

I. Very good; but that is not the only reason why it is lucky.

She. True: I know your reason, Sir: novels would make both, instead of one of us, lazy.

I. I must take a quart instead of a pint of your currants.

Hunt also included a few poems to Marianne in his letters. Only one of them, however, "Love and the Aeolian Harp," a song set to music by Whitaker, has been published.

In spite of Haydon's comment that Hunt tended always toward the melancholy, there is in his letters -- even when he is a victim -- a continual pleasantness and a looking for the good in everything or at least a stoical acceptance of what is with a look to better things in the future. In his letters, he is, in short, the eternal optimist.

There is some sentimentality in the letters to be sure. After all, many of the letters are to Marianne to whom he started writing when she was fifteen. For example, in describing a play to her, he writes:

When the Moor's mistress rushes in to save her
Lover; at the first sight of her, the madman seems
To have lost all his strength, he drops his hands as
If suddenly overcome with faintness, and fixing a
Look of melancholy tenderness on her face, as if he
Recollected he himself had loved and would do anything
For the other sex, he utters the mere word -- 'Woman!' but with such
A look and in such a tone that -- in short, he is a divinity.

More often he writes playfully to Marianne: "I could kiss all the beauties in the Grand Seignior's seraglio with as little emotion as a bunch of turnips, while I have only to touch your lips, and it sets me trembling like an aspin leaf." And later, "I am grown such an epicure in love, that I am afraid, your kisses will be as necessary after dinner to put me in spirits, as wine is to others."

One may not expect satire in Hunt's letters, especially those to Marianne, but it enters occasionally nevertheless. For example, his telling Marianne of a public house in Nottingham which pretended to have the sword and cap of Robin Hood, leads to a discussion of relic-finders. He adds:

It is amusing to think, how the world neglects much
Greater men than Robin, and how they value their
Most paltry memorials; and yet it shews the happy
Tendency of every trifle to keep up the reputation
Of great men. Thus the warrior, who is ungratefully
Used by his country, may obtain his reward after
Death by his cap or his sword; a poet may be
Immortalized among the vulgar by the chair in which
He used to write; and the beautiful Mary Stuart
Triumph over her rival Elizabeth by the mere force
Of a miniature. Sometimes indeed this deification
Of knicshaws may be abused: the Roman Catholics
Have five or six legs, *original* legs, of the same saint
In five or six different places, so that either five
Of the claimants tell us a story or the saint must
Have been a monster.

Some descriptions end with a satirical twist: "The city (Lincoln) is overlooked by a noble cathedral, the inside of which has been newly beautified, that is, whitened and spoiled." And "The town of Nottingham is a vile place, both physically & morally; it is narrow, dirty, drunken, factious, and Methodistical."

Another notable characteristic of Hunt's letters is the evidence of his interest in history. It is not that he gives lengthy discussions, but sometimes he introduces, parenthetically as it were, bits of background in the midst of his descriptions. In describing the mazes under the castle at Nottingham, for example, he notes that "The subterranean entrance is still shown -- through which they went to surprise that scoundrel Queen Isabella with her gallant Mortimer." Or in speaking of the Isle of Athelney he writes, "Here it was that Alfred the Great concealed himself from the Danes & burnt the cakes of which he was set in charge & from hence it was that he issued forth, like an unexpected God, and swept off the Danes forever. "

In his letters, Hunt also revealed the ability to adapt to the varied interests of his correspondents. When he wrote to Haydon, he discussed painting; when he wrote to Brougham, he discussed politics; when he wrote to Moore, he discussed poetry; when he wrote to Rowland Hunter, he discussed books; when he wrote to Hogg, he discussed the classics and filled his letters with Greek and Latin quotations. Of course, he discussed other things with each of these correspondents, particularly his health which he discussed with everyone, and he

discussed these particular topics with other people. However, he did adapt obviously to his familiar correspondents and not only in topics but in tone. He matched Haydon's vivaciousness, Brougham's formality, and Hogg's scholarliness, for example. This does not mean that Hunt was a chameleon or that he did not have his own voice. The letters are all basically Hunt, but many certainly are adapted significantly to his correspondents.

In his letters to Marianne, there are often touches of what today would be called male chauvinism. For example, of the view that "reading women have little that's feminine about them," Hunt wrote, "a female who does not forget the natural tenderness of her sex while she is rendering her mind more manly, or her knowledge if you please, is the most desirable object in the creation." Or again, Hunt suggested that men look in women for feminine qualities which he defines as "that *general spirit of mildness* both in heart and in manner, which makes a female beloved by all around her." At another time, he wrote, "I do not wish a woman to start subjects of conversation, but merely to have the ability of keeping it up if necessary: a wife otherwise will appear not only ignorant in the eyes of her husband's friends but inhospitable." Or again, "I do not wish ladies to be great politicians, but a little knowledge of what is passing is as well in every thing & always throws a grace & easiness into our conversations." When commenting on Marianne's carelessness in writing letters, he said, "I confess it is my peculiar ambition to see you write a good letter, because there is not one woman in a hundred who writes a tolerable one."

Finally, in most of his letters there is evidence of his hypochondria. If he is not complaining about heart palpitations or bilious fever or nervous affections, he is excusing his delay in writing because of sick headaches or motes haunting his eyes.

No doubt Hunt dashed off many of his essays in the same easy way he dashed off his letters. In any case, parts of many of his letters could have been published as essays, as indeed parts of some of them were. Even Hunt stops himself occasionally in the midst of a letter to suggest that he is writing more of an essay than a letter. There is, then, the occasional sentimentality, the occasional male chauvinism, and the pervading sense of hypochondria. In general, however, most of the letters delightful to read, and many of them throw light not only Hunt's personality but also upon some of the major writers and public figures of the time and upon life in the early nineteenth century. While the letters do not really change the generally accepted impression of Hunt, they do give us a more substantial picture of a man who through his impracticality was in constant financial difficulty but who had wide interests, was sensitive to people and to nature and could, and did, write about them perceptively and incisively.

Editorial Principles

The letters are arranged in chronological order. The date of writing is always given at the top right though occasionally Hunt put it at the bottom of his letters. When a letter is undated, the date is given in brackets. If the date is conjectural, a question mark precedes it. When a fairly specific date cannot be assigned, the letter is placed at the last date on which it reasonably could have been written.

The place of writing is given at the top right preceding the date. It is placed in square brackets when not given in the manuscript and preceded by a question mark when conjectural.

Each letter is introduced with the name of the correspondent and is followed by a headnote which includes other information concerning the letter. First, when the manuscript is the source of the transcription, which is true of most letters, location of the manuscript is given. When the manuscript has not been located, the source that is the most reliable (usually the only) printed text and its citation is given. Second, if the letter is undated, arguments for determining the date are presented including the watermark if pertinent. Third, where address and postmarks appear, they are given. Fourth, previous publications of the whole, or significant part, of the letter are noted.

The overall aim has been to provide a completely accurate transcription of the letters as Hunt wrote them, or, when the manuscript was not located, an accurate copy of the text as printed. But comments on some specific matters need to be made.

1. **Spelling.** Leigh Hunt's spelling is unusually accurate and since the few anomalies present no difficulty to the reader, they are preserved to give something of the flavor of the letters. For example, Hunt separated some words not usually separated: *every where*, *no where*, and *up stairs*. He also usually wrote *to day* but sometimes *to-day* or *today*; *to morrow* but sometimes *tomorrow*; and *to night* but sometimes *to-night*. Hunt also hyphenated a number of words not normally hyphenated: *bed-time*, *book-cases*, *box-tree*, *day-time*, *fire-place*, *head-ache*, *night-time*, *prison-house*, *slip-shod*, *small-pox*, *sun-flower*, and *well-a-day*. He also used some unusual plural forms: *chimnies*, *journies* and *vallies*; certain variant or alternative spellings: *bason*, *batchelor*, *cheerful*, *chuse*, *controul*, *desart*, *doat*, *dyke*, *falshood*, *loth*, *shew*, *solicitude*, *teaze* and *wave* (*waive*). And, some archaic spellings: *croud*, *duett*, *it's*, *your's*, and *plaister*.

Some spellings seem to be pure Hunt: *goodhearted*, *goodnature*, *ideot*, and *skaiter*. *Sic* is used rarely and only when essential to show that the word as spelled, or repeated, is not a mere typographical error.

2. **Capitalization.** Some few words are capitalized that are not normally so, but since the capitals may indicate an emphasis on the words, they have been allowed to remain.

3. **Punctuation.** Hunt's punctuation differs somewhat from modern punctuation, but it is quite consistent, and since it does not interfere with ease of reading, there was reason to change it. However, one punctuation mark—the dash—deserves special comment. Hunt sprinkles dashes throughout his letters sometimes following semicolons, periods, and even commas. They were apparently used for various purposes—pauses, shifts of thought, etc.—and have been allowed to remain as they appear in the manuscript.

4. **Abbreviations.** All abbreviations follow the manuscript except those that use superior letters. The superior letters have been dropped to the line and followed by a period.

5. **Cancelled words.** All meaningful cancellations that can be deciphered appear inside angled brackets. When the passage cannot be read, hyphens are put in the angled brackets, three for one word, more to indicate longer cancelled passages.

NOTE: For the purpose of *Leigh Hunt Online: The Letters*, angled brackets have been replaced by slashes because the software we use attempts to read text enclosed in angled brackets as html tags.

6. **Missing words.** Hunt rarely left a word out inadvertently. More often words, or parts of words, are missing because of holes, tears, or blots in the letters. When it is obvious what the missing word is, it is enclosed in brackets. If the word is conjectural, it is enclosed in brackets and preceded by a question mark. If no conjecture is possible, brackets enclose a blank. Unless otherwise noted brackets denote holes in the manuscript. Occasionally Hunt used only the initial of the last name to refer to someone. For the first such reference in each letter, the remainder of the name is supplied in brackets. For subsequent references in the same letter, only the initial will appear, as in the manuscript.

7. **Illegible words.** Illegible words are supplied conjecturally preceded by a question mark in brackets.

8. **Underlined words.** All underlined words appear in italics. If the word is underlined more than once, the number of underlinings is indicated in a footnote.

9. **Postscripts.** Usually Hunt places his postscripts at the end of the letter, but sometimes they appear on the first page in the date area, or in a margin, or even on the envelope. Wherever they appear in the manuscript, they are here placed after the signature.

NOTE: For the purpose of *Leigh Hunt Letters*, we have followed Cheney's practice in the transcript field for the document description; however, in the page description transcript fields, we have included all text rightfully belonging on that page. That is, a postscript that actually appears on page of a letter one will still appear after the signature in the transcript field for the letter as a whole, but if the reader clicks through to the page description for page 1, that transcript field will include the post script because this is the page on which it actually appears.

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