tracted both at school and college were little less than what he
himself describes them, "passions."  

This plausible and eloquent paragraph drew forth a
skeptical retort from John Cam Hobhouse, who, on read-
ing it, wrote in the margin of his copy of Moore's Life:
"M. knows nothing, or will tell nothing of the principal
cause & motive of all these boyish friend[ships]."  
Hob-
house, a lifelong friend of Byron, undoubtedly knew more
about Byron's bisexuality than anyone else of whom we
have any record. He thought it was an open question
whether Moore was writing in innocent naïveté or in a de-
liberate attempt to obfuscate the issue. But evidence has
now come to light that Moore was neither naïve nor igno-
rant. In the published memoirs of Charles Fulke Greville,
we learn that Moore spoke at length about his forthcoming
biography with Greville on November 9, 1829. After a dis-
cussion of Byron's orgies with women in Venice, the con-
versation turned to another question: "Moore said he did
not believe in the stories of his fancy for Boys, but it looked
as if he does believe it from his manner."  

Appar-
ently Moore tried to dismiss the matter lightly, but his lack of
ease on a subject of such momentous significance in En-
gland betrayed him.

In his authoritative biography of Byron, Marchand took
the position that Byron might "possibly" have recognized
the "sexual implications of these passionate friendships
... before he left Harrow, probably while he was at Cam-
bridge, and certainly while he was in Greece on his first
pilgrimage."  

Four years later, in 1961, Doris Langley
Moore published excerpts from the Lovelace papers, which

35. *LJL*, 1:43–44.
36. *BB*, 1:30n.
38. *BB*, 1:30n. This is the only place in his 1,264-page biography
where Marchand speaks directly of Byron's homosexuality and uses the
word, though his work implies throughout a keen awareness of this side
of Byron's life.
most unplatonic of lovers, Byron in this case achieved something like the paipitating restraint Socrates advocates in the *Phaedrus*, where the male lovers, though burning with erotic desire, restrict the expression of their emotions to “the sight, the touch, the kiss, the embrace.” After Edleston’s death Byron was to write of their love in his famous elegy “To Thyrza,” in which he disguised Edleston’s identity behind a feminine name. There he describes the amorous side of their life together at Cambridge:

Ours too the glance none saw beside;  
The smile none else might understand;  
The whisper’d thought of hearts allied;  
The pressure of the thrilling hand;  
The kiss so guiltless and refin’d  
That Love each warmer wish forbore;  
Those eyes proclaim’d so pure a mind,  
Ev’n passion blush’d to plead for more. . . .  
The pledge we wore—I wear it still.  

Obviously, Byron was well aware of the part sexual passion played in this attraction. One is reminded inevitably of another clandestine and platonic Cambridge romance, the affair carried on by Clive Durham and Maurice Hall before the unseeing eyes of their relatives and friends at home and at college in E. M. Forster’s novel *Maurice*.

Always in need of self-expression, Byron seems to have commemorated his feelings for Edleston in another poem during his years at the university. Besides “The Cornelian” and “Pignus Amoris,” Byron wrote some further lines, which he published a month after their parting. In this case he did what he was to do again more extensively in the Thyrza lyrics of 1811 and 1812—he pretended that the object of his passion was a girl. In July 1807 he sent to the editor of *Monthly Literary Recreations* a poem that was published over his name but never reprinted by him in his lifetime. These were the “Stanzas to Jessy,” which Marchand thinks were inspired by the separation from Edleston that

ever remain hidden in my own breast.” In November he still speaks of his “cordial, deliberate detestation” for Lord Grey. Matters were not eased by his mother, who had, absurdly enough, fallen in love with Grey and insisted, in a stormy scene, that Byron make up the quarrel. What had caused the fracas? Marchand thinks that “the sensuous young lord had made some kind of sexual advance which disgusted his younger companion.”

This is the usually accepted interpretation, which has been endorsed by Doris Langley Moore, herself a scholarly and astute interpreter of Byron’s character. However, some difficulties present themselves if we assume that Byron merely repulsed Grey’s overtures. Thomas Moore, who does not mention the break between the men, simply tells us that “an intimacy ... soon sprung up between [Byron] and his noble tenant.” To this innocuous remark, the vigilant Hobhouse, however, added another comment in the margin of his copy of Moore’s biography: “A circumstance occurred during [this] intimacy which certainly had much effect on his future morals.” This suggests that Byron in later life told Hobhouse that something sexual had taken place. It seems, however, difficult to imagine how Hobhouse could have asserted that the episode affected Byron’s later behavior if he had not been a willing participant.

40. March 26, 1804, BLJ, 1:46; November 2, 1804, BLJ, 1:54. See also Byron’s letters to his mother expressing the same sentiments, in BLJ, May 1-10, 1804, 1:49–50; and other letters to Augusta, November 11, 1804, 1:55, and November 23, 1804, 1:59.
41. BB, 1:80.
42. LIL, 1:13; LBAR, p. 77.
43. Doris Langley Moore recognizes this difficulty and seeks to explain it on the grounds that Byron was not attracted to older men: “It is odd to find Grey credited—or debited—with Byron’s phase of cheerful abandonment, six years afterwards, to adventures with youths in the Near East, seeing that his reaction to the approaches had been horrified recoil; but perhaps in his account of this juvenile ordeal, he did not, considering his own deviations, lay much emphasis on the repugnance he had felt when obliged to resist a man eight years his senior” (LBAR, p. 77). This is perceptive, but it does not, I think, account for the tone and substance of Grey’s letter cited below.
Obviously, Byron gave his list of faithful couples, intending them to be taken as examples of romantic friendships. He was hardly making an avowal of homosexuality. But inevitably a certain ambiguity hovers over the names, as in the case of Nisus and Euryalus. The suggestion has been made many times—and as often contradicted—that Jonathan's love for David was homosexual. In a cynical-sentimental poem, "To Romance," Byron had used Pylades as the generic name for a friend whose attraction would match the romance of the love of women.

But the most interesting models Byron proposes for Edleston and himself are contemporary, the so-called "Ladies of Llangollen." In 1778, Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, daughters of two prominent aristocratic families in Ireland, had eloped together. Eleanor was thirty-nine, Sarah twenty-three. They were captured by their families, berated, and restrained, but remaining adamant, they were finally allowed to leave the country. They settled in a picturesque house in a tiny village in Wales. Intensely snobbish and class-conscious in an age when such manners were taken as a matter of course, they nevertheless charmed the villagers and were seen as emblems of a self-sacrificing devotion that had renounced the world.

Four years after their flight, Lady Louisa Stuart wrote: "When I first heard of them I was disposed to be captivated by anything so romantic." Eventually they became a national and even an international cult and their cottage the haunt of celebrities. (One thinks of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in France in the 1920s.) Queen Charlotte corresponded with them, they received a government pension, and their guests included Sir Walter Scott and Robert Southey, William Wilberforce, Josiah Wedgwood, Sir Humphry Davy, the Duke of Wellington, and the young Charles Darwin. Prime ministers apologized for passing through

writing to someone else, he might have misrepresented the mood of their parting and the tone of Byron's letters, but it is hard to imagine that, knowing Byron's mettle, he would make assertions to him that were patently false when he is trying to conciliate him. One can only wonder what did happen. Did Grey anger Byron by boasting of his "conquest" to some mutual acquaintance? Until further evidence turns up, we must remain in the dark.

Byron's early poems and his passions for Mary Chaworth and other women reveal a sensibility that was already fully developed on the heterosexual side. But when and how did he come to understand the other part of his nature? Men who eventually identify themselves as bisexual come to self-awareness through various paths, some of which are neither comfortable nor easy. In Byron's day, one of the commonest, for the educated, was through the study of the classics that made up the core of a gentleman's education. Byron boasted with pride in later life that he had thirteen years of classical studies behind him. In his account of his early experience with literature, he recorded that he had read Greek and Latin poets "without number" and had "translated a good deal from both languages, verse as well as prose." Though hardly a model student, his interest seems to have been genuine and lasting. His enthusiasm for Greek history and literature was a potent influence in drawing him to Greece first as a visitor and later as a liberator. But what exactly would he have read and what knowledge of homosexuality would this have given him in a culture where scholarly discussions of the subject were rigorously tabooed?

Byron began to write when the so-called Greek revival was at floodtide. Pope and his age had looked to Augustan Rome for its models and knew Greek art mainly through late Roman copies. But after 1760, Europe turned to Athens to imbibe the Greek spirit at its source. James Stuart and
ceeds from a very different cause to that which you assign. . . . I will not however pretend to say I possess that Gaité de Coeur which formerly distinguished me, but as the diminution of it arises from what you could not alleviate, and might possibly be painful, you will excuse the Disclosure.” He then gave a list of reassurances—he is not worried about his health or his money difficulties, nor is he about to fight a duel—which cannot have been very reassuring since the mystery was only deepened. He then adds, probably ironically: “You know me too well to think it is Love.” Augusta had, in fact, been well aware of the Chaworth affair; Marchand thinks that this is a feint and that the letter does indeed refer to Edleston. His use of “melancholy” is one clue. Fifteen years later, Byron said of his Cambridge days: “I took my gradations in the vices—with great promptitude—but they were not to my taste . . . and my heart, thrown back upon itself, threw me into excesses perhaps more fatal than those from which I shrank.” The fatality here was, presumably, his love affair with Edleston. Then he writes: “People have wondered at the Melancholy which runs through my writings. . . . If I could explain at length the real causes which have contributed to increase this perhaps natural temperament of mine—this Melancholy which hath made me a bye-word—nobody would wonder—but this is impossible without doing much mischief.”

Byron speaks of women who admired “The Cornelian.” One of these was Elizabeth Pigot, his mother’s neighbor at Southwell, with whom he was on friendly terms. On June 30, 1807, shortly before parting from Edleston, he sent

77. January 7 [1805]. BLJ, 1:87–88. Byron also mentioned his sister’s awareness of his change in disposition in his “Detached Thoughts,” which he began in Ravenna on October 15, 1821: “When we met again in 1805—(she tells me since) . . . my temper and disposition were so completely altered that I was hardly to be recognized.—I was not then sensible of the change—but I can believe it—and account for it” (BLJ, 9:25).
verely punished, were openly avowed among the Greeks and Romans, even in their politest ages; and their most elegant and celebrated poets have defiled their compositions by the mention of such detestable amors, without any expressions of abhorrence, or even of disapprobation; nay, often in a way, which sanctions them, and almost wins the unwary reader to palliate, or even approve them!  

Shelley was to protest, when he came to write on the subject, that his contemporaries seemed to be engaged in a conspiracy to keep an important side of Greek life a secret from modern readers who could not read the original documents. He was particularly disappointed that men of philosophical temperament, such as Barthélemy in France and Christoph Martin Wieland in Germany, ignored or bowdlerized Greek manners. In the case of Winckelmann, it is arguable that his own homosexuality helped fire his enthusiasm for Greek marbles. In his "Essay on the Beautiful in Art" (1769) he had declared: "Those who are only aware of beauty in the female sex and are hardly or not at all affected by beauty in our sex, have little innate feeling for beauty in art in a general and vital sense." At the end of the preface to his History, Winckelmann suggested that there was an intimate connection between Greek art and Greek homoeroticism: "I should have been able to say more if I had written for the Greeks, and not in a modern tongue, which imposes on me certain restric-


51. Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy’s Voyage au pays d’Anarcharis en Grèce dans le milieu du quatrième siècle avant l’ère vulgaire was published in French in 1787; an English version, Travels of Anarcharsis the Younger in Greece, appeared in 1796. Shelley read it in 1813. We have noted earlier Bentham’s objections to Wieland’s misrepresentation of Greek manners in Agathon (see p. 43).

the role of aristocratic patron to a younger of talent, calling him his protégé. This was a relation that Byron felt especially comfortable with in the case of younger boys, whom at a later date he made his pages or attendants. Edlestone was fair and thin, with dark eyes. One imagines him as rather diffident, perhaps somewhat feminine: frailness in younger males brought out the chivalric side of Byron's character.

Byron had arrived at Cambridge in a state of depression, unhappy at leaving Harrow. His lameness and his rejection by Mary Chaworth may have made him shy about exposing his heart to others. He tells us he was first attracted to Edlestone by his voice, then by his looks and personality. Finally, an inadvertent revelation of the boy's feelings crystallized his own into love. Byron, with his typical generosity, had probably made substantial presents of money to Edlestone. When the latter wished to reciprocate, he gave Byron an inexpensive stone, a cornelian. But fearing that Byron would despise his gift, he burst into tears. This in turn melted Byron, who shed tears of his own. Byron commemorated the occasion in two poems, "The Cornelian," which he included only in the privately printed Fugitive Pieces and Poems on Various Occasions, and "Pignus Amoris," which was not published until 1896. In the first he expresses a fear that others will sneer at his sentimental friendship. The second poem seems to have been written after he and Edlestone parted since he speaks of "visions of the past":

For these this toy of blushing hue  
I prize with zeal before unknown,  
It tells me of a Friend I knew,  
Who loved me for myself alone.

Through many a weary day gone by,  
With Time the gift is dearer grown;  
And still I view in Memory's eye  
That teardrop sparkle through my own.

And heartless Age perhaps will smile,  
Or wonder whence those feelings sprung:
In Victorian times a young student would most likely have found enlightenment about Greek sexuality by reading translations of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. This is how John Addington Symonds, at seventeen, first became aware of the ideal side of Greek love. But this possibility did not exist in Byron’s day. First, as we shall see, Plato was little read. This general ignorance is reflected by Bentham’s writings on Greek homosexuality. Though one might have expected Plato to have been a prime source, Bentham does not cite him at all. When he speaks of Socrates, it is always the Socrates of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* he has in mind.

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57. Bentham was well trained in Greek and Latin at Westminster School. While there he wrote letters in both languages and considerable verse. When he entered Oxford at twelve, his library contained Archbishop Potter’s *Antiquities of Greece*, Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, Pliny, Anacreon, Aeschines, and Lucian’s *Dialogues*. A list of classical citations on homosexuality appears in the margin of his notes of 1774 (box 740, folio 72a).
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As yet a novice in the martial strife,
'Twas his, with beauty, valour's gifts to share,
A soul heroic, as his form was fair;
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Young, by filling their Minds with Ideas which it were to be wished they could always remain Strangers to.\textsuperscript{63}

That some youths might have needed and welcomed information about a society in which they were not outcasts did not occur to Sydenham. He sees the matter solely in the light of national morality. The reformation of the stage effected by Addison and Steele, he tells us, has been thrown back by the "licentious Comedy" of Gay and Fielding. A new effort at reform is under way. "It would therefore be the more unpardonable in the Translator of Plato to interrupt this beginning Reformation, by presenting to View of his English Readers a Character fit only for the Plays of an Aristophanes."\textsuperscript{64} Morality took precedence over truth.

But if Plato was a closed book, the gardens of poetry were open. The classical curriculum in England, as John Stuart Mill was to complain, ignored history and philosophy in favor of philology and poetry.\textsuperscript{65} In the case of poetry, the readings encompassed an odd mixture of the heroic and the rococo, the former represented by Homer, the latter by the erotic poets. It was a paradox that an age that would have rejected formal sex education as shocking should have prescribed amorous Latin and Greek poetry as a staple of education. Lady Byron (a quintessential Victorian even before Victoria) was to complain late in life to Harriet Beecher Stowe that "there was everything in the

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> At this lone hour, the Paphian boy,
> Descending from the realms of joy;
> Quick to my gate, directs his course,
> And knocks with all his little force;
> My visions fled, alarm'd I rose,
> "What stranger breaks my blest repose?"
> Alas! replies the wily child
> In faultering accents, sweetly mild;
> "A hapless infant here I roam,
> Far from my dear maternal home;
> Oh! shield me from the wintry blast,
> The nightly storm is pouring fast,
> No prowling robber fingers here;
> A wandering baby, who can fear?"
> I heard his seeming artless tale,
> I heard his sighs upon the gate;
> My breast was never pity's foe,
> But felt for all the baby's woe,
> I drew the bar, and by the light,
> Young Love, the infant, met my sight. . .
> With care I tend my weary guest,
> His little fingers chill my breast;
> His glossy curls, his azure wing,
> Which droop with nightly showers, I wring.

Then Cupid, reviving, fears his bow is unstrung from the damp and asks to test it:

> With poison tipt, his arrow flies,
> Deep in my tortur'd heart it lies:
> Then loud the joyous urchin laught,
> "My bow can still impel the shaft;
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Lucretius speaks of men being impelled by Venus toward women or boys indifferently at the beginning of De Rerum Natura. Horace addresses love poems to Lysicus and Ligurinus, Tibullus to Marathus. Martial writes of boys in a style explicitly sexual. Juvenal, who was widely admired, translated, and imitated in Byron's day, attacked effeminate homosexuals in his second satire, but at the end of Satire VI he recommends boys as less dangerous bedmates than women. Petronius was a byword for homosexuality in the eighteenth century. Propertius has no poems addressed to boys but shows the typical Roman acceptance of bisexuality by giving sympathetic advice to a friend who is wooing a boy. Tacitus, like Suetonius, uses homosexual scandals to denigrate the emperors.

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Thus Nisus all his fond affection prov’d,
Dying, reveng’d the fate of him he lov’d;
Then on his bosom, sought his wonted place,
And death was heavenly, in his friend’s embrace.

By an interesting coincidence, when Bentham took up the subject of homosexuality again in 1814 and sought

72. Ibid., pp. 76–77, 89.
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The other reason for popular ignorance of Plato’s views on homosexuality was the misleading nature of the one translation that did exist. The first English rendering of the *Symposium* was published by Floyer Sydenham in two parts in 1761 and 1767. Despite Plato’s lack of vogue, this was an ambitious work of philological and historical scholarship, in which a line of text may be accompanied by a page of notes. But Sydenham took drastic measures to assure that the reader who knew no Greek would not guess at the nature of the love celebrated in the panegyrics of Phaedrus and Pausanias that open the dialogue. Achilles, in Sydenham’s version, becomes not the lover of Patroclus, but his “admirer.” The Greek word *eromenos* (male beloved) is regularly rendered as “mistress,” and Phaedrus’s famous boast—“I know not any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to

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57. Bentham was well trained in Greek and Latin at Westminster School. While there he wrote letters in both languages and considerable verse. When he entered Oxford at twelve, his library contained Archbishop Potter’s *Antiquities of Greece*, Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, Pliny, Anacreon, Aeschines, and Lucian’s *Dialogues*. A list of classical citations on homosexuality appears in the margin of his notes of 1774 (box 74a, folio 76).
the role of aristocratic patron to a youngster of talent, calling him his protégé. This was a relation that Byron felt especially comfortable with in the case of younger boys, whom at a later date he made his pages or attendants. Edlestone was fair and thin, with dark eyes. One imagines him as rather diffident, perhaps somewhat feminine: frailness in younger males brought out the chivalric side of Byron's character.

Byron had arrived at Cambridge in a state of depression, unhappy at leaving Harrow. His lameness and his rejection by Mary Chaworth may have made him shy about exposing his heart to others. He tells us he was first attracted to Edlestone by his voice, then by his looks and personality. Finally, an inadvertent revelation of the boy's feelings crystallized his own into love. Byron, with his typical generosity, had probably made substantial presents of money to Edlestone. When the latter wished to reciprocate, he gave Byron an inexpensive stone, a cornelian. But fearing that Byron would despise his gift, he burst into tears. This in turn melted Byron, who shed tears of his own. Byron commemorated the occasion in two poems, "The Cornelian," which he included only in the privately printed Fugitive Pieces and Poems on Various Occasions, and "Pignus Amoris," which was not published until 1898. In the first he expresses a fear that others will sneer at his sentimental friendship. The second poem seems to have been written after he and Edlestone parted since he speaks of "visions of the past":

For these this toy of blushing hue
I prize with zeal before unknown,
It tells me of a Friend I knew,
Who loved me for myself alone. . . .

Through many a weary day gone by,
With Time the gift is dearer grown;
And still I view in Memory's eye
That teardrop sparkle through my own.

And heartless Age perhaps will smile,
Or wonder whence those feelings sprung:
Shelley was to protest, when he came to write on the subject, that his contemporaries seemed to be engaged in a conspiracy to keep an important side of Greek life a secret from modern readers who could not read the original documents. He was particularly disappointed that men of philosophical temperament, such as Barthélemy in France and Christoph Martin Wieland in Germany, ignored or bowdlerized Greek manners. In the case of Winckelmann, it is arguable that his own homosexuality helped fire his enthusiasm for Greek marbles. In his “Essay on the Beautiful in Art” (1763) he had declared: “Those who are only aware of beauty in the female sex and are hardly or not at all affected by beauty in our sex, have little innate feeling for beauty in art in a general and vital sense.” At the end of the preface to his History, Winckelmann suggested that there was an intimate connection between Greek art and Greek homoeroticism: “I should have been able to say more if I had written for the Greeks, and not in a modern tongue, which imposes on me certain restric-


51. Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy’s Voyage au pays Amazighe ou Grèce dans le milieu du quatrième siècle avant l’ère vulgaire was published in French in 1787; an English version, Travels of Anarcharsis the Younger in Greece, appeared in 1796. Shelley read it in 1813. We have noted earlier Bentham's objections to Wieland's misrepresentation of Greek manners in Agathon (see p. 43).

ceeds from a very different cause to that which you assign. ... I will not however pretend to say I possess that Gaité de Coeur which formerly distinguished me, but as the diminution of it arises from what you could not alleviate, and might possibly be painful, you will excuse the Disclosure.” He then gave a list of reassurances—he is not worried about his health or his money difficulties, nor is he about to fight a duel—which cannot have been very reassuring since the mystery was only deepened. He then adds, probably ironically: “You know me too well to think it is Love.” 77 Augusta had, in fact, been well aware of the Chaworth affair: Marchand thinks that this is a feint and that the letter does indeed refer to Edleston. His use of “melancholy” is one clue. Fifteen years later, Byron said of his Cambridge days: “I took my gradations in the vices—with great promptitude—but they were not to my taste ... and my heart, thrown back upon itself, threw me into excesses perhaps more fatal than those from which I shrank.” The fatality here was, presumably, his love affair with Edleston. Then he writes: “People have wondered at the Melancholy which runs through my writings. ... If I could explain at length the real causes which have contributed to increase this perhaps natural temperament of mine—this Melancholy which hath made me a bye-word—nobody would wonder—but this is impossible without doing much mischief.” 78

Byron speaks of women who admired “The Cornelian.” One of these was Elizabeth Pigot, his mother’s neighbor at Southwell, with whom he was on friendly terms. On June 30, 1807, shortly before parting from Edleston, he sent

77. January 7 [1805]. BL, 1:87–88. Byron also mentioned his sister’s awareness of his change in disposition in his “Detached Thoughts,” which he began in Ravenna on October 15, 1821: “When we met again in 1805—(she tells me since) ... my temper and disposition were so completely altered that I was hardly to be recognized.—I was not then sensible of the change—but I can believe it—and account for it” (BL, 9:25).
writing to someone else, he might have misrepresented the mood of their parting and the tone of Byron's letters, but it is hard to imagine that, knowing Byron's mettle, he would make assertions to him that were patently false when he is trying to conciliate him. One can only wonder what did happen. Did Grey anger Byron by boasting of his "conquest" to some mutual acquaintance? Until further evidence turns up, we must remain in the dark.

Byron's early poems and his passions for Mary Chaworth and other women reveal a sensibility that was already fully developed on the heterosexual side. But when and how did he come to understand the other part of his nature? Men who eventually identify themselves as bisexual come to self-awareness through various paths, some of which are neither comfortable nor easy. In Byron's day, one of the commonest, for the educated, was through the study of the classics that made up the core of a gentleman's education. Byron boasted with pride in later life that he had thirteen years of classical studies behind him. In his account of his early experience with literature, he recorded that he had read Greek and Latin poets "without number" and had "translated a good deal from both languages, verse as well as prose." 47 Though hardly a model student, his interest seems to have been genuine and lasting. His enthusiasm for Greek history and literature was a potent influence in drawing him to Greece first as a visitor and later as a liberator. But what exactly would he have read and what knowledge of homosexuality would this have given him in a culture where scholarly discussions of the subject were rigorously tabooed?

Byron began to write when the so-called Greek revival was at flood tide. Pope and his age had looked to Augustan Rome for its models and knew Greek art mainly through late Roman copies. But after 1750, Europe turned to Athens to imbibe the Greek spirit at its source. James Stuart and

47. I.J., 1:97.
Obviously, Byron gave his list of faithful couples, intending them to be taken as examples of romantic friendships. He was hardly making an avowal of homosexuality. But inevitably a certain ambiguity hovers over the names, as in the case of Nisus and Euryalus. The suggestion has been made many times—and as often contradicted—that Jonathan’s love for David was homosexual. In a cynical-sentimental poem, “To Romance,” Byron had used Pylades as the generic name for a friend whose attraction would match the romance of the love of women.

But the most interesting models Byron proposes for Edlestone and himself are contemporary, the so-called “Ladies of Llangollen.” In 1778, Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, daughters of two prominent aristocratic families in Ireland, had eloped together. Eleanor was thirty-nine, Sarah twenty-three. They were captured by their families, berated, and restrained, but remaining adamant, they were finally allowed to leave the country. They settled in a picturesque house in a tiny village in Wales. Intensely snobbish and class-conscious in an age when such manners were taken as a matter of course, they nevertheless charmed the villagers and were seen as emblems of a self-sacrificing devotion that had renounced the world.

Four years after their flight, Lady Louisa Stuart wrote: “When I first heard of them I was disposed to be captivated by anything so romantic.” Eventually they became a national and even an international cult and their cottage the haunt of celebrities. (One thinks of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in France in the 1920s.) Queen Charlotte corresponded with them, they received a government pension, and their guests included Sir Walter Scott and Robert Southey, William Wilberforce, Josiah Wedgwood, Sir Humphry Davy, the Duke of Wellington, and the young Charles Darwin. Prime ministers apologized for passing through

ever remain hidden in my own breast." In November he still speaks of his "cordial, deliberate detestation" for Lord Grey. 40 Matters were not eased by his mother, who had, absurdly enough, fallen in love with Grey and insisted, in a stormy scene, that Byron make up the quarrel. What had caused the fracas? Marchand thinks that "the sensuous young lord had made some kind of sexual advance which disgusted his younger companion." 41

This is the usually accepted interpretation, which has been endorsed by Doris Langley Moore, herself a scholarly and astute interpreter of Byron's character. However, some difficulties present themselves if we assume that Byron merely repulsed Grey's overtures. Thomas Moore, who does not mention the break between the men, simply tells us that "an intimacy . . . soon sprung up between [Byron] and his noble tenant." To this innocuous remark, the vigilant Hobhouse, however, added another comment in the margin of his copy of Moore's biography: "A circumstance occurred during [this] intimacy which certainly had much effect on his future morals." 42 This suggests that Byron in later life told Hobhouse that something sexual had taken place. It seems, however, difficult to imagine how Hobhouse could have asserted that the episode affected Byron's later behavior if he had not been a willing participant. 43

40. March 26, 1804, BLJ, 1:46; November 2, 1804, BLJ, 1:54. See also Byron's letters to his mother expressing the same sentiments, in BLJ, May 3-10, 1804, 1:49-50; and other letters to Augusta, November 11, 1804, 1:55, and November 21, 1804, 1:59.
41. BB, 1:80.
42. IJL, 1:53; LBAR, p. 77.
43. Doris Langley Moore recognizes this difficulty and seeks to explain it on the grounds that Byron was not attracted to older men: "It is odd to find Grey credited—or decried—with Byron's phase of cheerful abandonment, six years afterwards, to adventures with youths in the Near East, seeing that his reaction to the approaches had been horrified recoil; but perhaps in his account of this juvenile ordeal, he did not, considering his own deviations, lay much emphasis on the repugnance he had felt when obliged to resist a man eight years his senior" (LBAR, p. 77). This is perceptive, but it does not, I think, account for the tone and substance of Grey's letter cited below.
most unplatonic of lovers. Byron in this case achieved something like the palpitating restraint Socrates advocates in the *Phaedrus*, where the male lovers, though burning with erotic desire, restrict the expression of their emotions to “the sight, the touch, the kiss, the embrace.” After Edleston's death Byron was to write of their love in his famous elegy “To Thyrza,” in which he disguised Edleston's identity behind a feminine name. There he describes the amorous side of their life together at Cambridge:

> Ours too the glances none saw beside;
The smile none else might understand;
The whisper'd thought of hearts allied,
The pressure of the thrilling hand;
The kiss so guileless and refin'd
That Love each warmer wish forborne;
Those eyes proclaim'd so pure a mind,
E'en passion blush'd to plead for more. . .
The pledge we wore—I wear it still. 82

Obviously, Byron was well aware of the part sexual passion played in this attraction. One is reminded inevitably of another clandestine and platonic Cambridge romance, the affair carried on by Clive Durham and Maurice Hall before the unseeing eyes of their relatives and friends at home and at college in E. M. Forster's novel *Maurice*.

Always in need of self-expression, Byron seems to have commemorated his feelings for Edleston in another poem during his years at the university. Besides “The Cornelian” and “Pignus Amoris,” Byron wrote some further lines, which he published a month after their parting. In this case he did what he was to do again more extensively in the Thyrza lyrics of 1811 and 1812—he pretended that the object of his passion was a girl. In July 1807 he sent to the editor of *Monthly Literary Recreations* a poem that was published over his name but never reprinted by him in his lifetime. These were the “Stanzas to Jessy,” which Marchand thinks were inspired by the separation from Edleston that

82. *CPW*, 1:347.
tracted both at school and college were little less than what he himself describes them, "passions."

This plausible and eloquent paragraph drew forth a skeptical retort from John Cam Hobhouse, who, on reading it, wrote in the margin of his copy of Moore's *Life*: "M. knows nothing, or will tell nothing of the principal cause & motive of all these boyish friend[ships]."» Hobhouse, a lifelong friend of Byron, undoubtedly knew more about Byron's bisexuality than anyone else of whom we have any record. He thought it was an open question whether Moore was writing in innocent naïveté or in a deliberate attempt to obfuscate the issue. But evidence has now come to light that Moore was neither naïve nor ignorant. In the published memoirs of Charles Fulke Greville, we learn that Moore spoke at length about his forthcoming biography with Greville on November 9, 1829. After a discussion of Byron's orgies with women in Venice, the conversation turned to another question: "Moore said he did not believe in the stories of his fancy for Boys, but it looked as if he does believe it from his manner."» Apparently Moore tried to dismiss the matter lightly, but his lack of case on a subject of such momentous significance in England betrayed him.

In his authoritative biography of Byron, Marchand took the position that Byron might "possibly" have recognized the "sexual implications of these passionate friendships...before he left Harrow, probably while he was at Cambridge, and certainly while he was in Greece on his first pilgrimage."» Four years later, in 1961, Doris Langley Moore published excerpts from the Lovelace papers, which

35. *II*, 1:43–44.
38. *BB*, 1:90n. This is the only place in his 1,264-page biography where Marchand speaks directly of Byron's homosexuality and uses the word, though his work implies throughout a keen awareness of this side of Byron's life.