raphers dared to broach the subject; he also wrote, in a form that is telling and powerful, the earliest published protest against homosexual oppression in England that has survived and the first plea for understanding.

Since Hobhouse was still alive in the 1860s, he may have read Don Leon in Dugdale's edition. If he did, he must have realized that someone at last knew the truth he had tried so desperately to keep hidden. At his advanced age (he was eighty in 1866) he may not have cared; indeed, he hardly need have—it was almost a century before anyone would pay any serious heed to Don Leon. He would probably have been far more concerned had he read the attack on Byron that Harriet Beecher Stowe published three months after his death.

Stowe's "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life" appeared simultaneously as a leading article in Macmillan's Magazine and in the Atlantic Monthly in September 1869. It caused an international furor by making public for the first time the accusation of incest. Stowe's avowed reason for making her revelations, which were based on conversations she had had with Lady Byron in 1856, four years before her death, was to counteract what she regarded as the pernicious moral influence of the new cheap editions of Byron's poetry. But since it was felt she was recklessly seeking a journalistic sensation, her revelations were coldly received. Her report that Lady Byron believed Augusta and Byron had been lovers was credited, but most Victorians were disposed to believe that Lady Byron was mistaken and that Stowe had injudiciously betrayed her friend's confidences. On balance she received far more blame than praise. But Stowe's essay was by far the most controversial ever published about Byron. Dozens of articles and several books appeared in response, most of them critical. Finally, Stowe herself repeated and defended her charges in Lady Byron Vindicated (1870). In the midst of the uproar, it is surprising that no direct hints of Byron's homosexuality surfaced, all the more so since Dugdale's edition of Don Leon had been
in circulation for several years: the disinclination to credit it or even to acknowledge its existence seems to have been total.

One of the many replies to Stowe's revelations was Alfred Austin's *Vindication of Lord Byron*, which rashly rejected the accusation of incest as absurd. Austin did, however, quote a letter from John Robertson, an acquaintance of Lady Byron, to the effect that during the years he had known Lady Byron at Brighton: "I heard but of one crime of which she accused her dead husband," a crime, he implied, quite different from Stowe's charge. 26 This seems to suggest that Lady Byron made Byron's homosexuality known to her intimates. But nothing more specific than this appears to have found its way into print, and Austin's readers must have been left guessing as to the nature of this crime, which Robertson simply discounted as one of Lady Byron's delusions.

By the seventies, however, at least one homosexual reader of Byron had come close to penetrating to the truth. In an essay on Byron in St. Paul's Magazine in 1873, Lord Roden Noel included two paragraphs that hinted at a pederastic strain in the poet's temperament. Noel seems to have been alerted by Shelley's letter to Peacock about Byron's life at Venice, which had been published by Mary Shelley in 1840. He speaks of "some curious references" in this communication without quoting it. By juxtaposing this with Byron's remark about rumors accusing him of the crimes of Tiberius and Heliogabalus, his "passionate" friendships at Harrow, and his predilections for Clare, Edleston, Rushton and Giraud, Noel succeeds in throwing a very different color over Byron's relations than the romantic friendship theory of Moore, though he does not go beyond veiled suggestions. If the reader had not read Shelley's letter or was hazy about Heliogabalus, he or she remained in the dark. Noel, an admirer of Walt Whitman's

"Calamus" lyrics, later republished "Lord Byron and His Times" in his Essays on Poetry and Poets (1886). This anthology was dedicated "to my friend, John Addington Symonds." In the autobiography that he left in manuscript, Symonds identifies Noel as one of the men who helped initiate him into London's homosexual subculture. A curious thread of relationship also linked Noel and Hobhouse—the latter's son-in-law, the fifth Earl of Roden (a grandson of his friend the Bishop of Clogher), was Lord Roden Noel's uncle.

More typical of the age were some dillent speculations on the identity of Thyrza, published in the Athenæum in 1884 by a writer who signed himself "A. B." Reacting to an improbable guess by John Cordy Jeaffreson that Thyrza was Margaret Parker, the writer pointed out that Byron's cousin had died in 1800 when he was only twelve. Since he then quotes Byron's Pigot rhapsody, the relevant letters to Dallas and Hodgson, and the "Cornelian" references, his chain of argument seems to be leading inescapably to Edleston. But at the last moment, he retreats almost, if not quite all the way, to Moore's position. The idea of Byron's writing a series of love poems about a young man was still not acceptable. "The inference should be," he speculates, "that as Moore holds, there was strictly speaking, no historical Thyrza; that the poems addressed to her express many blended sorrows; and that among them the sorrow for young Edleston [sic] was probably the most poignant." But if it was Edleston he mourned, why did Byron change the gender? The writer suggests that it was less embarrassing to pretend he was writing love poems to a woman than to reveal a personal friendship with a boy of a lower class:

So far as this emotion was in his mind, Byron would feel that he would provoke ridicule (which no one dreaded more in such cases) by uttering in public such a sentiment about his humble friend as he expressed in his letters to Hodgson. He therefore adopted the language of a bereaved lover, and addressed his verses to a feminine name, though . . . the poetry would be equally appropriate in either case. Precedents of the
poetry of friendship resembling the poetry of love will occur to every one.27

The writer was, of course, referring to Tennyson’s In Memoriam, which had now taken its place beside Shakespeare’s sonnets as a problematic expression of male affection.

In the meantime, Don Leon went unnoticed except by a bibliographer whose speciality was erotica: Henry Spencer Ashbee devoted four short pages to it and quoted a few lines in the first volume of his Index Librorum Prohibitorum. This bibliography was printed pseudonymously in 1877, and because of Victorian disapproval of its subject matter, it had only a limited, surreptitious circulation. It is a sign of the times that even Ashbee should have repudiated both its implication of homosexuality and Stowe’s charge of incest as equally “heinous and preposterous.” But though Don Leon was discounted as a salacious squib and remained unknown except to a tiny group of collectors of rare pornography, its existence inevitably posed a threat. Ashbee tells the story of a friend to whom Dugdale had shown a manuscript of the poem about 1860. The friend had warned the publisher “to be very cautious about any application to Lady Byron, as, although they would only laugh at him for being so credulous [Dugdale at that point believed the poem really was by Byron], he might be charged with attempting to extort money if the matter came to the ears of ‘The Society.’”28 Dugdale had apparently intended to use the manuscript for the purpose of blackmail.

Whether or not Lady Byron ever heard of Don Leon, there is no doubt that it was known to her daughter Ada’s son, Lord Lovelace. Unnamed but unmistakable, it haunts the pages of the curious essay Lovelace had printed pri-

Epilogue 365

vately in 1905 under the title Astarte. His main purpose was to defend Lady Byron, who had reared him after the death of his mother, by showing that there was indeed substance to the allegation of incest made by Stowe. Unlike Stowe, who was a crusading moralist, feminist, and popular writer, Lord Lovelace was an erudite and irascible conservative skeptic, who regretted that “Semitic and socialist hordes” were threatening classical education. That so proud and sensitive an aristocrat should circulate, even privately, a book convicting his grandfather of incest was piquant enough. That the book is also concerned to lay to rest an unspoken accusation of homosexuality adds an additional interest to the enterprise.

Lovelace, of course, had access to Lady Byron’s voluminous memoranda, which he had typed and then personally classified. From them and Byron’s letters he extracts a case for the guilt of Byron and Augusta that most biographers have regarded as reasonably conclusive. But he does not think of incest as a particularly horrible sin. After all, he reminds the reader, it was not unknown among the great of Byron’s day, and Byron and Augusta were only half-siblings. He even makes the romantic suggestion that they should have defied society by eloping. Where homosexuality is concerned, however, his insouciance deserts him. Incest, he declares, with characteristic vehemence, was after all “a sin far less repulsive than some exaggerations and inventions about [Byron] which human imbecility and infatuation forged out of infinitely little knowledge.”29 His strong phobia on the subject is visible in his comments on Shelley’s letter about Byron’s sexually dubious companions in Italy. Though Byron lived a licentious life there, he writes: “Trustworthy contemporary information from Venice, dating from the first half of the nineteenth century, disposes completely of the most re-

pulsive abominations. There was no foundation for the
crass and egregious suggestions of Shelley in a letter to
Peacock, which became a favourite quotation for credulous
ill-wishers." 30 Lovelace thinks Shelley was imposed upon
by rumors promoted by Byron's hostile ex-mistress Claire
Clairmont. Obviously, in Lovelace's eyes incest was a fam-
ily scandal that time might palliate and even glamorize, but
not homosexuality.

Lovelace was also hostile to Thomas Moore for includ-
ing the Pigot letters in his Life. Presumably it was the two
on Edleston that especially excited him. "The worst[!] of
his letters were included. There were juvenile letters, in
which, having nothing to tell, he made up crude realities
into idiotic nonsense for idiots to read. Subsequent notori-
ety could never convert trash written to Pigot into liter-
ature or biography. . . . They mean nothing and explain
nothing." 31 Lovelace was particularly embarrassed to rep-
dudate the implications of Don Leon without directly ac-
knowledging the poem's existence or specifying the nature
of its revelations. Speaking of the period immediately after
Lady Byron's death in 1860, Lovelace tells the reader:

Strange invaders reappeared, intent upon campaigns—futile
and unprovoked, but sufficient to splash "a noteless blot on a
remembered name." Statements and personalities of an un-
usual description were circulated, which the Byrons must ab-
solutely repudiate and condemn, and that in the most and
indeed only effectual manner—by plain truth and tangible evi-
dence—practical exposure of pseudo-Byronese manipulations
and fables. . . . The unpopularity of disestablishing favourite
delusions [i.e., that Byron did not commit incest] has no terror
for those who are already misrepresented. 32

Lovelace was aware of the rumors in circulation at the
time of Byron's separation from his wife. He comments: "It

30. Ibid., p. 1242. It is not clear what "information" Lord Lovelace
had seen or what had elicited it.
31. Ibid., p. 129.
32. Ibid., p. 173.
is right to state most distinctly that the separation papers leave no possible place for other charges besides the two commonplace ones of adultery and cruelty, and that connected with Mrs. Leigh." 33 This statement is odd, to say the least, in the light of what we now know, for the Lovelace papers contained Lady Byron's memorandum of her interview with Lady Caroline Lamb. No doubt Lovelace was prepared to discount Caroline's statement as strongly as he had Shelley's.

With his bias it was inevitable that Lovelace should try to discourage the kind of speculations about Thyrza that the *Athenaeum* had published. When E. H. Coleridge undertook to edit Byron's works in 1898—originally with the cooperation of Lord Lovelace—the annotations for "To Thyrza" obviously presented a problem. Coleridge prefaced the footnote on the poem in his editions with the explanation that "the following note on the identity of Thyrza has been communicated to the Editor." We now know that the anonymous annotator was Lord Lovelace and that Coleridge had doubts about his communication, which he nevertheless published. The note reads: "The identity of Thyrza and the question whether the person addressed under this name really existed, or was an imaginary being, have given rise to much speculation and discussion of a more or less futile kind. This difficulty is now incapable of definitive and authoritative solution." Drawing on his knowledge of Lady Byron's papers, Lovelace then declares that "Byron referred to Thyrza in conversation with Lady Byron . . . as a young girl who had existed," thereby giving the impression that whatever else was in doubt about Thyrza, there was no doubt about her gender. 34

Given the climate of opinion in England, it is not sur-

33. Ibid., p. 182.
prising that the first open surmises about Byron's bisexuality in scholarly contexts appeared in works published in Germany, France, and Italy. In Germany attitudes toward homosexuality were markedly more liberal than elsewhere on the Continent and far freer than in England. Two aspects of German culture contributed especially to this liberalism. One was the exceedingly high prestige of classical studies in intellectual and academic circles: German scholarship on Greek art, history, literature, and philosophy led the world and by implication called into question postclassical prejudices. Substantial learned essays on Greek homosexuality began to appear in German reference works as early as 1830. Candid discussions of this theme in Plato and other Greek writers abounded. The other liberating influence was the respect accorded "science" generally and medical science in particular in Germany. As a result, psychiatrists, jurists, and anthropologists found it possible to discuss the issue in print. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a homosexual German legal worker, had opened a debate with a series of studies in the 1860s of what he called "Uranianism." Psychiatrists began to publish case histories, and, though some of these had a negative effect by stereotyping homosexuality as an illness, they at least broke the taboo of silence. Symptomatic of these new developments was the creation of a new scientific nomenclature to replace the old theological language: the word homosexual was coined in 1869. Twenty years later, Magnus Hirschfeld, a German physician and sex researcher, organized a group of scientists and intellectuals as the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee to agitate for law reform (a move unthinkable at that time in England) and inaugurated an ambitious scholarly annual, the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, with lengthy, well-documented articles on scientific and cultural aspects of homosexuality.

These new developments in sexology also aroused interest in France. *Volume 15 of the Bibliothèque de Criminologie*, published in Lyons in 1896, was devoted to *Uranisme et unisexuality*, a title reflecting the German inspiration of its...
entific" categorizing. Its author was André Raffalovitch, a young decadent poet, who had grown up in Paris, settled in London at the age of eighteen, and been associated with the circle of Oscar Wilde. Raffalovitch's study, published the year after Wilde was sent to prison, included biographical entries devoted to a number of famous literary figures, among them Byron, whom he classified as a bisexual. His opening sentence implies that Byron had already been "claimed" by homosexual circles in Europe, though his two pages on the poet's attachments at Harrow and to Edleston and Giraud do not draw on any information not in Moore's Life. This suggests that in some homosexual groups, Moore's "explanations" had already been discounted as veiling the truth.

Inevitably, speculation about Byron appeared in the Jahrbuch. But the language barrier, the threat of censorship by customs, and no doubt the high level of paranoia in the still covert gay communities of America and England kept the Jahrbuch from circulating in those countries except through medical libraries. Neither the British Museum nor the Library of Congress acquired copies, despite its impressive scholarship and extensive bibliographies, which listed on the average two or three thousand articles published each year in Europe. Some of this research, however, found its way into a six-hundred-page study on homosexuality in English published in Italy. This was The

35. Uranisme et unisexualité: Étude sur différentes manifestations de l'in- 

36. Review of Hans Rau, "Das Liebesleben Lord Byrons." Jahrbuch für 

37. The reviewer took notice of some 

38. The reviewer called for further research but made no attempt on his own to ex- 

39. explicate Byron's poetry except to wonder if the "sin that haunted Manfred 

40. Manfred is now, of course, taken to reflect Byron's feelings about his incest with his 

41. sister.
Intersexes: A History of Similosexualism as a Problem in Social Life, the work of an expatriate American music critic named Edward Irenaeus Prime Stevenson, who used the pseudonym "Xavier Mayne." Though the preface is dated Rome, 1908, it is not clear exactly when it appeared: it draws heavily on the *Jahrbuch* for its scientific framework and for its historical and literary materials but was not reviewed in Hirschfeld’s journal until October 1911. Stevenson devotes five pages to Byron, whom, using the scientific jargon of Hirschfeld’s circle, he calls a “Dionian-Uranian,” that is, a “bisexual.” “During all his life,” Stevenson wrote, “the great English poet was more or less temperamentally homosexual: an idealistic, hellenic, romantic homosexual.” He speaks of Byron’s love for Clare, Edleston, and Giraud and concludes, with significant insight: “In Byron’s boyhood and in his university days, his homosexuality was the most really passionall emotion of love which he knew.” “Greek in his intellectual and sexual nature, he was Athenian at heart.” However, like many pioneers Stevenson overstaites his case. Having decided that Byron was, indeed, attracted to boys, he errs by concluding that he never was seriously attracted to women. Nevertheless, Stevenson’s book is remarkable for providing the first straightforward account of Byron’s homosexuality in English. Unfortunately he reached very few readers; he printed only 125 copies, and few found their way into American libraries. The book was all but inaccessible until Arno Press reprinted it in 1975.37

38. Stevenson has little to say about Byron’s poetry with one notable exception. In a section subtitled “Byron’s ‘Manfred’: A Homosexual Allegory?,” he tells us he had received “a pertinent comment on *Manfred*” from a correspondent who “claims strong private authority in discussing Byron’s homosexuality.” According to this account, the writer’s grandfather had discussed “Greek love” with Byron and confessed some kind of same-sex liaison:

When my grandfather had finished his account, which you can imagine was done with great embarrassment [sic], Byron said after a moment—“Pshaw, I don’t
The difficulty of disseminating scholarly work on the subject of homosexuality was dramatized by the fate of the first English book on the subject, Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*. In a trial in 1870, the British attorney-general had expressed a sense of gratification that there was "very little learning or knowledge upon this subject in this country," and a defense counsel thanked God that such scientific literature was still foreign to the libraries of British medical men. But the sensation caused by the Wilde case and the intense popular hostility it aroused led Ellis to make an attempt at enlightening the public. This he did, in a book written in collaboration with John Addington Symonds. A German translation appeared without difficulty in 1896, but the opposition he faced in England was formidable. First, Symonds died and his heirs insisted that Ellis destroy the first English edition and remove Symonds's name and contributions. Though Ellis's style was austerely chaste by any standards, the courts found the revised book obscene and issued an order for the destruction of all copies. Later editions were published only in America where legal standards were markedly more tolerant. In 1916, Ellis incorporated some materials on Byron from Raffalovich and the *Jahrbuch*. He suggested that Byron's feelings for Clare and

If authentic, these remarks are of some interest both as to the genesis of *Manfred* and as to Byron's view of homosexuality. But except for the reference to "British philosophy" the style of the reported conversation does not sound very much like Byron.

Giraud might have been homosexual and that some of his poems to women were in fact "inspired by men." He concluded, however: "It is probable . . . that here, as well as in the case of Shakespeare, and in that of Tennyson's love for his youthful friend, Arthur Hallam, as well as of Montaigne for Etienne de La Boëtie, although such strong friendships may involve an element of sexual emotion, we have no true and definite homosexual impulse; homosexuality is merely simulated by the ardent and hyperesthetic emotions of the poet." 40 For once, Ellis's scholarly caution served him ill. But even his guarded remarks reached few in England: the British Museum possessed a copy of his banned study but did not list it in the catalogue.

Byron's biographers of this period were not as open-minded as Ellis, whose studies were in sexology. Ethel Colburn Mayne's spirited two-volume life of 1912, which remained the standard scholarly work for more than a generation, was exceptionally naive, perhaps because Lord Lovelace's fulminations misled her. She fully accepted Lovelace's views on Byron's incest, but she dismissed the Don Leon poems (rarely referred to even obliquely in that day) as "little filthy contraband brochures" that "told of things unspeakable in villainous alexandrines." 41 Yet the subject of Byron's friendships, which she interpreted idealistically, fascinated and puzzled her. In her very full account of Byron's friendship with Edleston, she emphatically rejected the theory that he was the object of the Thyiza lyrics on the grounds that Byron told Dallas that the related stanzas in Childe Harold did not allude to "any male friend." 42 Mayne quotes the passage from the Ravenna journal on the "violent, though pure, love and passion" but gives the impression that she does not connect this with Edleston, though she is puzzled as to why

42. Ibid., 1:92n.
Byron did not make mention of so important an attachment in these recollections. This puzzlement also comes out in her account of Byron’s penchant for Giraud, which she describes as “one of those ambiguous friendships with a youth infinitely below him in rank.” She calls Byron’s beseech to him a “fantastic feature” of a “fantastic will.” One feels that Mayne’s upbringing in a society dedicated to silence on the subject of homosexuality made it hard for her to imagine that Byron might have had such interests.

The ultimate in the “blind eye” approach to this matter came in John Drinkwater’s popular but well-researched *The Pilgrim of Eternity* (1925). By this time public awareness of male homosexuality had made Thomas Moore’s romantic friendship approach obsolete so that Drinkwater simply bypasses the subject. He ignores Byron’s boyhood “passions,” omits all reference to Edlestone, Thyrza, and Giraud, and refers to Lukas (whom Mayne failed to mention) merely as “a Greek boy whom Byron had taken into his service.” It would be impossible from this book, which purports to give a detailed account of Byron’s whole life, to derive even the faintest hint of his bisexuality. André Maurois, whose widely read *Byron* appeared in 1930, was more candid but still cautious about offending British sensibilities. He tells of Byron’s friendships with Edlestone and Giraud and identifies Thyrza with the former. But we get no clue as to how he interprets these until the “Epilogue,” when he sweeps Byron’s loves together into one catalogue: “Yes, what Byron was capable of loving in another was a certain kind of innocence and youthfulness—whence Mary Duff and Margaret Parker, whence Edlestone and Nicolo Giraud, or later Teresa Guiccioli and the page Loukas.” His including the three fifteen-year-old boys in his list suggests that Maurois perceived Byron as bisexual but was unwilling to say so directly.

But by the end of the 1920s a change had taken place in intellectual circles in the English-speaking world. Though popular feeling and legal opinion remained negative, educated men and women read Mann, Gide, and Proust and found in the writings of Freud an analytical detachment. True, Forster could not conceive of publishing Maurice (written in 1912–1913), and D. H. Lawrence’s The Rainbow was declared obscene in 1915 because it contained a lesbian episode even though Lawrence presented it negatively. But there was now a minority willing to take a stand against censorship. In 1929 James Douglas, a popular London journalist, launched a vitriolic attack on Radclyffe Hall’s Well of Loneliness in the Sunday Express: his argument was that though the fight against novels with explicitly homosexual themes had been lost in France and Germany, English fiction was still uncontaminated and should remain so. Though the judge refused to hear their evidence and ruled that copies of the book should be destroyed, leading literary figures of the day rallied to Radclyffe Hall’s defense. The times were undoubtedly ready for a more candid consideration of Byron’s sexuality if significant new evidence were to appear. In due course it did—ironically enough from the hand of the man who had tried most energetically in Byron’s age to suppress information. The treatment this evidence received, however, was at first far from ingenious.

Some time about 1920 (he does not give the exact date) Harold Nicolson found Hobhouse’s copy of Moore’s Life offered for sale in a bookseller’s catalogue and purchased the volume. Nicolson’s Byron: The Last Journey (1924) made some use of Hobhouse’s marginalia. When he reprinted the book five years later, Nicolson appended a chapter entitled “An Addition to Byron’s Biography,” in which he claimed to quote “all” of Hobhouse’s “perfectly legible” pencil notes. He calls Hobhouse’s statement that Byron’s connection with Lord Grey “had much effect upon his future morals” a “puzzle” and comments: “We are left guessing” as to what he meant to imply. He adopts the same ap-
proach with Hobhouse's remark that Moore had "not the remotest guess at the real reason which induced Lord B. at that time to prefer having no Englishman immediately or constantly near him" in Greece, remarking: "again we are left with a riddle," though his reiteration suggests that he saw some connection between the two notes. 46 One has the impression that Nicolson was deliberately playing dumb. Nicolson, as we know from his son's memoir, was homosexual, but he was exceptionally discreet. Montgomery Hyde has noted that his diaries, full of information about high life in London, are silent on the subject of homosexuality, though it played a part in the lives of many of the men of rank he describes. His training as a diplomat no doubt led him to prefer caution, and his desire for a peerage would have discouraged him from precipitating anything like a new Stowe imbroglio.

Peter Quennell was more daring. Though his *Byron: The Years of Fame* (1935) dealt only with Byron's life in England in 1811–1816, and thus did not cover the period when Byron was directly involved with Edlestone, Giraud, or Lukas, it was the first book on Byron to bring his bisexuality clearly into the open. Nicolson allowed Quennell to examine the Hobhouse pencillings: for the first time these are related meaningfully to Byron's psychology. Quennell connects Hobhouse's remark about Byron's wanting no Englishman near him in Greece with his affair with Giraud. In his chapter on Lady Caroline Lamb, Quennell interpolates an essay "Byron as Amorist," quotes Hobhouse's comment on Grey, and, though not quite explicitly, implies a homosexual interpretation of the incident. He also prints for the first time something Nicolson had omitted—Hobhouse's pregnant remark that "M. knows nothing, or will tell nothing, of the principal cause and motive of these boyish friendships." Having primed his readers with hints,

Quennell finally speaks openly on page 100: "I have suggested that a pronounced strain of homosexual feeling ran through his life." This is the first time, to my knowledge, that the word was used in a book on Byron published and freely circulated in England. At the end, he sums up: "He wanted love; and it is conceivable that, had he been born during the fourth or fifth century before Christ, at Athens or Sparta, his amatory existence might have developed on happier and more harmonious lines." This was a position not far from Stevenson's.

It was not until the 1950s, however, that anyone took up Quennell's theme again. By this time the Kinsey report of 1948 suggested to Americans and English alike that male homosexuality was not a rare phenomenon but something involving a significant proportion of the population. Indeed, Kinsey found that some 37 percent of white American men had had such experiences after the age of sixteen and that fully half of all males were aware of erotic arousal by other males. But Kinsey's findings did not immediately usher in an era of official tolerance. In England, arrests for homosexual offenses, which had averaged about 800 a year before World War II, rose to 3,000 in 1952. Private homes were searched, personal papers ransacked for evidence, and charges brought for acts that had occurred years before. All this might have gone unnoticed if four well-

47. There was no repetition of the Stowe scandal. The Times Literary Supplement, the New York Times Book Review, and the London Mercury (in which Ethel Colburn Mayne wrote a review) were silent on this aspect of the book. But Samuel Chew (who knew Don Leon) accepted Quennell's view, and Clive Bell thought it threw meaningful light on the puzzling reference to passions "unworthy mankind" in "On This Day" (Saturday Review of Literature, November 23, 1935, p. 6; New Statesman and Nation, October 26, 1935, p. 608). John Sparrow even characterized Byron as "fresher and happier" in his relations with boys than in his involvements with women (Spectator, October 18, 1935, p. 613). Only Frederick Dupee in The Nation adopted a skeptical stance. He described the study as "colored throughout by Mr. Quennell's theory, here and there insinuated, that Byron was homosexual... This highly unconventional notion is not impossible but is still far from proved" (January 29, 1936, p. 136).
Epilogue

Publicized trials had not taken place. These involved, respectively, a peer, his cousin, and two journalists. The writers wrote books. The peer was a popular young member of the House of Lords—he was imprisoned, but instead of being ostracized as in Byron's day, he was regarded as the victim of arcaic laws and objectionable police practices. Finally, the British government set up a Departmental Committee under Lord Wollenden, which in 1957 recommended decriminalization. Ten years later the law was changed.

It is at least symbolically significant that two important books treating of Byron's homosexuality, though in very different styles, appeared the same year as the Wollenden Report. The first was G. Wilson Knight's *Lord Byron's Marriage*. This was Knight's second book on Byron. The first, *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues* had appeared five years earlier. Hagiographic in effect, the book cast a halo around Byron. Knight followed Teresa Guiccioli in treating Byron's patronage of boys as one of his more attractive "virtues." He writes at length of Byron's youthful friendships with Clare, Edlestone, Rushton, and Giraud and his relations with Lukas, but they are considered only as examples of his "protectiveness, instinctive affection, and consideration for social inferiors." 48 Though Knight links Byron's patronage to Greek pederastia, it is only in the educational sense and no sexual element is implied. In this respect he was more conservative than Quennell had been seventeen years before.

What seems to have moved Knight onward from this position was his reading of *Don Leon*. The poem had been reprinted in 1934 by R. A. Caton of the Fortune Press, a publisher whose list contained a significant number of erotic titles. 49 A police prosecution led to a court order for

the destruction of three of these, including the new edition of *Don Leon*. Once again, material that might have alerted readers to the truth about Byron was suppressed. But in 1954 and 1956, Knight published two essays, "Who Wrote 'Don Leon'?" and "Colman and 'Don Leon,'" which, while primarily addressed to the question of authorship, nevertheless, made it clear that the controversial poem purported to tell the truth about Byron's homosexuality.

In his next book on Byron, Knight returned to the subject at length, providing by far the fullest analysis to date. The first chapter of *Lord Byron's Marriage* (1957), "Friends and Lovers," in effect adopts the point of view of the *Leon* poet. Knight collects together voluminous details about Byron's Harrow friendships, speculates that he may well have been sexually involved with Giraud in Greece, and interprets his feelings for Edleston as set forth in his letters, journals, and the Thyrza poems as a love relation. In Chapter 5 he gives a full account of *Don Leon* as it bears on Byron's homosexuality, quoting as much as seemed allowable under the law of the day. Though Knight's book dealt at length with the separation controversy and was much concerned with the questions of incest and marital sodomy, its most significant achievement was to document Byron's bisexuality by a meticulous and exhaustive, if sometimes debatable, marshaling of suggestive circumstantial evidence.50

Despite its focus on hitherto taboo themes, Knight's

50. Knight joined the minority of Byron scholars who have been disinclined to accept the incest theory, arguing that it was a "red herring" used to cloak the more dangerous issue of homosexuality. He introduced a new "solution" to the separation mystery, based on passages in *Don Leon* and *Leon to Amataelia*, which represent Byron as committing sodomy with his wife. According to Knight's theory, Lady Byron was unaware of the seriousness of the offense (which in fact was liable to the death penalty under the same statute that made male homosexuality capital) until she consulted her lawyer, Sir Stephen Lushington. Hobhouse's remark (see above, n. 14) adds some plausibility to this view, though conclusive proof that this was an issue in the separation is still lacking. Doris Langley Moore argues against Knight's view in her "Appendix 2: Byron's Sexual Ambivalence," in *ELBAN*, pp. 445-49.
book was well received. Critics praised the author’s courage and candor. No one protested indignantly that Byron had been slandered, as had been the case with Harriet Beecher Stowe. The vehement Byronic and anti-Byronic partisanship of the nineteenth century was dead. And, of course, Knight was not writing as an accuser but as an admirer of Byron. Popular attitudes toward homosexuality in Britain and America were still strongly negative (as they are today, though to a lesser degree), but among literary critics the influence of Freud had made speculation about the sexual orientation of famous writers almost a fashionable game. Though such hypotheses often lacked biographical evidence and were cavalier in their lack of any sense of social context, they had at least made the unspeakable speakable. But some critics complained of Knight’s “license” of interpretation where homosexuality was concerned or noted that Don Leon, of which he made so much, had no real authority as evidence. Andrew Rutherford accused Knight of overstressing Byron’s bisexuality. Another reservation expressed by reviewers was provoked by Knight’s theory that bisexuality was one of the stigmas of genius: this, it was felt, might have unduly influenced his view of Byron’s life. But Knight did not lack for defenders. Replying to those who thought his interest in bisexuality “obsessive,” the Times Literary Supplement argued that “since nineteenth-century morals and decorum forbade discussion or even public admission of a homosexual element in imaginative men, so much the more remains now to be exposed, explored, and weighed up in its larger implications.” In the case of Byron, Knight had produced a portrait “truer to the essential genius of the man than all previous efforts.”

Though reviewers tended to accept Knight’s findings

51. See the letters on this subject by Alec Craig and Malcolm Elwin, Times Literary Supplement, March 1, 1957, p. 129.
53. February 8, 1957, p. 82.
generally, one weakness was that his evidence for actual sexual involvement on Byron's part stopped just short of finality. It was Knight's good fortune that Marchand's biography emerged a few months after his own book. Marchand's publication of the Falmouth letter to Matthews showed that Byron had indeed looked forward to affairs in Greece, and his deciphering of the "Greek epistles" provided the proof that had been so long lacking as to the exact nature of Byron's involvement with boys there. His coolly objective recital of the facts of Byron's life, free from any detectable bias or special pleading and uninfluenced by speculative theories, essentially supported Knight on this issue (though not his dubiety as to Byron's incest with Augusta). Especially telling was Marchand's declaration that Don Leon had been written by "someone who was no amateur and who knew many of the facts of Byron's life astonishingly well." There was one difficulty: reviewers, faced with the task of responding to so long and detailed a work, generally failed to grasp the real significance of Marchand's subtly worded discoveries or to find space for comment on them. But those whom Knight had alerted to the issue found that Marchand corroborated him at key points. Doris Langley Moore's two substantial studies, which followed in the next decades, provided many more important details about Byron's relations with Edlestone, Giraud, and Lukas; the second, *Accounts Rendered*, appended a balanced and sympathetic essay on the subject.

All of these approaches had their limitations. None of them attempted any exploration of contemporary English attitudes toward homosexuality or tried to place Byron's experiences in the context of his time. As a result, they failed to reveal one important drama of his life. Often this was because the subject was of only incidental concern: much of the new information was scattered piecemeal throughout works where the emphasis lay primarily on

54. *BB*, vol. 2 supplemental notes, p. 61.
other subjects. But the sum of these researches taken as a whole has been impressive, and an essential part of Byron's personality, long denied and obscured, has at last emerged.

The forces that frightened Byron and his friends into so much dissimulation and silenced Bentham, Shelley, the *León* poet, and Havelock Ellis (among others) have now waned. Looking back, one is struck by Montesquieu's remark that the three bugbears of his age, judging from its laws, were witchcraft, heresy, and sodomy. Anxieties about witchcraft no longer terrify us. Religious leaders of all faiths now strongly defend the right of men and women to differ on doctrinal issues, and federal statutes protect the religious heretic's rights to employment and accommodation. But if we tolerate and accept different styles of faith to a degree that even Voltaire could not have imagined, diverse sexual lifestyles still arouse apprehension even when they threaten no direct harm to others. In this particular matter, our culture faces business unfinished by the Enlightenment. By tracing the relevant facts in the life of a famous poet, this study has tried to demonstrate how fiercely the engines of repression have worked in the past through the criminal law and censorship. But it would be naïve to pretend that sexual prejudice, though dramatically attenuated, has disappeared or is not still formidable. Indeed, its persistence through eighteen centuries is a remarkable historical fact, and its continuing strength in present-day America and Europe makes it one of the notable anomalies of our society.