variorum *Don Juan* note that they are in Byron’s hand.\textsuperscript{57} Again, another projected stanza in Canto XI, held up to obloquy “Clogher’s bishop” who “sullies / The law, at least until the Bench revert to true / Plain simple fornication.” Byron had the grace to cancel this passage.\textsuperscript{58} Perhaps Hobhouse’s warnings about playing with fire had inspired caution. Conservative journalists would have been glad of any chance, after the government’s embarrassment, to expose a “sodomite” in the liberal-radical camp. The exacerbated situation caused by this scandal may well have increased Hobhouse’s nervousness about the memoirs he knew Byron had written and entrusted to Thomas Moore. We shall have occasion to return to this question when we consider the fate of this famous manuscript.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 130.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 314. This stanza was originally numbered 76.
Love and Death in Missolonghi

The composition of *Don Juan*, though the work proceeded apace and grew in length to more than sixteen cantos, did not absorb all of Byron's energies in Italy. Eventually he grew bored and restless. His affair with Countess Teresa Guiccioli, which had begun passionately in the summer of 1819, had now subsided into quasi-domesticity. When it commenced, Byron had been thirty-one, Teresa twenty, and her husband fifty-four. At first Byron fell into the prescribed role of *cavalier servente*, as the public escort and all-but-openly-acknowledged lover of the young wife. Finally, Teresa insisted on a separation, and an agreement was reached with the count. When in the course of time the count sued to force his young wife to return to him, public opinion was on the side of the lovers, and the pope refused to grant his request. This turn of events could only have delighted Byron when he thought of his isolated position in England after his matrimonial troubles.

Nevertheless, the victory had its price, and Byron must have felt even more deeply committed than he would have been by another marriage. It was part of his code that a man could not desert a woman who had left a husband for his sake, her position being a much more anomalous one than an abandoned wife's. Fortunately, Byron and Teresa were temperamentally as well as passionately suited to each other. Her sense of humor and her interest in literature made her a congenial companion. Inevitably, however, there were strains; both were plagued by jealousy, and Teresa, on her part, was discomfited by the mockery and cynicism of *Don Juan*. But after four years of a marriage
in all but name, Byron felt dissatisfied with his role as household pet. By that time Teresa’s father, Count Ruggero Gamba, and her brother, Pietro, had become deeply involved in the struggle for Italian freedom. Byron in turn was caught up by the cause. When the Gambas were exiled after the failure of the Carbonari revolt of 1821, Byron followed them to Pisa and Genoa where he was briefly reunited with Shelley. After Shelley’s drowning, Edward John Trelawny, the Cornish adventurer who had been a member of their circle at Pisa, urged him to help the Greeks in their new war of independence. Byron accepted the challenge as an opportunity to give meaning to a life become dull and empty.

The London Committee for Greek independence had been founded in March 1823. Jeremy Bentham was a founding member and kind of patron of this association of English philhellenes, which included many of his disciples. John Bowring, Bentham’s future editor and biographer, was its secretary and in this capacity had extensive dealings with Byron, who began to think seriously about going to Greece in April. He hesitated for two reasons—Teresa and his doubts about whether he could be of use. On his first visit he had been delighted by the climate, the beauty of the people and the landscape, and the freedom from English constraints. But he had formed no very high opinion of the Greek national character and had doubts about the Greeks’ ability to wage a successful war against the Turks, desirable as he was convinced their freedom would be. In 1823, the rebellion, only two years old, had not yet fully caught the imagination of Europe. To date, only a few idealists and a motley crew of harum-scarum adventurers, at loose ends after the Napoleonic wars, represented western Europe in the struggle. Rival chieftains on the peninsula showed little inclination to support a central government, and it was not clear whether the country could be united. Byron, on his part, was looked upon as a poet who had helped inspire the new wave of philhellenism; he had,
however, no practical experience in military matters, and Teresa strongly opposed his leaving Italy.

But Byron saw a unique chance to do some lasting good and, despite misgivings, decided to commit himself. Since he did not want to become immediately embroiled with the feuding factions in Greece, he sailed first to the island of Cephalonia, off the west coast, in order to familiarize himself with affairs on the mainland. From there he wrote candidly to Charles Barry, his banker in Geneva, about his desire to avoid any amorous intrigue that might have political implications:

It is not of their ill-usage . . . but of their good treatment that I am apprehensive—for it is difficult not to allow our private impressions to predominate—and if these Gentlemen have any undue interest and discover my weak side—viz.—a propensity to be governed—and were to set a pretty woman, or a clever woman about me—with a turn for political or any other sort of intrigue—why—they would make a fool of me—no very difficult matter probably even without such an intervention. But if I can keep passion—at least that passion—out of the question—(which may be the more easy, as I left my heart in Italy), they will not weather me with quite so much facility.  

Byron's determination to keep clear of feminine influence in Greece was maintained. The last half-year of his life was the only period that seems to have been womanless. But, as we shall see, he did not entirely succeed in keeping "passion out of the question." During his second visit to Greece, as during his first, it was his own sex that engaged his heart and troubled his equanimity. Had Byron foreseen this? Was a revival of the homosexual side of his nature one of the things that contributed to his restlessness in Italy and made a return to Greece seem attractive to him? We have little evidence. There is nothing corresponding to his Falmouth letter to Matthews, and he was no longer writing openly to Hobhouse on erotic subjects.

1. October 25, 1823, BLJ, 11:54–55; "weather" here means "to get the better of."
But Byron was incapable of living without intimate personal ties of some sort. In earlier days, he had written that his heart always alighted "on the nearest perch." Now he was to repeat the pattern of his boyhood and see patronage blossoming into love—in this case an especially frustrating and unsatisfactory love affair. Once again events cast him in the role of protector, a role which, when young people were concerned, made him peculiarly susceptible. This development came about as a result of a sight-seeing visit to Ithaca. There he took under his protection a formerly well-to-do but now impoverished Greek widow and her family. Madame Chalandrutsanos and her three young daughters had fled from Patras (where Byron's two fevers had raged in 1810) to escape the ravages of the Greek war. When Byron's largesse became known to her fifteen-year-old son, Lukas, he too left the Morea (as southern Greece was then called), where he had been fighting the Turks, to join Byron at Argostoli on the island of Cephalonia. It was Lukas who was to be the center of Byron's emotional life during his last months in Greece.

Apparently Byron found the Chalandrutsanos family somewhat importunate. Like most Greeks of their day, military or civilian, they regarded the English lord who had devoted his life and fortune to their cause as a kind of Midas and all-encompassing providence. Byron's account books of the period, which Doris Langley Moore has excerpted and published, list repeated expenditures on their behalf. By November 2, 1823, Byron's tight-fisted steward, Lega Zambelli, had paid out nearly thirty-three dollars for clothes and goods "for the Moreote family." A few days later Byron complained that Madame Chalandrutsanos was asking too much of him. He wrote in Italian to Zambelli that the "family will not receive from this day on more than six dollars a month to maintain the ailing mother." The girls, he suggested, might go into service. He com-

plained that he had already provided more than one hundred and twenty dollars since he had befriended them in August and that four dollars a month was the standard pay for a Greek soldier, who usually had to provide for a larger family than theirs. It was a week after this that Lukas and a younger brother made their way to the Ionian Islands.

When, after some four months on Cephalonia, Byron at last left for the mainland, Lukas, or Luke, as Byron preferred to call him, accompanied the expedition. Their voyage to Missolonghi past the Turkish fleet proved unexpectedly difficult. The shallow-bottomed "mistico" they sailed in was intercepted by a Turkish vessel and chased back from the approaches to Missolonghi to an inlet at Scrofes. From there, on the last day of 1823, Byron wrote to Colonel Leicester Stanhope, the other representative of the London Committee, who had proceeded him: "I am uneasy at being here; not so much on my own account as on that of a Greek boy with me, for you know what his fate would be; and I would sooner cut him in pieces and myself too than have him taken out by those barbarians." Both Greeks and Turks routinely massacred prisoners, and Byron may also have feared that Lukas would be sexually assaulted because of his youthful good looks. Two days later, Byron wrote from Dragometri that he had landed the boy at Scrofes "as Luke's life was in most danger," with some money and a letter for Colonel Stanhope. It was Byron's intention that Lukas and a companion would proceed overland to Missolonghi since he feared their boat might yet be captured by the Turks. For whatever reason—the route may have turned out to be more difficult or dangerous than Byron had imagined or he may not have wanted to stay separated from his patron—Lukas did not proceed eastward to Missolonghi as planned but instead made his way

---

3. *BLJ*, 11:87; see also the letter to Charles Hancock, January 2, 1824, 11:90.
north to Dragomestri and rejoined Byron there. For he was once again on the "mistico" when the ship again passed the Scrofes rocks. Bad weather made shipwreck seem imminent. At one point on the voyage Byron assured Lukas "I could save both him and myself—without difficulty (though he can't swim), as the water though deep was not very rough." Though the ship did strike the rocks, it sprang only a small leak, and they got safely to their destination. But Lukas's safety on the trip had caused Byron great anxiety, and these dangers were to remain vivid in his recollection.

Byron's arrival at Missolonghi was his one triumph in the entire Greek campaign. A band played, and the assembled crowd in their colorful costumes must have looked something like an opera chorus. Splendid in his own plumed helmet and red uniform, Byron basked in a brief moment of glory as the Greeks, primed with stories of his wealth and reputation, hailed him as a messiah. But the situation soon revealed its grimmer side. Glowingly idealistic accounts of the Greek struggle in liberal journals had lured scores of young men, first from Germany and Italy, and later from France and England, who later returned in poverty and rags to their own lands to warn others of Greek perfidy and incompetence and to decry their own quixotism. But even for someone steeled like Byron to a more realistic view of the struggle, Missolonghi was a sore trial. The weather was dismally wet and the town a depressing mudhole. The Suliote warriors he hoped to lead against the Turks were an especially galling disappointment. They proved riotous and mutinous and keen only in demanding their pay. When Byron saw a good prospect of capturing the nearby fortress of Lepanto, they balked. He finally dismissed most of them in despair. His position was a lonely one. Prince Mavrocordatos, the titular head of the Greek government, also quartered in the town, was intelli-

5. To Charles Hancock, January 13, 1824, BLJ, 11:92.
gent and companionable, but Byron, to avoid identifying himself too closely with any faction, felt it necessary to keep some distance between them.

Byron's one natural ally on the scene was Colonel Stanhope, the other representative of the London Committee, from whose money-raising efforts the Greeks expected much. Stanhope, like Byron, was an aristocrat; a younger brother of the fourth Earl of Harrington, he succeeded in later years to the title. He was also a Benthamite radical. In the reformist ferment of the post-Napoleonic era, Bentham had been invited to write constitutions and laws for Spain and several new republics in Central and South America. Buoyed by these successes, he and his disciples looked to Greece, rather unrealistically, as fertile soil for the testing of their social theories, which lay great stress on enlightened laws, education, and freedom of the press. Byron, more pragmatic, wanted to concentrate on the military struggle, and, always impatient of philosophical theorizing, reacted irritably toward Stanhope's doctrinaire side. There is a story that when the colonel presented the poet with a copy of Bentham's treatise *Springs of Action*, Byron dashed it to the floor with the remark: "What does the old fool know of springs of action—my ——— has more spring to it."  

6 Byron, not foreseeing Kinsey (or knowing Bentham's notes), thought that only a man of the world could appreciate the realities of human sexuality. Another point of contention was Stanhope's energetic campaign to found newspapers in Greece. Byron feared that a press controlled by the radical exiles gathered there would alienate the European powers, whose neutrality he considered essential if the Turks were to be defeated. He suppressed some articles he felt were inflammatory. Stanhope accused him of practicing censorship in the name of freedom.

Amidst these frustrations and discord, Byron's relations with Lukas did not run smoothly. His official status in

Byron's polyglot household was that of a page. He also held a kind of military rank: Byron had provided him with a handsome Mainote outfit, gilt pistols, and a troop of soldiers to command. Among his prescribed duties was reading modern Greek, or Romaic, with Byron for half an hour every morning. Byron bought Lukas some Greek grammars for this purpose. When we recall the erotic coloring Byron's recollections gave to his Italian lessons with Nicolo Giraud, we may wonder if Byron entertained hopes that his privacy might facilitate a more intimate relation. A contemporary English writer commented on Greek manners of the time:

The modern Greeks, as living under the government of the Turks, naturally follow their usages. If, therefore, they indulge in antiphysical pleasures, it might be said that they owe it to the example of their masters; however, in a Greek grammar, printed at Vienna some years ago, there are some Golden Rules for Youth, by Phocylides, in hexameter verse, in which there is a line showing that the thing was at least spoken of familiarly to and before young persons, and seems to have been forbidden, in the same strain as we are accustomed to hear fornication forbidden, and probably with the same effect.7

Byron's Suliote warriors, who were Albanian Christians, would have looked on an older soldier's partiality for a beautiful young boy with the same sympathy as their predecessors, the Dorian Greeks. One of the members of Byron's entourage, the Dutch physician, Julius Millingen, in his Memoirs of the Affairs of Greece, has left a vivid description of Greek chieftains parading with formal pomp in Missolonghi, accompanied by their psychoutioi (or "soul-sons") and "three or more lads handsomely dressed with their loose tresses floating over the shoulders, bearers of their master's silver-cup, pipe, and tobacco-bag."8 As for Lukas, he was probably familiar enough with these traditions not

to be shocked or surprised by Byron's attentions, however incapable he was of responding emotionally.

Byron continued to make generous gifts. A visitor to his headquarters in January 1824 noticed that "his page was a young Greek, dressed as an Albanian or a Mainote, with very handsomely chased arms in his girdle." On January 18 Zambelli recorded under the heading "Lukas's expenses by order of Milord," the sum of fifty-five dollars and then eleven more dollars for a "fascia" or scarf. On the twenty-first and twenty-fifth there were further substantial outlays. But occasionally Byron felt Lukas's demands were excessive. Byron expressed his irritation in his instructions to Zambelli: "Tea is not a Greek beverage—therefore Master Lukas may drink Coffee instead—or water—or nothing.—The pay of the said Lukas will be five dollars a month paid like the others of the household. He will eat with the Sul- iots—or where he pleases." By this time the emotional strain of the one-sided affair had begun to tell. Byron had written no poetry since leaving Italy, but the accumulating tension demanded some kind of release. It found expression in the famous lines, "On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year." For many decades this poem was believed to be his last. For this reason and because it reads like a testament, it inevitably became one of the best known and most anthologized of Byron's lyrics. But only since the appearance of Marchand's biography and Doris Langley Moore's researches has its context been fully appreciated.

Among the party of philhellenes who followed Byron to Greece was Teresa's brother, Pietro Gamba. It is he who has given us the fullest information about its composition. In his book, Lord Byron's Last Journey to Greece, Gamba tells us that on January 22 Byron

11. Ibid.
came from his bedroom into the apartment where Colonel Stanhope and some other friends were assembled, and said, with a smile, "You were complaining, the other day, that I never write any poetry now,—this is my birthday, and I have just finished something, which, I think, is better than what I usually write." He then produced those noble and affecting verses on his own birthday, which were afterwards found written in his journal.  

We may assume that this dramatic announcement prompted those present to ask Byron to recite his poem and that he condescended to do so.  

The first stanza must have made his auditors uneasy:  

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved  
Since others it hath ceased to move,  
Yet though I cannot be beloved  
Still let me love.

Was this a personal confession? If it was—and Byron, who liked sensations, probably projected enough of his considerable histrionic energy into the lines to make it hard for them to regard the poem as anything but personal—who, they must have wondered, was the object of his infatuation? Obviously, he was not referring to Teresa: her unwavering devotion was well known. And there was no other woman on the scene.  

My days are in the yellow leaf  
The flowers and fruits of love are gone—  
The worm, the canker and the grief  
Are mine alone.  

The fire that on my bosom preys  
Is lone as some Volcanic Islé,  
No torch is kindled at its blaze  
A funeral pile!  

The hope, the fear, the jealous care  
The exalted portion of the pain  

And power of Love, I cannot share
But wear the chain.

Critics have objected to the strained rhetoric of these lines and to the worn-out Shakespearean metaphors. Byron himself had mocked poets who could not resist "the volcano." But such points of criticism would hardly have concerned his first hearers. The thought uppermost in their minds must have been that Byron was now declaring publicly his love for Lukas, of which they were by this time well aware. We can imagine their reaction. Here was the man on whom they relied to lead them in a difficult and dangerous situation, parading, with typical panache, "the pageant of his bleeding heart" in a way calculated to create the maximum of scandal. James Hamilton Browne tells us that on the ship that took him to Greece Byron had played a cruel joke: he had persuaded the Scottish captain that one of his Greek passengers was, as one of his shipboard companions put it, "addicted to certain horrible propensities, too common in the Levant," in order to enjoy the skipper's consternation and the passenger's puzzled discomfiture. Was Byron now presenting himself as one of these despised wretches? In the Thyrza lyrics Byron had disguised the object of his love by changing his gender. Such a ruse, under the circumstances, would hardly have taken in his Missolonghi associates. It must have been a relief to hear what followed and to realize that Byron, though he had half-lifted the mask, had not irrevocably exposed himself and meant to put this involvement behind him:

But 'tis not thus—and 't is not here
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor now

Where glory decks the hero's bier
   Or binds his brow.
The Sword—the Banner—and the Field
   Glory and Greece, around us see!
The Spartan borne upon his shield
   Was not more free!
Awake! (not Greece—She is awake!)
   Awake my spirit—think through whom
Thy Life blood tracks its parent lake
   And then strike home!

These lines, it must be admitted, are remarkably forced and artificial. Their very jerkiness suggests a man desperately calling himself to order, straightening his back, and thrusting his chin out. So great is his desperation that Byron even goes to the length of invoking his family's tradition of military service as aristocrats. However, this somewhat snobbish gesture must have reassured his listeners since it directed attention away from the theme of Greek love to the theme of Greek freedom. But Byron, to complete the poem and resolve the tensions set up by its two disparate parts, felt bound to return to the amorous theme he had introduced so alarmingly in the opening lines:

   Tread those reviving passions down
   Unworthy Manhood;—unto thee
   Indifferent should the smile or frown
   Of Beauty be.

Obviously the "reviving passions" refer to the love of boys that had obsessed him in his youth and which he now deprecates. Though Byron's audience knew there was no woman in his life, the vagueness of the language would have pleased them—at least it avoided too open a confession as to where his feelings were involved. And the reference to the "smile or frown / Of beauty," though undoubtedly a reference to Lukas (whom even so down-to-earth an observer as Byron's munitions expert, William Parry, de-
scribed as "of a most prepossessing appearance") would have struck them as susceptible to a conventional interpretation by conventional readers.

If thou regret'st thy youth, why live?
The Land of honourable Death
Is here—up to the Field! and give
Away thy Breath.

Seek out—less often sought than found,
A Soldier's Grave—for thee the best,
Then look around and choose thy ground
And take thy Rest."

Byron's "regret" for his youth might at first appear to refer to his earlier pederastic love affairs. More likely, however, Marchand is correct in assuming that what concerned Byron at the time was the effect of age on his own beauty. His increasing baldness, his tendency to fat, and his decaying teeth all depressed him. No doubt he felt that they made him markedly less attractive than he had been to the boys in the convent fourteen years earlier. These reflections must have been discouraging to a man who was convinced that the best of life was over at twenty-three and who had thought of suicide even at that age. There was a difference, however: his earlier urge to self-destruction was connected with satiety, this one with frustration. His decision to make his death a political gesture inevitably reminds us of another bisexual writer, the Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima, who also subscribed to a warrior's code and disliked the idea of old age and decrepitude. Here Byron congratulates himself that one act—self-immolation on the battlefield—will at the same time serve a cause he is committed to and provide a way out of a personal dilemma. As

15. I am indebted to Professor Jerome McGann for providing the text of this poem and the texts of "Last Words on Greece," and "Love and Death" as they will appear in the last volume of The Complete Poetical Works.
a poem, Byron's oft-reprinted lines are not successful—they are too theatrical, a kind of literary counterpart to David's painting The Oath of the Horatii. But as a personal record of a man under an almost intolerable strain who is trying desperately to pull himself together, they have an inescapable poignancy.

As if Byron's other troubles were not enough, February brought with it a variety of illnesses, some alarming. On the way back from a meeting with Greek leaders at Anatolico, Byron's party got thoroughly drenched. Pietro Gamba developed a fever and colic, and on February 5 Byron wrote to Charles Hancock, his banker at Zante, that "Luke (not the Evangelist, but a disciple of mine)" had also fallen ill. Lukas's illness caused Byron much anxiety, so much, indeed, that he gave up his bed and undertook to nurse him personally. Lukas's occupancy of Byron's bed apparently caused some talk in the town where privacy was nonexistent; several months later, Gamba was to comment nervously about this. But the most alarming development concerned Byron's own health. On February 15 he suffered a serious breakdown, the first real indication that he might not survive the rigors of Missolonghi. The seizure took the form of a kind of epileptic fit, which frightened both Byron and his medical attendants, who were inexperienced and inclined to hysteria. Byron described the attack two days later in the last journal entry he is known to have written: "It was very painful and had it lasted a minute longer must have extinguished my mortality—if I can judge by sensations. I was speechless with the features much distorted." He ascribed the seizure partly to lack of exercise (because of the bad weather) and partly to agitation induced by the tense state of military and political affairs in the town. Then Byron makes a revealing admission: "I have also been in an anxious state with regard to things which may be

only interesting to my own private feelings." This deliberately obscure comment undoubtedly refers to his tormented feelings for Lukas.

One wishes that Lukas had been more sensitive to Byron's feelings instead of causing further pain in an already very trying situation. But Lukas, though handsome and brave, was also vain and greedy. We learn more of their relation in two later poems. For more than half a century, "On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year" was supposed to have been Byron's last poetic statement. We now know that this was the first rather than the last of the poems Byron wrote about his love for Lukas. At least two other poems eventually found their way into the hands of John Cam Hobhouse. In 1887, more than half a century after Byron's death and eighteen years after Hobhouse's, another John Murray, the son of Byron's publisher, inaugurated Murray's Magazine. In order to add interest to the second number of the enterprise, Murray included some unpublished Byron materials, nothing less in fact than two new Missolonghi poems, written subsequent to "On This Day." The poems were given the place of honor on the opening pages of the February 1887 issue under the heading "Byroniana," but with no clue as to their background except for two comments by Hobhouse, the first of which identified the verses as "the last [Byron] ever wrote; from a rough copy found amongst his papers on the back of the 'Song of Suli. Copied November, 1824—John C. Hobhouse.'" For the occasion the editor supplied the somewhat arbitrary titles, "Last Words on Greece" and "Love and Death."

"Last Words on Greece" presumably reflects Byron's mood in February after Lukas fell ill. The contrast with "On This Day" is striking. Where the earlier poem was public and rhetorical, "Last Words" is intimate and down-

beat. "On This Day" represented Byron's commitment to Greece as triumphing over his love. On this point, "Last Words" negates its predecessor; here, with a vengeance, is "Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée." Both poems echo Shakespeare. "On This Day" draws its imagery from Macbeth and Twelfth Night; "Last Words" invites a comparison with the sonnets. Indeed, the brief ten-line poem actually suggests, through its rhyme and movement, a kind of truncated sonnet, the last two lines, though not rhymed, have the summing-up effect of a Shakespearean couplet:

What are to me those honours or renown
   Past or to come, a new-born people's cry[?]  
Albeit for such I could despise a crown
   Of aught save Laurel, or for such could die;
I am the fool of passion—and a frown
   Of thine to me is as an Adder's eye
To the poor bird whose pinion fluttering down
   Wafts unto death the breast it bore so high—
Such is this maddening fascination grown;
   So strong thy Magic—or so weak am I.19

It is perhaps worth noting that Byron discussed Shakespeare with the young American historian George Finlay, who visited him at Missolonghi about a week after he had recovered from his fit. In a typically defensive way, Byron had justified his own writings by pointing to the moral disrepute of Shakespeare's most personal poems: "People talk of the tendency of my writings, and yet read the sonnets to Master Hughes."20 The reference to "William Hughes," on whose name Shakespeare was purportedly punning in his controversial "master—mistress" sonnet, may seem surprising. Most readers associate this theory that Shake-

19. See n. 15. Byron's reference to rejecting a crown was not mere rhetoric. If he had lived, he might well have been offered the throne of Greece.
Shakespeare addressed his sonnets to a young man of this name with Oscar Wilde's "Portrait of Mr. W. H.," but the idea can be traced back to Thomas Tyrwhitt, to whom Edmond Malone ascribed it in his edition of 1780. But if Shakespeare's sonnets express (in the main) Shakespeare's delight in a young man's beauty and friendship, Byron's second Lukas poem is, by contrast, a poem of anguish. The folklore belief that snakes could hypnotize birds was a favorite conceit of the Romantics. Shelley used it and so did Tennyson, but neither to express the force of love: Byron's image is by far the most powerful. Byron's poem also makes us think today of the experience of another writer of European reputation, Thomas Mann, who also fell under the spell of a boy of classical beauty by the shores of the Adriatic and described his humiliation in *Death in Venice*. Byron and Aschenbach (Mann's alter ego) are equally abject in their surrender to an overpowering erotic obsession, which their age and fame make ridiculous.

It is notable that both "On This Day" and "Last Words" speak of Lukas's "frowns." Lukas gave clear indications of the discomfort he felt at any manifestations of Byron's love. Nevertheless, he continued to be dependent on him and to benefit from his largesse. On March 21, Zambelli recorded another expenditure of forty-five dollars for Lukas and a bill for 1,000 drachmas for gold-laced jackets, rich saddlecloths, and gift for his pistols. Byron's infatuation seems to have been fired rather than extinguished by the boy's disdain.

Sometime late in February or during the month of March—we cannot be sure of the exact date—Byron wrote the last of his poems on this unhappy love affair, the last, indeed, of any he is known to have composed. "Love and Death" differs strikingly from the earlier verses inspired by

---

Lukas. The poetic language and the elaborate conceits have now vanished; Byron uses the simplest and barest confessional style to convey his feelings so that the stanzas read almost like a versified journal. They enumerate five different episodes in the life of Byron and Lukas after leaving Cephalonia, all well documented: the escape from the Turks during the voyage to Missolonghi, the near-shipwreck at Scrobes, Lukas’s illness, an earthquake that struck on February 21, and Byron’s fit. Byron observes chronological order in recounting these events, except for reversing the last two:

I watched thee when the foe was at our side,
    Ready to strike at him,—or thee and me
Were safety hopeless—rather than divide
        Aught with one loved, save love and liberty.

I watched thee in the breakers—when the rock
    Received our prow, and all was storm and fear,
And bade thee cling to me through every shock—
        This arm would be thy bark—or breast thy bier.

I watched thee when the fever glazed thine eyes,
    Yielding my couch—and stretched me on the ground
When overworn with watching—ne’er to rise
    From thence, if thou an early grave hadst found.

The Earthquake came and rocked the quivering wall,
    And men and Nature reeled as if with wine—
Whom did I seek around the tottering Hall—?
        For thee—whose safety first provide for—? thine.

And when convulsive throes denied my breath
The faintest utterance to my fading thought—
To thee—to thee—even in the gasp of death
    My Spirit turned—Ah! oftener than it ought.

Thus much and more—and yet thou lov’st me not,
    And never wilt—Love dwells not in our will,
Nor can I blame thee—though it be my lot
    To strongly—wrongly—vainly—love thee still.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} See n. 15.
Perhaps Byron wrote so simply in a final desperate attempt to reach Lukas's heart. It would have been relatively easy to translate these lines into Romaine or Italian.

They are both proud and despairing. We do not know for certain if Byron had anticipated a revival of his earlier pederastic feelings on his return to Greece: he may have. Or he may have been surprised and bewildered by their recurrence and their intensity, in a sense he had come full circle. His letter to Elizabeth Pigot had set his feelings for John Edleston in the tradition of classical Greek love, the love of Orestes for Pylades, and Nisus for Euryalus. His "Greek epistles," in contrast, have a Petronian playfulness. "On This Day" tries to resume a heroic pose by rejecting love for war. But in "Love and Death" Byron returns to the heroic theme and looks at death not as an escape from love but as an affirmation of it. We are back to the heroic Greek ideal as Phaedrus depicts it in the Symposium. An even closer analogy, perhaps, is a speech of Callicratidas in Lucian's Amores:

A lover might well pray that his cherished one should journey to old age without any sorrow through a life free from stumbling or swerving, without having experienced at all any malicious spite of Fortune. But, if in accordance with the law governing the human body, illness should lay its hand on him, I shall all with him when he is weak, and, when he puts out to sea through stormy waves, I shall sail with him. And, should a violent tyrant put him in chains, I shall put the same fetters around myself. . . . Should I see bandits or foemen rushing upon him, I would arm myself even beyond my strength, and if he dies, I shall not bear to live. I shall give final instructions to those I love next best after him to pile up a common tomb for both of us, to unite my bones with his and not to keep even our dumb ashes apart from each other. 23

23. Lucian, trans. M. D. McLeod, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 221. It is now thought, on the basis of internal evidence, that this dialogue, though Lucanic in style, was in fact written about a hundred years after Lucian's death, i.e., about 300 A.D.
In "Love and Death" Byron complains that he has loved Lukas with this sort of idealism but evoked no response. His abjectness recalls Proust's stricken lovers, the list of benefits unacknowledged parallels Wilde's reproaches in De Profundis. Only the brave, if bleak, facing of the truth in the last lines keeps the poem from lapsing into petulance and adds a final touch of dignity to Byron's despair.

No poem of Byron's is more specifically autobiographical or more painful in its revelations than "Love and Death." With our knowledge of how each detail fits Byron's relation with Lukas during the Missolonghi period, we may wonder how the truth went so long unrecognized. Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century biographers—even Harold Nicolson, who devoted his whole book to this period of Byron's life—failed to connect these lines with Lukas. In part, this was due to the deliberately misleading way in which they were introduced to the public. When the poem first appeared in 1887, a comment by Hobhouse was added, informing the reader that "a note attached to the verses by Lord Byron states they were addressed to no one in particular, and were a mere poetical Scherzo."24 Thus Byron's readers were invited to interpret some of his most personal and deeply felt verses as a mere literary exercise. Did Byron really write such a note? The effort he took to mislead Dallas about the stanzas on Edlestone in Childe Harold suggests that he might have. Yet one wonders why Hobhouse chose to make a copy of the poems rather than preserve the originals. It is possible that Hobhouse himself concocted the sentence to obfuscate evidence that in the eyes of his age would have appeared incriminating.

The interesting question remains as to whether there were once other Lukas poems. Leicester Stanhope was ordered back to England in May 1824. In July he talked at length with Hobhouse and recorded the conversation in

24 Murray's Magazine 1 (February 1887): 145.
the book he published later the same year on Greece and Byron:

Mr. John Cam Hobhouse was [Byron's] long- tried, his esteemed, and valued literary and personal friend. . . . Mr. Hobhouse has given many proofs of this, and among others, I saw him, from motives of high honour, destroy a beautiful poem of Lord Byron's, and, perhaps, the last he ever composed. The same reason that induced Mr. H. to tear this fine manuscript will, of course, prevent him or me from ever divulging its contents. 25

Hobhouse must have gritted his teeth on reading these self-congratulatory lines, which appeared to compliment him while inviting just the kind of speculation he was trying to discourage. Apparently Stanhope and Hobhouse had engaged in some discussion of Byron's pederastic inclinations, for Hobhouse noted in his journal on July 8, 1824: "Stanhope told me one or two truths too true I am sure about Byron's last career in Greece." 26 This exchange of confidences presumably led to Hobhouse's dramatic gesture of tearing up a manuscript.

But what was the poem he destroyed? Doris Langley Moore makes the natural assumption that it was "Love and Death," but there is some mystery here. If Hobhouse did, in fact, tear up the manuscript of the poem before Stanhope's eyes, he was engaging in a disingenuous charade since we know from his own account that he had made a copy of it. But assuming the discussion took place in July as Hobhouse's journal indicates, the poem must have been another one if Hobhouse's statement that he copied the poems in November is correct. So unless there was a subsequent discussion—an unlikely event since Stanhope, rankled by his quarrels with Byron, took a public line critical of him after his return—we are faced with the possibl-

25. Stanhope, Greece in 1823 and 1824, p. 534.
ity that Byron wrote more poems about or to Lukas than have survived.

Every aspect of Byron's last three months contributed to making his life miserable. He had returned to Greece with few illusions. But he was bitterly disappointed at the refusal of the Suliotes to fight and at his inability to unify the contending Greek factions. Selfishness and calculation predominated over patriotism among the chieftains. Too often the Greeks rivaled the Turks in cruelty and disregard for human decencies and were as prone to kill and pillage as their enemies. Byron's one significant achievement at Missolonghi was to rescue some Turkish prisoners from massacre and to send them home with a plea that the Turkish commander might consider this a precedent. He befriended a ten-year-old Turkish girl named Hatagée and dressed her prettily and extravagantly: this was his one indulgence apart from his spoiling of Lukas. Finally, the Suliote soldiers became so rapacious and such a threat to civic order at Missolonghi that Byron paid them off and sent them away at the cost of several thousand dollars of his own money. Only this kind of largesse and the hope for a substantial loan from the London Committee he represented kept the Greeks and foreign philhellenes deferential.

Day by day Byron's health worsened. Fever, dizziness, weakness, and pain oppressed him. The nervous strain imposed by recurring political crises in the town kept him from recovering adequately from his first breakdown. After April 10 he was continuously ill, barely able to stir or take exercise. His doctors diagnosed rheumatic fever from chills and exposure, but modern medical opinion takes the view that he was suffering from a uremic disorder. Incompetent to deal with the situation, his medical attendants made matters worse by extravagant blood-letting, the medical fad of the age, despite Byron's ever-weakening protests. His last days were made all the more pitiful by the confusion in his disorganized household. His thoughts naturally
turned to his will and to a realization that his more humble dependents were not provided for in that document. His valet, William Fletcher, later told Hobhouse that Byron had "expressed an anxiety to do something for his favorite chasseur, Tita, and his Greek boy Luca, but Fletcher told him to speak of more important concerns." On April 24, 1824, exhausted from fever and repeated bleedings, Byron died.

At least one commemorative statue to Byron in Greece shows him expiring in the arms of his Greek page. Though such a fantasy might have appealed to Byron's poetic sense, Lukas was not present at his death. He had sent him away to spare him the sight of the bloody bandages and any possible death agony. Realizing his death was near, Byron had, however, tried to make some immediate provision for him by giving him the receipt for the several thousand dollars he had loaned the Missolonghi authorities to pay off the Suliotes. When the news of Byron's death was made public, free Greece declared a period of national mourning, and western Europe was shocked and respectful. Lukas, too, must have grieved, if only for the loss of a generous benefactor.

However, this was not quite the end of Lukas's story. As we have seen, Hobhouse and Stanhope were to exchange confidences on the subject in London that July. As a result Hobhouse wrote to Pietro Gamba about Lukas in his capacity as Byron's executor responsible for moneys and as a friend anxious to refute scandal. Gamba replied on August 11 in a lengthy letter. This remarkable document has been deciphered and translated by Doris Langley Moore. In it Gamba confirms that Byron had indeed given the boy the receipt for the Missolonghi debt and reveals a pathetic story before unknown:

Moreover it was within my knowledge and that of the steward of the house and Fletcher that more than thirty Spanish dou-

27. **BE, 3:1227.**
blooms and 200 francsconi in silver ought to have been found in possession of Mylord.

After the death of B there was a search for this sum, about 700 [77 dollars]—but in vain. It was suspected that Lukas had it. I questioned him skillfully and he insisted that Lord Byron had given him some doubloons to assist his family. We did not wish to press the matter, because to recover the money appeared hopeless, and after all it might have been a cause of gossip damaging to the reputation of our friend. Every friend of Byron must desire that this mischievous topic should be buried if possible.

Another matter connected with Lukas also agitated Gamba. This was the rumor that Byron and the boy had shared the same bed. To counteract it, Gamba felt it incumbent to analyze their relation in some detail:

During the voyage and the residence at Missolonghi he watched with [such] particular care over this youth that one might call it a weakness. He gave him splendid clothes, arms, and money; and passed some half-hour every day with him reading Modern Greek. He took him with us in the cavalcade, and in the end gave him the command of 30 irregular soldiers of his own brigade. On one occasion when this boy had a somewhat dangerous illness, Mylord was pleased to give up his own bed and slept in the common room with us on a Turkish divan for 3 or 4 days. This should not appear so strange, however, when you remember that the illness required a bed, and that no other was to be found in the house—and that on another occasion, when I was ill he made me the same offer, and that in the passage from Cephalonia to Missolonghi, Fletcher having a severe chill, Mylord gave him the only mattress on board and was pleased to sleep, himself, on deck.

Whatever suggestion was made to you that Mylord could have slept in the same bed is absolutely false. The donation of 3,000 dollars was given in consideration of his poor family.

If the conduct of Mylord towards that youth might seem to imply weakness, these facts and these few observations will suffice to prove to you that this weakness rose only from a noble source and a generous aim—his pity for the innocent unfortunate. 28

There is no doubt that Byron was susceptible to pity for unfortunate people of all sorts, conditions, and ages. But Gamba’s explanation for Byron’s taking Lukas with him to Missolonghi is curious. Since Lukas was of “well-bred manner and person,” Pietro told Hobhouse, Byron did not want “to degrade him to the rank of a servant”; we may recall, however, that Byron had no compunction about Lukas’s sisters entering service. “Many a time he had said to me that, going to Greece, he would need many young people to serve as pages. We were then on the eve of our departure for Missolonghi, and thus he took Lukas in the quality of page.” There may be some naïveté in Gamba’s argument here. He seems to be saying that Byron should not be suspected of any erotic interest in Lukas because he had fancied himself as surrounded by “many” young pages in Greece. This is the one suggestion on record that Byron may have had a conscious, or perhaps unconscious, desire to repeat the experiences of his first Greek journey. Byron had told Trelawny, apropos of this visit: “I was happier in Greece than I have ever been before—or since.” 29 At least at first, the freer air of Greece seems once again to have exhilarated him. There was some irony here, for Greece under Turkey was, in sexual matters, freer than liberalized Greece was to be. After 1829, Turkish tolerance faded out, and the homophobic strain in the Greek Orthodox church, traceable to Chrysostom and Justinian, once again asserted itself in the form of harsh laws. However desirable the fall of the Turkish empire was from the point of view of the peoples enslaved by it, in this one particular it meant the substitution of prejudice and oppression for relative freedom.

It appears that Lukas did not long outlive Byron, but our information on this point is sketchy. In 1832 his young sisters appealed for help to Byron’s daughter, Ada. A letter

addressed to her in Greek speaks of Byron's philhellenism and of his charity to "one of our brothers named Lukas, who was very much loved by the unforgettable Lord Byron, but who died in the midst of the war and in the midst of the happiness which Byron had procured for him." 30 Since the Greek war of independence dragged on for another five years after Byron's death, this would place Lukas's death sometime before 1829. An extract from a journal by Trelawny, published in the *London Literary Gazette* for February 12, 1831, throws some further light on the matter. In the course of his career as an adventurer in Greece, Trelawny had turned violently against Prince Mavrocordatos; the journal accuses the prince (probably unjustly) of appropriating the money Byron had assigned to Lukas from the Missolonghi debt. Trelawny makes the charge that Lukas's "family was left in utter destitution at Byron's death" and that "the young man died six months after, in want of the necessaries of life." 31 Trelawny's contention that Lukas died destitute is contradicted by the sister's declaration that he died "in the midst of the happiness which Byron had procured for him" and may have been made, on the basis of little or no knowledge, to further dramatize the alleged iniquity of Mavrocordatos. His statement that Lukas survived Byron by only a few months is, however, quite compatible with what his sisters say and may well be the truth.

31. P. 97.
EPILOGUE

The Truth Appears

News traveled slowly in a Europe still without railways or telegraphs. Though he must have been the first person in London to be informed, John Cam Hobhouse did not hear of Byron’s death until May 14. Then, when the shock of the news passed, his overwhelming concern was with Byron’s manuscript memoirs. Byron had begun his autobiography in Venice in 1818 and added to it substantially in 1820 and 1821, entrusting the pages to Thomas Moore to publish after his death. With Byron’s permission, Moore had later sold the manuscripts to John Murray. But Hobhouse wanted them destroyed and was now able to bring Augusta and (more surprisingly) Murray himself around to his point of view. Three days later, over Moore’s protests, the pages were consigned to the flames in Murray’s office in Albemarle Street.

Did the memoirs make any revelations about Byron’s bisexuality? Were fears on this score behind Hobhouse’s obsessive determination to obliterate Byron’s record of his life? Doris Langley Moore has given a full and vivid account of the events preceding the burning and has probed the motives of the participants. In effect, Hobhouse was able to create a mood of hysteria in which “gentlemanly” considerations for the dead man’s fame were invoked to override Thomas Moore’s scruples. Doris Langley Moore has argued that no explosive secrets were revealed in the memoirs. Though Hobhouse and Murray had not read them, we know that perhaps a score of people had since they circulated widely. William Gifford, who read the manuscript at Murray’s request, had pronounced it “fit