vast region of the East in which Judaea formed a part, but in
the metropolis of the empire and on and about the throne, evi-
dence of this sort thus standing not only [not] opposed but
corroborated seems to have that claim to attention which the
reader is now in a condition to reject or to confirm, to bestow
or withhold, as to him seems reasonable. 64

A Christian to whom homosexuality is abhorrent will of
course reject Bentham’s reading of the Gospels out of hand
and with vehemence. Certainly the evidence he builds on
is fragile and inconclusive, surprisingly so when we re-
member that Bentham was his age’s leading authority on
legal evidence. But what people believe, especially in mat-
ters of religion and morals, is rarely determined by evi-
dence. Personal or cultural bias is much more important. A
Greek ignorant of Paul or Leviticus who read the Gospel of
St. John in the first or second century might very well have
interpreted it as a homosexual romance, just as, with little
more evidence, he interpreted the story of Achilles and
Patroclus in the Iliad as a homosexual love affair. Bentham’s
interpretation is neither probable nor impossible. Most re-
sponses to Bentham’s theory, however, will be less a re-
sponse to the evidence than an indication of one’s feelings
about homosexuality or, for that matter, about ascribing
sexual feelings of any sort to Christ.

64. November 29, 1817, box 161b, folio 497.
Shelley—Clogher—Castlereagh

The unpublished portion of Not Paul but Jesus was only one manifestation of dissent from traditional sex ethics by an English writer in the last days of the Regency. Bentham broke off his notes on the New Testament in February 1818. This was the year Shelley published Laon and Cythna, a poem, which, by making its revolutionary hero and heroine not just lovers but also brother and sister, challenged the taboo against incest. In 1819, the annus mirabilis of the younger romantics, Keats attacked sexual asceticism in "The Eve of St. Agnes," and Byron mocked moral hypocrisy in the first canto of Don Juan. Their elders, Wordsworth and Coleridge, now turned conservative, had, of course, never expressed radical views on sexual matters. But the contrast was not simply between an older and a younger generation. The seventy-one-year-old Bentham and the sixty-two-year-old Blake were, after all, the seniors of the Lake poets.¹

Of the poets, Shelley was unique in challenging accepted sex mores in his prose as well as in his verse. Both his Godwinism and his deep immersion in Greek literature

¹ Benjamin Robert Haydon, a somewhat hostile witness, commenting on Medwin’s Conversations of Lord Byron (1834), expressed the opinion in his journal that “Byron, Shelley, Hunt were but the fallen Pupils of Godwin—they felt they had incurred the contempt of the world by their attempt to shake the established principles of sexual intercourse.” They "would and might have produced a revolution had they not shocked the Country by their opinions on sexual intercourse—This forever blasted up the virtue of the Country" (Duncan Gray and Violet W. Walker, “Benjamin Robert Haydon on Byron and Others,” Keats—Shelley Memorial Bulletin 7 [1958]: 23–24).
gave him a point of view remote from his countrymen. It was his Platonic studies, in particular, that led him to touch upon the taboo subject of homosexuality. In July 1818, Shelley, then living at the Bagni di Lucca near Pisa, devoted some “ten mornings” to translating the Symposium. He was drawn to Plato for several reasons. The philosopher’s poetic style attracted him; so did his exalted doctrine of love. But what inspired Shelley to translate the dialogue was its unique significance as a social document throwing light on Greek homosexuality. On July 10, he wrote to John and Maria Gisborne: “I am employed just now... in translating into my fainting & inefficient periods the divine eloquence of Plato’s Symposium—only as an exercise or perhaps to give Mary some idea of the manners & feelings of the Athenians—so different on many subjects from that of any other community that ever existed.”

We may recall how thoroughly the Floyer Sydenham translation of 1761–1767 and the subsequent Thomas Taylor translation of 1804 had been bowdlerized. Their distortions and omissions help explain the odd fact that Bentham, though keenly interested in the Greeks, cites Xenophon, Thucydides, and Plutarch (among others) but makes no reference whatever to the Symposium, the Phaedrus, or any other dialogue by Plato. Even more surprising is the general neglect Plato suffered in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England. Matthew Arnold was later to single out Bentham’s slighting remarks on Plato in the Deontology (1834) as a sign of Bentham’s limitations as a thinker, but in fact this attitude was characteristic of his age. Scholars writing on the history of Greek studies have noted the almost total disappearance of Plato from the British educational curriculum in this period and have generally ascribed his eclipse to the new philosophical predominance of Locke. His translators fared poorly: Sydenham

died in poverty, and Taylor's work was little respected or supported largely because of its scholarly deficiencies.

But Plato's candor with respect to Athenian manners seems also to have influenced his academic banishment. Thomas Love Peacock, in his satirical novel Crotchet Castle (1831), has Dr. Folliott complain of the ignorance of Plato in England in these terms:

I am aware, sir, that Plato, in his Symposium, discourseth very eloquently touching the Uranian and Pandemian Venus: but you must remember that in our Universities, Plato is held to be little better than a misleader of youth; and they have shown their contempt for him, not only by never reading him . . . but even by never printing a complete edition of him."

Plato had been, of course, a favorite in the Renaissance and had inspired the Cambridge Platonists in the seventeenth century. Given his moral conservatism and his puritanical antipathy to sexuality, to learn that Plato was regarded as a bad influence on youth appears paradoxical. Plato did, however, condone homosexual love if it was given no physical expression. Apparently even this qualified approval exceeded the limits of Georgian tolerance.

But there can be no doubt about the completeness of the obscurity into which he had passed. Three years later, in 1834, the young John Stuart Mill protested in an article in the Monthly Repository that despite Plato's "boundless reputation," "of all the great writers of antiquity, there is scarcely one who, in this country at least, is so little understood or so little read":

Our two great "seats of learning," of which no real lover of learning can ever speak but in terms of indignant disgust, bestow attention upon the various branches of classical acquirement in exactly the reverse order to that which would be observed by persons who valued the ancient authors for what is

valuable in them: namely, upon the mere niceties of the language first; next, upon a few of the poets; next, (but at a great distance,) some of the historians; next, (but at a still greater interval,) the orators; last of all, and just above nothing, the philosophers. An English bookseller, by the aid of a German scholar, recently produced an excellent edition of Plato; the want of sale for which, by the way, is said to have been one of the causes of his insolvency. But, with the exception of the two dialogues edited by Dr. Routh, we are aware of nothing to facilitate the study of the most gifted of Greek writers, which has ever emanated from either of the impostor-universities of England; and of the young men who have obtained university honours during the last ten years, we are much misinformed if there be six who had even looked into his writings. . . .

There are, probably, in this kingdom, not so many as a hundred persons who ever have read Plato, and not so many as twenty who ever do. 4

Mill tried to compensate in some measure by providing partial translations of the Protagoras and the Phaedrus. Nevertheless, it is notable how firmly the taboo operated with respect to Plato's forbidden side. Though the theme of homosexuality is woven into the very warp and woof of the Phaedrus, Mill managed to excerpt the dialogue in such a way as to leave no hint of its presence. Nor did his introductory discussion make any reference to what had been left out.

It was exactly this kind of obfuscation that Shelley aimed at countering in his translation of 1818. To this end he not only produced a version that was accurate, unbowdlerized, and complete, but he also embarked on a related project. On July 25, he informed Godwin:

The Symposium of Plato, seems to me, one of the most valuable pieces of all antiquity whether we consider the intrinsic

4. "Notes on Some of the More Popular Dialogues of Plato," in Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, ed. J. M. Robson, vol. 11 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 59–60. Oddly enough, despite his utilitarian bias, James Mill was an enthusiastic student of Plato. John Stuart Mill records in his autobiography that his father had him read six dialogues of Plato in Greek before he was eight. The Mills admired Plato's logical method but not his political or moral principles.
merit of the composition or the light it throws on the inmost state of manners & opinions among the antient Greeks. I have occupied myself in translating this, & it has excited me to attempt an essay upon the cause of some differences in sentiment between the antients & moderns with respect to the subject of the dialogue.3

The essay he refers to became the second essay in English on the subject of homosexuality presently known to us (after Bentham’s unpublished effort of 1889)—Shelley’s “Discourse on the Manners of the Antient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love.” Shelley begins by indicting contemporary scholarship for its evasions. He is determined finally to lift the veil:

The Greeks of the Periclean age were widely different from us. It is to be lamented that no modern writer has hitherto dared to show them precisely as they were. . . . There is no book which [does this]; they seem all written for children, with the caution that no practice or sentiment, highly inconsistent with our present manners, should be mentioned, lest those manners should receive [sic] outrage and violation. But there are many to whom the Greek language is inaccessible, who ought not to be excluded by this prudery to possess an exact and comprehensive conception of the history of man: for there is no knowledge concerning what man has been and may be, from partaking of which a person can depart, without becoming in some degree more philosophical, tolerant, and just.4

Unfortunately, Shelley’s good intentions were somewhat marred in the performance. When we set his essay beside Bentham’s, it appears distinctly marked by English anti-homosexual bias. Nevertheless, the essay is striking as a conscientious effort to provide a candid, critical, and philosophical discussion of Greek pederasty. Along with John Addington Symonds’s A Problem in Greek Ethics, first privately printed in a limited edition of ten copies in 1883, it

remains a pioneering work in a field not fully and freely explored by an English scholar until Kenneth Dover's authoritative study of 1980.

Its chief limitation is what we may call its "neo-Tyrianism." This interpretation of Greek love, which denied or minimized its physical side, had found eloquent expression in the writings of Archbishop Potter in the seventeenth century. We have seen how his celebrated Antiquities of Greece (1697–1699) had included, in its account of the customs of the Greeks, a chapter "On Their Love of Boys," which was glowingly enthusiastic about "this excellent passion." Potter is essentially following the line of Maximus of Tyre, the second-century philosopher who interpreted the loves of Socrates and Sappho as ideally chaste. Potter extends Maximus's views to all Greek love relations with bland assurance, as if the matter were hardly even debatable.7

In the eighteenth century Voltaire also followed this "Tyrian" tradition by interpreting the Greek eros as friendship, not love. In his essay "Socratic Love" he vehemently opposed those who found a warrant for homosexuality in classical literature:

I cannot bear to hear people say that the Greeks authorized this license ... this word love has deluded us. Those who were called the lovers of a young man were precisely those who are the minions of our princes today, those who were the children of honor, young men assisting in the education of a distinguished child, sharing the same studies, the same military labors: a martial and saintly institution which was wrongly turned into nocturnal feasts and orgies.8

But no one who has read the Symposium carefully, not to mention the dialogues of Plutarch and Lucian, among a multitude of other documents, can maintain this view of

Greek popular tradition. Bentham was keenly aware of the discomfort the historical facts caused his contemporaries: "Another spectacle amusing enough is to observe the distress men are under to keep the peace between 2 favourite prejudices that are apt cruelly to jar: the one in disfavour of this vice, the other in favour of antiquity, especially antient Greece, which itself when close pressed [they] cannot deny to have been so overrun with it as to [have] look[ed] upon it without eyes of blame." In his essay of 1785 he challenged Voltaire sharply:

The principle by which the union among the members of [the Theban Band] was commonly supposed to be cemented is well known... Many moderns, and among others Mr. Voltaire, dispute the fact, but that intelligent philosopher sufficiently intimates the ground of his incredulity—if he does not believe it, it is because he likes not to believe it. What the antients called love in such a case was Platonic, that is, was not love but friendship. But the Greeks knew the difference between love and friendship as well as we—they had distinct terms to signify them by: it seems reasonable therefore to suppose that when they say love they mean love, and that when they say friendship only they mean friendship only. 9

With the emergence of Georgian homophobia, such distinctions were discarded by English historians who tended to assume (what they saw as) the worst. Indeed, the standard histories of Greece by John Gillies (1786), William Mitford (1784–1818), and George Grote (1846–1856) avoid discussion completely, limiting themselves to terser asides, as when Mitford calls the love of Aristogiton and Harmodius "utterly abhorrent" to "our manners." 10 What Shelley did was to revive a modified form of Tyrianism while look-

ing critically at Greek love from a sophisticated historical-psychological perspective.

Shelley's opening to his "Discourse" parallels the ardent philhellenism of his Defence of Poetry in its rhapsodic praise of the literature, philosophy, painting, and sculpture of the Greeks. We need to know all we can, he argues, about the "most perfect specimens of humanity of whom we have authentic record." It was a sign of the height civilization had reached in Greece that they felt the need for personal relations characterized by what we would now call romantic love:

Man is in his wildest state a social being: a certain degree of civilization and refinement ever produces the want of sympathies still more intimate and complete; and the gratification of the senses is no longer all that is sought in sexual connexion. It soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment, which we call Love, which is rather the universal thirst for a communion not merely of the senses, but of our whole nature, intellectual, imaginative and sensitive; and which, when individualised, becomes an imperative necessity, only to be satisfied by the complete or partial, actual or supposed, fulfillment of its claims.

Unfortunately, Greek women were uneducated and incapable of intellectual sympathies and, if the representations of Greek art are to be trusted, far less beautiful than Greek men. These latter, Shelley thinks, must have corresponded in external form to the models which they have left as specimens of what they were. The firm yet flowing proportions of their forms, the winning unreserve and facility of their manners, the eloquence of their speech, in a language which is itself music and persuasion; their gestures animated at once with the delicacy and the boldness which the perpetual habit of persuading and governing themselves and others; and the poetry of their religious rites, inspired into their

13. Ibid., p. 408.
whole being, rendered the youth of Greece a race of beings something widely different from that of modern Europe."

As a result, it is not surprising that "beautiful persons of the male sex became the object of that sort of feelings, which are only cultivated at present as towards females." 15

Thus, two considerations made Shelley sympathetic to the idea of love between men in Greek times—the high estimate he put on love per se and his sense of the unique beauty and charm of the young Greek male. This latter sensitivity comes out not only in the "Discourse" but also, perhaps even to a greater degree, in his extensive paragraphs on classical sculpture. Nathaniel Brown, in an acute and scholarly study of Shelley's sexual psychology, notes how fully Shelley responded to "the aesthetic ideal of Greek pederasty." 16 Shelley's extensive manuscript descriptions of classical statues neglect the Venuses and dwell ecstatically on the Apollos, Ganymedes, and Bacchuses—"those sweet and gentle figures of adolescent youth in which the Greeks delighted." 17 Brown summarizes:

Boy-beauty was the principal object of attraction. Most striking in its revelation of this attraction is Shelley's impassioned description of a youthful Apollo that he examined in Rome, a figure whose androgynous grace particularly insinuated itself into his imagination. Recalling another statue he had seen earlier, he observes that it had been "difficult to conceive anything more delicately beautiful than the Ganymede"—another famous boy-beauty, who had inspired a violent pederastic passion in no less a luminary than the father of the gods. But the Apollo surpassed it, possessing "a womanish vivacity of winning yet passive happiness and yet a boyish inexperience

15. Ibid., p. 410.
17. The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, vol. 9 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), 328. In his responses to the beauty of Greek males and Greek sculpture Shelley is strikingly close to Winckelmann whom he read, studied, and imitated in his own notes.
exceedingly delightful” (VI. 327). This figure was the poet’s “favourite,” according to Mary, one that he admired far more than the “quantity of female figures in the attitude of the Venus di Medici” abounding in Rome. He describes the Apollo as “probably the most consummate personification of loneliness . . . with regard to its entire form that remains to us of Greek Antiquity” (VI. 330).18

What are we to make of this? Like Winckelmann, Shelley admired especially the androgynous creations of Hellenistic sculpture and was particularly fascinated by the hermaphrodites. (He himself had characteristics of face and voice which struck observers as markedly feminine.) Were these feelings homoerotic? The question may be unanswerable. We simply do not know exactly where the line is to be drawn between the aesthetic and the erotic. Beauty is notoriously enticing. Can aesthetic appreciation of it exist separate from sexual feeling? Kant, who made the aesthetic exactly that which we do appreciate without desire, thought that it could. On the other hand, Thomas Mann, in Death in Venice, dramatizes the almost imperceptible stages by which the one can pass over into the other. Things are further complicated in Shelley’s case since some of this sculpture obviously evoked feelings connected with the memories of romantic schoolboy friendships of the sort he celebrated elsewhere in his notebooks.19

Shelley’s appreciation of young male beauty and of love between males suggests that he might have been attracted

18. Sexuality and Feminism in Shelley, p. 21. Brown’s references are to the Complete Works; see n. 17 above.

19. See, e.g., his detailed description of the figures of two males, identified as Bacchus and his youthful lover, Amphilus, whom he compares to an older and younger boy at school. He dwells on the “flowing fulness and roundness” of Bacchus’s “breast and belly, whose lines fading into each other, are continued with a gentle motion as it were to the utmost extremity of his limbs. Like some fine strain of harmony which flows round the soul and enfolds it, and leaves it in the soft astonishment of a satisfaction, like the pleasure of love with one whom we most love, which having taken away desire, leaves pleasure, sweet pleasure” (Complete Works, 5: 319–20).
by Shakespeare's sonnets, and this was indeed the case. Speaking of English homophobia at the end of the "Dis-
course," he makes this suggestion: "It may blunt the harsh-
ness of censure [of the Greeks] also to reflect that in the
golden age of our own literature a certain sentimental at-
tachment towards persons of the same sex was not uncom-
mon. Shakespeare has devoted the impassioned and pro-
found poetry of his sonnets to commemorate an attachment
of this kind, which we cannot question was wholly di-
vested of any unworthy alloy." 20

But if Shelley exalted the romance of same-sex love, he
still shared many of the prejudices of Regency England
with respect to physical relations. At this point, regreth-
ably, the lack of any contemporary scientific vocabulary for
discussing the details of sexual behavior makes his essay
obscure; as he puts it: "The laws of modern composition
scarcely permit a modest writer to investigate the subject
with philosophical accuracy." 21 He is persuaded that Greek
men must have found sexual release in some mode other
than "the ridiculous and disgusting conceptions which the
vulgar have formed on the subject." 22 Presumably, what
Shelley means is that his beloved and admired Greeks could
not have penetrated each other anally. Shelley describes

20. P. 413. This preoccupation with Shakespeare and Greek love left
its mark on Shelley's poetry. The unpublished "Fragments Connected
with Epipsychidion" deliberately tease readers by leaving the sex of the
person to whom the love poem is addressed ambiguous. Perhaps, Shelley
playfully suggests, they will think the "friend or mistress" is a hermaphro-
drite of the sort fashioned by classical sculptors: "that sweet marble mon-
ster of both sexes, / Which looks so sweet and gentle that it vexes / The
very soul that the soul is gone / Which lifted from her limbs the veil of
stone" (Complete Works, vol. 2:378). Shelley invokes Shakespeare's sonnets
and the speech of Socrates in the Symposium as precedents. Apparently,
however, he regarded this approach as too provocative since he did not
publish the lines. His intention seems to have been to resolve the "riddle"
in the fashion of Lara; in a canceled headnote he indicates that this "ef-
feminate looking youth" will turn out to be a woman when she dies (ibid.,
p. 379).
22. Ibid.
this undefined and unacceptable act as "detestable," "operose," and "diabolical." (The Oxford English Dictionary defines operose as "laborious" or "difficult.") The licentious Romans may have indulged in such enormities, but not the Greeks, who would not have subjected their lovers to such "pain and horror." Rather, Shelley imagines them as finding an outlet for their passions in orgasms that were the "almost involuntary consequences of a state of abandonment in the society of a person of surpassing attractions," a theory that seems at least strained, if not bizarre. In other writings Shelley freely employs the contemporary rhetoric of abuse when speaking of physical relations between men. Of a statue of "a Satyr making love to a Youth" in the Naples Museum, Shelley remarked to Peacock that only "the expressed life of the sculpture & the inconceivable beauty of the form of the youth overcome ones repugnance to the subject." In the preface to his play The Cenci, Shelley calls Count Cenci's homosexual acts "capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind." These sentiments seem to have been typical of his circle. When Shelley visited Germany with Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont in 1814, the latter noted in her journal: "I find it is the custom for Men to kiss each other at parting.—The Canaille take advantage of this & kiss each other all the day which with their horrid leers & shine has a most loathsome effect."

23. Ibid.
24. December 17 or 18, 1818, Letters, 2:63.
What lay behind these feelings of revulsion? In matters of sex Shelley's theoretical position largely accorded with Bentham's utilitarianism: "If happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of the pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connexion of the sexes [i.e., in a marital union] is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties." But Shelley, so unconventional and so much the cosmopolitan philosopher in other matters, simply echoed national prejudice when he made an exception of same-sex relations. In the "Discourse" we can find three explicit rationalizations of his aversion. First, he qualifies his utilitarian stand with the condition that the sex act "ought to be indulged according to nature." Bentham, we may recall, had objected strongly to this approach as totally vitiating any real utilitarian ethic. How Shelley reconciled the traditional concept of "natural law" with his own erotic hedonism is not clear. "A volume of definitions and limitations belong to this maxim," he tells us, but, unfortunately, he decides that they "here may be passed over." 23

The second implicit basis of objections would presumably be the potentially painful nature of anal intercourse, which contravened Shelley's notion that love should promote the sympathetic sharing of pleasures of body and

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27. "Notes to Queen Mab," in Complete Works, 1:141.
mind. The third objection to male homosexuality sprang from his radical feminism: "Represent this passion as you will, there is something totally irreconcilable in its cultivation to the beautiful order of social life, to an equal participation in which all human beings have an indefeasible claim, and from which half the human race, by the Greek arrangement, were excluded." This was, of course, the ubiquitous eighteenth-century argument that homosexuality threatened the status of women that Bentham had argued against so strenuously in 1765 and 1814. Shelley, having first assumed that the low status of women in Greek society caused male homosexuality, now assumes that male homosexuality caused this status: but neither proposition is clearly demonstrable. As admirable and sincere as Shelley's concern for women was, one feels that he appeals to it here because he feels the need to find some liberal-sounding principle to justify an emotional bias.

Near the end of his essay Shelley does appear to deprecate the intensity of English homophobia: "Nothing is at the same time more melancholy and ludicrous than to observe that the inhabitants of one epoch or of one nation harden themselves to all amelioration of their own practices and institutions and soothe their conscience by heaping violent invectives upon those of others; while in the eye of sane philosophy their own are no less deserving of censure." Shelley points especially to prostitution in contemporary England as an example. But his intention is to attack prostitution, not to ameliorate the plight of homosexuals: he makes no mention of the hangings and pilloryings common to his age. This silence on the part of a writer who so often went out of his way to protest strenuously against cruelty and intolerance is remarkable. The poor, Irish Catholics, Greeks subject to the Turks, and women generally all roused the sympathies of the man who, like

29. Ibid., p. 412.
30. Ibid.
the madman in his own Julian and Maddalo, conceived himself to be

a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth. 31

But on the subject of homosexual oppression he has nothing to say. He cannot have been ignorant: we are left with the uncomfortable conclusion that either insensitivity or fear kept him silent.

But in writing his "Discourse," Shelley at least attempted to challenge the taboo of silence on the subject of Greek love. The publication of his essay and of his unbowedlerized translation of the Symposium would have been a significant step forward in nineteenth-century England where Greek culture was held in such high esteem. But Shelley was also well aware of how daring even his modest effort was for his times. When he first undertook the task, he told Peacock: "I am proceeding to employ myself on a discourse, upon the subject of which the Symposium treats, considering the subject with reference to the difference of sentiments respecting it, existing between the Greeks and modern nations; a subject to be handled with that delicate caution which either I cannot or will not practise in other matters, but which here I acknowledge to be necessary." 32 Nonetheless, Shelley did not attempt to publish either work during the remaining four years of his short life. After his death, Mary Shelley wanted to include at least the translation of the Symposium in the edition of 1840. But when she consulted Leigh Hunt, she ran into difficulties. Hunt was notoriously open about his free love doctrines but decidedly edgy about a candid rendering of Plato. Mary Shelley was perplexed about how to reply to his warnings:

You have puzzled me much. What you said convinced me. You said: "Do as Mills [sic], who has just phrased it so that the

common reader will think common love is meant—the learned alone will know what is meant." . . . Thus I was emboldened to leave it so that our sort of civilized love should be understood—Now you change all this back into friendship—which makes the difficulty as great as ever. I wished in every way to preserve as many of Shelley's own words as possible. . . . I have altered & omitted as you mention—but I could not bring myself to leave the word love out entirely from a treatise on Love.33

As a result, the printed version of the translation changed unacceptable words like "lover" into "friend," "men" into "human beings," "youths" into "young people," etc., to veil the historical genders. James Notopoulos's edition records dozens of such bowdlerizations.34 In one respect the 1840 text was more conservative than Thomas Taylor's version of 1804: the speech of Alcibiades was omitted completely. As for Shelley's essay on Greek homosexuality, its publication was unthinkable. The fragment published in 1840 contained only the opening rhapsody on Greek civilization with no hint of what was to follow. Even in 1930 the ambitious and scholarly Julian edition printed only these paragraphs. The complete "Discourse" was first published in a private limited edition a year later and did not become available to the general reader until Notopoulos included it with a full critical apparatus in The Platonism of Shelley in 1949, one hundred and thirty-one years after Shelley had written it.

A few days after finishing the "Discourse," Shelley again met Byron (whom he had not seen for two years) in Venice and complained (in December) to Peacock about the company he kept there. Shortly afterward they began work on their contrasting masterpieces, Don Juan and Prometheus Unbound. Two years later Byron penned the reminiscences of his Cambridge love affair in his Italian journals. Then, in

1822, eleven days after Shelley was drowned in the Bay of Spezia, a grotesque scandal erupted in England that was to have curious repercussions in the Byron circle and tragic consequences elsewhere.

This was the notorious case of the Bishop of Clogher. On the night of July 19, Percy Jocelyn, the Irish bishop with whom Hobhouse had dined in 1811, was apprehended with a guardsman of the First Regiment in the White Lion Tavern near the Haymarket, a well-known place of assignation. Newspaper reports indicate once again that both men would have been in danger of their lives if the police had not protected them from a hostile crowd. Charles Fulke Greville recorded with amusement in his Memoirs that the bishop "made a desperate resistance when taken, and if his breeches had not been down they think he would have got away." The bishop was heard that night groaning and praying in his cell; next day he appeared in court with the effects of his struggle visible in the form of a black eye. When he was released on bail, he fled the country, no doubt to the relief of the authorities who can scarcely have relished the prospect of a trial. Greville reported, however, that this did not quite solve the problem: "The greatest dissatisfaction would pervade the publick mind at the escape of the Bishop and the punishment of the Soldier." The bishop's nephew, the third Earl of Roden, then provided bail for the other man, who obligingly disappeared.

Public feeling ran high, especially since the coachman whom the bishop had charged with making false accusations in 1810 had been brutally punished. Several weeks after Clogher's arrest the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote that it was still unsafe for a bishop to appear in the streets of London. Jocelyn's palace in Ireland was pillaged by a mob and the authorities actually took the extreme step of

36. Ibid.
invoking an archaic medieval law, declaring the bishop an outlaw. Needless to say, the established powers of church and state were acutely embarrassed. On July 25, the Times felt obliged to take note of the incident:

An exposure of monstrous depravity has taken place within these few days, all allusion to which we have hitherto suppressed. Mingled feelings of sorrow, humiliation, and disgust, have been in part the causes of our silence; and the respect we owe to public decency might still have induced us to persevere in our reserve, if we could have thereby checked the horrible tale in its progress to notoriety amongst all ages and both sexes, which we fear it has already attained to. The person accused of being the chief criminal—P. Jocelyn, Bishop of Clogher—has, it is affirmed, forfeited his bail, and quittd forever the country which his presence had polluted. Bail in such a case! What sum could be named which the wretch would not have sacrificed? We know not whether to rejoice or grieve that he has fled from justice. We know not whether the trial of such a criminal for such a crime, might not have cost more in the way of corruption, than even his death by law, could have paid in the way of satisfaction to good morals. It is dreadful to remember, that a poor and innocent man was sentenced to transportation from his country on the oath of this mitred reprobate, for only threatening to charge him with that which he now stands (by his flight) confessedly convicted. It is more dreadful to think how the church of God has been scandalized and disgraced.\textsuperscript{37}

It is also sobering to note that the Times thought “good morals” required a hanging for their satisfaction.

On August 12, 1822, just three weeks after the bishop’s arrest, came further startling news: Lord Castlereagh, the British foreign minister, had committed suicide. For a generation Castlereagh had been a leading conservative politician, during an era when the Tories held almost uninterrupted power. An Irish peer from Ulster, he had helped *suppress the Rebellion of 1798* and been one of the prime movers behind the *Act of Union* two years later. During

\textsuperscript{37} Times, July 25, 1822, p. 3, col. 3.
the decade before his death he had led the Tories in the House of Commons. Since the titular prime minister, Lord Liverpool, sat in the Lords and was out of favor with George IV, he was in fact the acting prime minister and Britain's most powerful statesman. In his capacity as foreign minister he had represented England at the Congress of Vienna and supported Metternich in redrawing the map of Europe. Among liberals he was much hated, both for his backing of the Holy Alliance on the Continent and for his support of the local authorities whose orders had led to the "Peterloo" massacre at Manchester in 1819. Byron and Shelley both regarded him as the archetype of reaction. In his "Masque of Anarchy," Shelley, shocked by the deaths in the Midlands, had written:

I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh.\(^9\)

When Byron heard of Castlereagh's death, he penned a bitter epigram:

So He has cut his throat at last! He! who?
The man who cut his country's long ago.\(^9\)

How much Byron knew of the inside story of Castlereagh's death is not clear. Some crucial information remained secret until recent years. Hobhouse may have had some inkling of the truth, for he warned Byron to be cautious in his public comments.\(^9\) The official account given out was that overwork from his arduous duties had led to a mental breakdown in the throes of which Castlereagh had opened his carotid artery while unattended. We now know more of the details. Accusations of homosexuality seem to

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40. When Hobhouse visited Byron in Italy, Byron told him he had written against Castlereagh; Hobhouse then warned Byron to be careful about "how he touched on his death" (H. Montgomery Hyde, The Strange Death of Lord Castlereagh [London: Heinemann, 1959], p. 35).
have played a significant part in the events leading to his death. Evidence for this has come to light in the correspondence of his political colleague and friend the Duke of Wellington and in the letters and diaries of two woman friends, Princess Lieven, wife of the Russian ambassador and Metternich's mistress, and Harriet Arbuthnot, wife of the secretary to the Treasury in the Tory government, who were also his political confidantes. From the letters of Princess Lieven, we learn that Castlereagh, highly distraught, had burst in upon George IV on August 9 and informed the astonished king that he was a fugitive from justice. Castlereagh's agitation seemed doubly alarming in a man noted for his courage and the calm, almost inhuman, unperturbability of his public demeanor. When the incredulous king asked why Castlereagh believed he was in jeopardy, he replied, to the king's amazement: "I am accused of the same crime as the Bishop of Clogher" 41 and declared that "a warrant was out against him & that he must fly the country!" 42 This remarkable conversation was reported to Princess Lieven by Lady Conyngham, the king's mistress, who also told her that Castlereagh had shown the king two blackmail letters, one of which threatened to reveal some adulterous intrigues to his wife while the other "concerned a more terrible subject." He also showed the letters to the attorney-general and the solicitor-general. Princess Lieven thought the latter accusation had had a devastating effect on her friend. "This second letter," she wrote to Metternich later, "sent him off his head." 43

The coroner's inquest found that Castlereagh had committed suicide while insane; such a verdict, supported by testimony from his servants and his physician, allowed the

43. August 14, 1822, Private Letters, p. 194.
government to give him a state funeral in Westminster Abbey, where the corpse was jeered. But what had really happened? Were the blackmail allegations of homosexuality, which undoubtedly existed, based on fact or were they inventions? The one detailed critical examination of the evidence, Montgomery Hyde’s *The Strange Death of Lord Castlereagh*, argues for the latter view. Hyde’s study is an extremely interesting and carefully written analysis. Like Castlereagh, an Ulster Tory, Hyde took the lead in modern efforts to rehabilitate the reputation of his fellow countryman as a statesman and diplomat by publishing in 1933 a favorable account of his early career. In the course of his research he uncovered evidence about his suicide, which he did not include in this first book. But Hyde, despite his ultraconservative constituency, was also a courageous spokesman for the sodomy law reform proposed by the Wolfenden Committee twenty-four years later. One of the most reiterated arguments for this reform was that the historic British statute gave dangerous power to blackmailers. Publishing *The Strange Death* in 1959, two years after the committee had made its recommendation, Hyde revealed that the most famous suicide in British history had been preceded by just such a blackmail attempt. But he does not take the position that Castlereagh was actually involved in homosexual relations. Rather, he endorses the “explanation” of blackmail set forth by the lawyer-historian John Richardson in his *Recollections* of 1856. In this book Richardson cited an unnamed informant who claimed as his source an unnamed nobleman close to Castlereagh. According to the latter, Castlereagh had been lured to a brothel by a man disguised as a woman and surprised in a private room by blackmailers who demanded money. Later, Richardson tells us, the men conducted a war of nerves against their victim. “Day after day did these miscreants station themselves by the iron railings with which the enclosure of St. James’s-square is surrounded, opposite the windows of the Marquis, and take the opportunity, by signs and mo-
tions whenever he appeared, to let him know that they had not yet forgotten the scene which they had contrived." 44 Richardson's unidentified nobleman (whom Hyde guesses might have been Lord Clanwilliam, Castlereagh's secretary) told his informant that Castlereagh did not have the resolution to prosecute these extortionists because he feared the effect of the disclosures on his wife. But, more likely, another consideration prevailed: after the Clogher case, charges by men in power that they had been falsely accused of homosexuality were likely to be met with derisive skepticism. The blackmailers, whoever they were, had cleverly chosen a moment when public feeling would stymie any such counterattack.

Hyde regards Richardson's account as the answer to the "mystery" of Castlereagh's death. He quotes another commentator: "It is . . . only fair to adopt the version which receives credence to this day from the great Party to which he belonged, namely, that he had been deliberately entrapped." 45 But why should the general reader accept a statement that gives no explicit sources or authorities and makes its appeal on party grounds? Is there any evidence that Castlereagh may have indeed been, as his contemporaries would have put it, "guilty"? It is interesting that Princess Lieven, who was certainly sympathetic to Castlereagh, thought the unwonted perturbation, acute paranoia, and occasional delusions he suffered from in his last days were the result of guilt. "At times," the princess wrote, "I think he was mad. Terrible remorse was preying on his conscience. But he was not mad when he killed himself" 46—that is, she rejected the coroner's verdict. Moreover, Castlereagh made explicit confessions to two people. Dr. Bank-

head, the physician who had attended him in his last days, told the Duke of Wellington that despite his testimony to that effect at the inquest, Castlereagh was not mad and had confessed to him that he had actually committed the crimes of which he had been accused, that is, that he had indeed been involved in some kind of homosexual activity. At first, the duke told Harriet Arbuthnot, he had believed this version of the case. But he later found it inaccurate as to "two facts" and took the position that Bankhead was simply trying to defend himself against the very harsh criticism he had received for not watching his patient more carefully. Unfortunately, we do not know what the "two facts" were or why Wellington chose to discount them. But it is significant that Castlereagh's wife also received similar confessions, which she discussed with the duke two years after the suicide. Though the duke advised her, "You ought to attribute what he told you to one of the unfortunate delusions of the moment," we may wonder if this was not a counsel of prudence, aimed at hushing up a scandal that would have reflected on a Tory leader. Certainly, Castlereagh suffered from some delusions at the time—there was, for instance, no warrant for his arrest, but the most reasonable course seems to be to regard the possibility of homosexual involvements on Castlereagh's part as at least an open question. Indeed, the weight of the evidence, when all the details are considered, points, I think, to his actual guilt.

47. August 15, 1823, Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot, 1: 257. There is no indication whether the "two facts" discredited Bankhead's story or Castlereagh's. Possibly Wellington was using the term fact in its legal sense to refer to a completed act of sodomy, as opposed to the "attempt."


49. Castlereagh's more recent biographers have followed Hyde. C. J. Bartlett discounts the idea that the blackmail had any basis in fact, citing Wellington's testimony, but leaves the door open. "Even if [it had], it would still not be proven that this was the only cause of the suicide" (Castlereagh [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966], p. 265). John W. Derry, whose study, Castlereagh (London: Allen Lane, 1976), is a political defense, accepts the Hyde-Richardson theory (pp. 227–28). Wendy Hinde
As a philosophical radical, Bentham had waged what might be termed a closet war on English homophobia, denouncing the nation's sodomy law as an instrument by which the "ruling few" extended their power over the "subject many." By contrast, popular radicalism, in the wake of the Clogher case, could not resist using the issue of homosexuality to embarrass the church. This neatly reversed the situation in modern America where antihomosexualism is a popular stance on the far right rather than the left. But attitudes toward homosexuality have always been volatile in moments of high political tension. During revolutions antihomosexual laws may be perceived as a form of oppression on the part of the ancien régime (as they were in France in 1791, and in the first, pre-Stalinist, stages of the Russian Revolution), or homosexuality may, by contrast, be seen as a decadent vice of the dominant class, aristocratic or bourgeois, and may be vigorously suppressed by the new government, as in Castro's Cuba.50

Class antagonism as an occasion for homophobia was one source Bentham failed to analyze in his notes. But there is no question that it stoked the fires of animosity and raised the level of intolerance under George IV. The ruling class, by enforcing the laws with harsh severity, fortified their claim to power by setting themselves up as pil-

adopting Wellington's views of Bankhead's revelations but does not mention Castleragh's confessions to his wife (Castleragh [London: Collins, 1981], p. 280); Hinde thinks his self-accusations were the result of delusions.

50. This paradox can also be seen in Wilhelmite Germany. In 1898 August Bebel, leader of the Social Democratic party, spoke out against Germany's sodomy law in the Reichstag whereas other leftist, as in the Krupp scandal of 1902, used charges of homosexuality to discredit the government. But events contemporaneous with the Cuban antihomosexual campaign of the mid-1960s point up the irony even more sharply; at the same time that large numbers of Cuban homosexuals were being harshly treated in rehabilitation work camps on the grounds that homosexuality was intrinsically counterrevolutionary, a Florida legislator who had instituted a witchhunt against communist teachers in state colleges in Florida turned his campaign into a campaign against homosexual teachers, as a kind of related threat. No communists were found, but many lesbian and male homosexual teachers lost their positions.
lars of morality. But since homosexuality has never been confined to any one class or political faction, they also made themselves vulnerable, and the Clogher affair presented a unique opportunity to the radical press, which, understandably if regretfully, made the most of it. The issue was taken up with greatest vigor by William Benbow. An agitator and minor publisher, the Manchester-born Benbow, a former shoemaker, had been a colleague of William Cobbett in publishing a reforming newspaper, the Political Register, until the two men quarreled. He later came into association with Hobhouse and Sir Francis Burdett at radical meetings in connection with Queen Caroline’s trial in 1820. Like many radical publishers Benbow had pirated both Don Juan and Shelley’s Queen Mab. He saw Byron as a symbol of radical protest and ironically (in view of the issue he chose to raise) selected as his publishing emblem the sign of the “Byron’s Head,” presumably a sign with Byron’s head painted on it to advertise his printing shop and bookstore. In 1823 he was inspired by the Clogher case to publish a violent diatribe against the church under the title The Crimes of the Clergy, or the Pillars of Priest-Craft Shaken.31

Though Benbow’s book was a compendium of every kind of clerical scandal, it placed a special emphasis on men who had been exposed as homosexuals and forced to flee the country. He took note of the hanging of John Atherton, Bishop of Waterford, in Dublin in 1640 and dwelt at length on the Clogher affair. But the special interest of his book lies in its revelation of how many minor clergy were exiled in Byron’s age. He mentions the Reverend John Fenwick of Northumberland, who in 1797 had absconded to Naples, “a country where such monsters are tolerated, and even esteemed”; a Parson Walker of Chichester, a man of “most exemplary character” who was revered as a saint before he was unmasked as an “Unnatural Monster”; the

31. The title-page is dated 1822, but the book contains material from the next year. I am indebted to Professor Hugh Luke for calling my attention to this rare volume and lending me his copy.
Reverend V. P. Littlehales, a learned prebendary of Southwell Cathedral and a member of Parliament, who in 1812 had, like Parson Walker, fled to America ("that sanctuary of crime, and hot bed of guilt"); and several contemporary cases, including Richard Milles, who had forfeited bail in 1823, and Thomas Jephson of St. John's College, Cambridge, who had recently been arrested and escaped to the Continent. From Benbow's account it would appear that the clergy were rarely arrested; more often they were simply warned to leave the country. Benbow, who had himself been sent to prison by informers from the Society for the Suppression of Vice for publishing obscene books, took an especially jaundiced view of that organization. When William Wilberforce, the Society's founder, held up Sparta as a puritanical society worthy of emulation, Benbow could not resist the chance for some homophobic spite. In Sparta, he pointed out, Lycurgus's laws "permitted 'the great only' to practice a crime for which we have not a name, and which is with us chiefly confined to the Parsons of the church of England, composing the Members of the Vice Society, of which Mr. W. is a leader." With more wit, Benbow might have noted that the "lurking holes," from which the Society's predecessor, the Society for the Reformation of Manners, had sought to ferret out "miscreants," had often turned out to be pulpits.

One might have wished that Byron had had the decency

52. These cases appear in Benbow's *Crimes of the Clergy* as follows: Atherton, pp. 25–26; Clogher, pp. 42–44; Fenwick, pp. 8–14; Walker, pp. 229–30; Littlehales, pp. 238–39; Milles, pp. 138–40; Jephson, pp. 239–40. Benbow also mentions a Reverend Mr. Mills of Bath, who had been arrested but not tried when the work went to press (p. 40). Of Clogher, Benbow remarks: "At the day of judgment there must be more jostling and shoving than Lord Byron describes, if such a fellow slips into heaven and deprives the fire of hell of such a deserving faggot" (p. 44). Benbow's language raises the intriguing question whether or not this is an early use of a contemporary slang term. To date its use has not been authenticated before the twentieth century, despite the much-cited theory (historically impossible) that it derives from the inquisitorial practice of burning homosexuals at the stake.

53. Ibid., p. 137.
not to engage in popular gay-baiting, but Clogher presented
too tempting a target for his anti-Tory partisanship. In a let-
ter from Pisa dated August 8, 1822, he asked Thomas Moore
impiishly: "What do you think of your Irish bishop?" In
his highly political preface to Cantos VI–VIII of Don Juan
Byron not only complained about Castlereagh’s state fu-
neral; to embarrass the Tories, he also linked the two scan-
dals in a double reference to "suicide Statesmen" and "het-
erodox Prelates." In a note, Byron repeats a lame joke
defining orthodoxy as "my doxy" and heterodoxy as "an-
other man’s doxy." Then, playing on the innuendo in the
word doxy (which meant a paramour), he comments slyly:
"A Prelate of the present day has discovered, it seems,
a third kind of doxy, which has not greatly exalted in the
eyes of the elect that which Bentham calls 'Church-of-
Englandism.'" The editors of the variorum Don Juan offer
no hint as to the butt of this allusion—the reference is un-
doubtedly to Clogher. Though the thrust is comparatively
mild for Byron, he hardly mends matters by declaring "I
have no wish to trample on the dishonoured or the dead"
after doing just that.56

In stanza 76 of Canto VIII, Byron makes another refer-
ence to Clogher in his account of Juan’s adventures in east-
ern Europe. Byron describes a Russian reversal in the war
with Turkey as

... being taken by the tail—a taking
    Fatal to bishops as to soldiers.

Mary Shelley, who had been copying the manuscript, ap-
parently refused to write out these lines; the editors of the

54. BL, 9:191. Judging from the asterisks that follow, Byron seems
to have dwelt at length on the bishop’s case, presumably in a series of
jocularities that Moore excised.

55. Byron’s note of 1833, Notes on the Variorum Edition, Vol. 4 of By-
ron’s "Don Juan," ed. Willis W. Pratt, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas

variorum *Don Juan* note that they are in Byron’s hand. 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. 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.

57. Ibid., p. 150.
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