

THE SONY WALKMAN: A REVOLUTION IN SOUND

We take music on the move for granted, thanks to mobile streaming. Beverley Casebow looks at the machine that changed the way we listen



I remember getting my first 'portable' cassette player. It was Christmas 1978, and the excitement was immense. No matter that it was a size of a large handbag, and as heavy as a sack of potatoes. Here, at last, was a way of taking my music on the road.

My parents no doubt soon regretted their generous gift, as the cassette player now accompanied us on every car journey, irrespective of duration or distance. As soon as the car engine started up, and seatbelts clunked-clicked, I would press 'play', and, hey presto!, there would be the voice of Dave Lee Travis presenting that week's Top 20, carefully recorded from the indoor stereo system on a Sunday night. Along with the latest hits, there would be snippets of family conversations, the clatter of dinner plates, the sound of the dog barking, and urgent, irritated pleas for everyone to 'Be quiet!', all captured forever, or at least until the tape got mangled in the machine. It was a miracle, and a constant source of joy and amazement.

Although I could not fathom it at the time, my musical tastes did not seem to align with those of my family. It was therefore a relief to everyone when the Sony Walkman appeared. Here, for the first time, was a way of making music both portable and private. It was stylish, lightweight, and small enough to clip on to a belt, or tuck into a pocket. It was now possible to listen to music whilst walking, jogging, or doing aerobics along to the Jane Fonda video.

The world had a new soundtrack. Like many other teenagers of the time, I spent most of the 80s with small foam headphones glued to my ears. The Walkman became a companion on every journey, a solace in times of adolescent angst, a retreat from the noise of inner city London, and a backdrop for imaginative meanderings.

Although it was a largely solitary experience, there was also the pleasure of sharing tapes with friends, and above all creating personalised mix tapes – curating 90 minutes of music as a special gift for a 'best' friend or boyfriend. This time-consuming task could involve many hours of taking LPs on and off the turntable, painstakingly aligning the play button on the cassette recorder with the needle at the start of each track on the record, and hand-writing the miniscule track-lists that fitted neatly inside each cassette box. It was a labour of love, and a token of undying friendship.

DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN, AND PRODUCTION

The Walkman was developed by

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Japanese technology giant Sony in the late 1970s, and was launched in Japan in summer 1979, and the US in 1980. It was an immediate success. The forerunner of Sony – the Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo (TTK) – had already created the first mass-produced transistor radio, the Sony TR 55, in the mid-1950s, the first pocket transistor radio in 1957, and the first portable miniature television in 1959.

A year prior to the launch of the Walkman, the company also issued the Sony Pressman 100 Tape Recorder, a mono cassette recorder. The first Walkman prototype was based on this machine, and also inspired the name 'Walkman'. The Walkman was first introduced in the US as the 'Sound-About' or the 'Stowaway', but the name 'Walkman' was soon adopted as being more ear-catching and easily transferable to different markets.

In Japan, the sales were phenomenal; the Walkman sold upwards of 50,000 in the first two months, compared to an initial prediction of monthly sales of 5,000. It soon became a cult object, a 'must-have' item for young people around

the globe. Although other companies, such as Aiwa, Panasonic, and Toshiba, produced their own versions, the name 'Walkman' became synonymous with the personal cassette player, and became recognised the world over, in much the same way as Hoover for the vacuum cleaner and Xerox for the photocopier. Music tapes were introduced in the 1960s, but in 1983 cassette tapes outsold vinyl for the first time, in large part due to the popularity of the Walkman.

Although the Walkman was initially aimed at a youth market, it soon became popular with people of all ages, and coincided with a craze for aerobics, jogging, and exercise to music. At the height of the Walkman's popularity, from the mid-80s to the mid-90s, the number of people who said they walked for exercise (according to an article in *Time* magazine) increased by 30 per cent. Sony responded to these cultural trends by issuing models of the Walkman for different interests and age groups, for example the water-resistant Sport Walkman, the Shower Walkman, and My First Walkman for children.

The first model of the Walkman – the TPS-L2 – came with two headphone jacks, as developers intended it to offer a social way of enjoying and sharing music with friends. It was thought at the time that it would be discourteous to listen to music alone in a public space. However, consumer research soon revealed that people were using the machine to create a private soundscape, and in later models, the additional headphone jack was removed. The Walkman coincided with a wider trend for personalised products in the 1970s and 1980s, and was one of the first items



to combine functionality with fashion – it was a stylish accessory, as much as a way of listening to music.

CULTURAL DEBATES

The popularity of the Walkman throughout the 80s initiated public debates about the intersection of the private and public domains, debates which are still ongoing today in regard to smartphones, tablets, and other portable devices.

For some, the Walkman signalled greater choice and personal freedom; a way of controlling and to some extent eliminating external unwanted noise – particularly in an urban environment – and an exciting new way of listening to music.

For others, the popularity of personal stereos was identified with a growing emphasis on the individual and personal, as opposed to the social and communal. Would the growing trend for private pleasures and personalised leisure activities destroy public life and community values?

In 1981, Shushei Hosokawa coined the term 'The Walkman Effect' to describe the disconnection between the Walkman user and his or her immediate environment; the user inhabits a virtual space, which is available only to them, and is therefore shut off from, or oblivious to, the actual space around them. For some commentators, this immersion in a private world was akin to excessive drug-taking or other ways of withdrawing from community life; it was considered a threat to traditional ways of living and being, and at worst amoral, or even immoral. People worried that

the appetite for personal devices would also exacerbate isolation and loneliness, which echoes some of the current debates about the amount of time spent alone in front of a screen.

For the first time, the domestic world was introduced into the public sphere. Whereas television and radio represented home-based consumption, the personal stereo introduced private pleasures and

● With the current nostalgia for vinyl records, typewriters and fountain pens, it is perhaps not surprising that cassette tapes are also making a comeback: sales have increased year-on-year since 2013 and Cassette Store Day is an established event ●

preferences into the public domain. For some, this was entirely 'out of place' and a transgression of normal boundaries. London Transport issued regulations for appropriate Walkman use and noise-

levels on the London Underground, which could result in a financial penalty, and on British Rail, a 21-year-old man was forcibly evicted from the train after annoying fellow passengers by playing his Beautiful South tape at full volume on his Walkman.

Today, we are so accustomed to having a soundtrack instantly available via our smartphones, tablets, and MP3 players, that it is maybe difficult for a younger generation to comprehend why the Walkman seemed so revolutionary in 1980. But it completely changed the way we listen to music, and was the first in a long line of portable, personal audio players. With the current nostalgia for vinyl records, typewriters, and fountain pens, it is perhaps not surprising that cassette tapes are also making a comeback: sales have been increasing year-on-year since 2013, and Cassette Store Day is an established annual event. Who knows, maybe the Sony Walkman will be the next big vintage fashion?

For me, the Sony Walkman is synonymous with the 1980s and, despite it being my constant companion throughout that decade, I do not think it had any lasting effect on my morals or anti-social tendencies. The only damage, perhaps, was to my hearing. Although I rarely listen to pre-recorded music these days, the distinctive 'click' and 'whirr' of a Walkman can still transport me back to many happy hours of listening.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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GRENADA, OPERATION URGENT FURY, AND THE UK-US 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'

America called in a rescue mission. But the invasion of Grenada put strain on Reagan and Thatcher's friendship. Sarah Thomson looks back

Upon leaving the White House, Barack Obama described German Chancellor Angela Merkel as his closest international ally during his eight years in office. Some Britons saw this as a snub to the supposed US-UK 'Special Relationship'.

This was a term coined in the 1940s to describe the alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom. The relationship is often embodied by the respective leaders of each country, and perhaps none have captured its essence quite like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Staunch conservatives and anti-communists who led their respective nations throughout the 1980s, one aide even went as far as to dub them 'political soulmates'.

However, President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher's political alliance was not always as harmonious as many believe. As archives are opened and documents declassified, historians are beginning to paint a clearer picture of what went on behind closed doors. One episode that now captures both the strengths and limitations of the Special Relationship was the United States' invasion of Grenada in October 1983, otherwise known as Operation Urgent Fury.

ARMED CONFLICT

The US invasion of Grenada was the first deployment of American troops in an armed conflict since their crushing defeat in Vietnam. On 25 October, 1983, President Ronald Reagan deployed 7,000 American troops in the East Caribbean, occupying the tiny island of Grenada, whose population was no greater than 100,000 people. This incident is often relegated to the footnotes of America's military history, but it offers a significant example of friction in Reagan and Thatcher's supposedly 'Special' relationship.

Grenada was a former British colony, gaining its independence in 1973, and it remained part of the British

Commonwealth. Thatcher firmly opposed US intervention in the region, telling Reagan at the time that "the United States has no business interfering in [Grenada's] affairs".

Political unrest had been brewing on the island for a number of months, culminating with the assassination of the Grenadian Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, during a coup d'état. The population of Grenada was placed under house arrest, including approximately 1,000 American civilians. The Organisation of East Caribbean States (OECS), a 'regional collective security organization', met on 21 and

22 October to discuss the situation in Grenada. The OECS member states, alongside Jamaica and Barbados, decided to intervene in Grenada, with the proviso that the US agreed to supply the bulk of the required military power. Reagan authorised the use of American troops on the afternoon of 24 October, without consulting Thatcher. On 25 October, the invasion began.

Reagan justified his decision to invade, even without British support, on several grounds. Firstly, he told the world that he had received a formal appeal for aid from the OECS, who were keen to see democracy restored to Grenada. He stated that since 1,000 American civilians lived on the island, he had the right to stage a rescue mission. He also claimed that the Governor-General of Grenada, Paul Scoon, had sent a formal aid request to the US, which Reagan used to legitimise the invasion. Finally, the strategic significance of the Caribbean for American trade, combined with concerns about the spread of communism in the region, meant the invasion was justified on the grounds of national security. Most of these claims do not stand up to scrutiny, and upon discovering Reagan had deployed troops without consulting the UK, Thatcher was livid.

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Wreckage from the invasion still lies decaying in Grenada

THE RESCUE MISSION

The presence of about 1,000 US civilians in Grenada, including approximately 600 medical students, quickly became a focal point for discussions. Concerns regarding their safety permeated both public and private discourse, with Reagan frequently claiming that they were the most important reason for his decision to authorise the invasion. Fears created by the 1979–1981 hostage crisis in Iran exacerbated concerns about civilian safety, helping to garner popular support for an evacuation of US civilians.

However, there was little evidence to suggest that American civilians were truly in danger, and an evacuation of civilians did not explain why US troops remained in the region after the bystanders had been 'rescued'. Portraying the invasion as a rescue mission helped the administration to justify using military force in the region in the face of congressional scrutiny. The civilians provided both constitutional and emotional reasons for deploying troops, which were difficult for Reagan's political opponents to criticise.

Proving that Americans were in danger also formed a vital part of Reagan's constitutional right to engage the US military in a conflict in the East Caribbean. As Commander in Chief of the US Army, President Reagan had the authority to use the armed forces to rescue civilians facing a threat abroad, according to Article VI of the Constitution of the United States. This clause stipulates that the President must uphold the 'Laws of the Land', which includes international laws the US is bound by, such as the Charter of the United Nations. Since the UN Charter allows for the "inherent right [...] of self defense", Reagan's best chance to legitimise his actions under international law hinged upon his ability

to demonstrate that American civilians were in danger. Indeed, 35 years after the invasion Edwin Meese (Counselor to the President) stated that "their being there was a lucky break for us", as it created an excuse for deploying troops.

To outsiders, the extent to which the US civilians living in Grenada were in any genuine danger was at best unclear at the time of the invasion. There had been

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no direct threat made against foreign nationals living on the island during or after the coup d'état, although American citizens were placed under house arrest in the same manner as the rest of the island's population. However, this curfew came to an end on 24 October, prior to the US invasion. Classes had resumed at the medical school, shops were reopening, and order was being restored on the island.

There was a lack of 'concrete' evidence offered to suggest American nationals needed to be evacuated. Members of the administration referred more generally to a 'clear and present danger' to American nationals, rather than a more precise outline of why the political unrest was a risk to civilian safety. Additionally, the

administration was later forced to retract a claim that Grenada's only airport had been closed on 24 October, contributing to the decision to invade, when it was revealed that the airport had allowed at least four charter flights to take off that day.

APPROACHING ALLIES

Reagan wrote to Thatcher on 24 October to tell her he was giving "serious consideration" to deploying troops to Grenada. She firmly opposed the invasion, but he gave the order to invade before waiting for her opinion on the matter. Despite her pressure to call off the invasion, Reagan persisted with his plan on the grounds that he was supporting the smaller Caribbean countries that had requested US support.

Reagan called Thatcher on 26 October to apologise, telling her that the US "regret very much the embarrassment that's been caused" to the UK as a result of launching the invasion without telling their supposedly closest allies of the plan. Thatcher's response was somewhat frosty (audio of their conversation was released to the public in 2014), and she later stated that she was "not in the sunniest of moods" when she took Reagan's call that day.

In the face of Thatcher's disapproval, Reagan's White House was keen to emphasise that the episode in Grenada was a 'multinational' effort rather than an American invasion. When Reagan told the world that he had deployed troops he did so in a joint announcement with Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica, one of the neighbouring eastern Caribbean nations.

By making a shared announcement with the leader of another sovereign state Reagan could more convincingly argue that the invasion was a multinational mission rather than an act of American aggression. Reagan said that the United States had "acceded to the request to become part of a multinational effort" to "restore order and democracy" to Grenada. Charles was then invited to address the audience, and the two heads of state hosted a joint question-and-answer session with the press afterwards.

Although Reagan was keen to present this as a joint military effort, only American troops were engaged in combat. In fact, only 300 troops from the other members of the 'multinational effort' were deployed, arriving on the afternoon of 25 October and assisting only with 'civilian police work and guarding of detainees'. The administration clearly tried to present



A smoke-cloud blooms after an air strike during the American assault

this as a far more 'multinational' effort than it truly was.

In the process of offering aid to the OECS, the Reagan administration risked jeopardising the strength of far more important alliances, not just their alliance with the British. The OECS was only founded in 1981, and had just six small member states (excluding Grenada). In contrast, the Caribbean Community, or CARICOM, was established in 1973 and included all six members of the OECS plus another nine member states. CARICOM discussed the situation in Grenada and concluded that "there should be no external involvement in what was an internal problem" three days before the US and OECS deployed troops in the region. CARICOM was therefore opposed to this joint action, as was the even larger Organisation of American States (OAS).

It should be noted that alongside the OECS, the US acted with the support of Jamaica and Barbados, but without the support of the rest of CARICOM. The fact that the US was willing to act without the support of these other large powers in the region, despite none of these other powers feeling the political unrest warranted a military intervention, suggests the invasion was unnecessary.

PAUL SCOON'S DISTRESS CALL

Grenada's membership of the British Commonwealth added a further level of complication to the US decision to invade. The island had a Governor-General, Paul Scoon, who acted as a figurehead representing Queen Elizabeth II. No formal request for aid had been made by anyone on Grenada while Reagan was deliberating whether or not to deploy troops. However, a formal distress call from a figure such as Scoon promised to give valuable political legitimacy to the invasion, and would help Reagan to fend off international criticism. So, the US orchestrated a distress call from Scoon to add credibility to the invasion.

This lack of any formal request for aid was raised in Congress in the days following the invasion. Congressman Robert W Edgar pointed out that no appeal for aid had been received from the Grenadian people, or the hospital where the students were based. Several days later, the administration announced that it had received a request for aid from Scoon, but had not announced this to the public due to fears for Scoon's safety. In his remarks on 4 November, 1983, Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam claimed that Scoon's request was "an important element – legally as well as politically – in our respective decisions to help Grenada". Scoon's aid request was useful because

he represented a 'legitimate' form of authority on the island, which helped the US and the OECS to claim that they had received a 'distress call' directly from the island.

In fact, Scoon's request did not factor into the US decision to invade at all. He later confessed to fabricating the aid request (although maintaining his request was sincere), and evidence has emerged that his letter appealing for aid was backdated to make it appear like a genuine distress call. A memorandum sent at 6.45am GMT from the American Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados to Secretary of State George Schultz read: "Below follows the text of a letter the countries participating in the Caribbean security forces propose that the Governor-General sign and deliver to the OECS, Jamaica, Barbados and the United States."

Given that the memorandum was sent at least 12 hours after Reagan had given the order to invade, and was sent only to the nations that had already agreed to participate, it provides proof that the decision to get a written request for aid from Scoon came after the decision to invade had been reached by participating parties. Scoon's request provides evidence that the participating parties wanted to give more legitimacy to their invasion by having a written 'distress call', which they used as evidence of their right to be involved in the region.

Recently declassified documents held by the Margaret Thatcher Foundation demonstrate that Scoon was corresponding with Downing Street throughout the period of the invasion. On 22 October, he said that despite the assassination of the Grenadian Prime Minister, he and his wife did not believe themselves to be in any immediate danger, which directly contradicts the contents of the distress call. He later remained on the island to offer advice on the best way to establish an interim government alongside the US forces, though there was some reluctance among British policy makers for the UK to become involved in the American efforts. Indeed, one British diplomat expressed his concern by remarking on "the natural tendency [sic] of our American cousins to act like bulls in a China shop on unfamiliar territory".

Though this was clearly a moment of tension between Reagan and Thatcher, ultimately the Grenada episode was quickly forgotten, at least in the public's imagination. The invasion did not feature in Reagan's State of the Union Address in 1984, and with the exception of his speech on the fifth anniversary of the

invasion, he did not mention it again in any public speeches. Still, in Reagan's memoirs and public diaries he maintained that Grenada was "a rescue mission", a belief which endures in the public imagination to this day.

While Thatcher's disapproval of Reagan's handling of the Grenada invasion was public knowledge at the time, the extent of her frustration becomes clearest when we turn to the archives, looking at their correspondence and listening to their phone conversations from this period. Similar revelations are coming to light regarding Anglo-American relations during the Falklands War just a year before the Grenada episode took place. Therefore, this episode highlights not just this moment of friction between two world leaders, but also the importance of conducting archival research in order to understand and appreciate our recent past. As Republicans and Democrats alike seek to lay claim to the legacy of the United States' "Great Communicator", scholarly research into 1980s American political history is perhaps timelier than ever.

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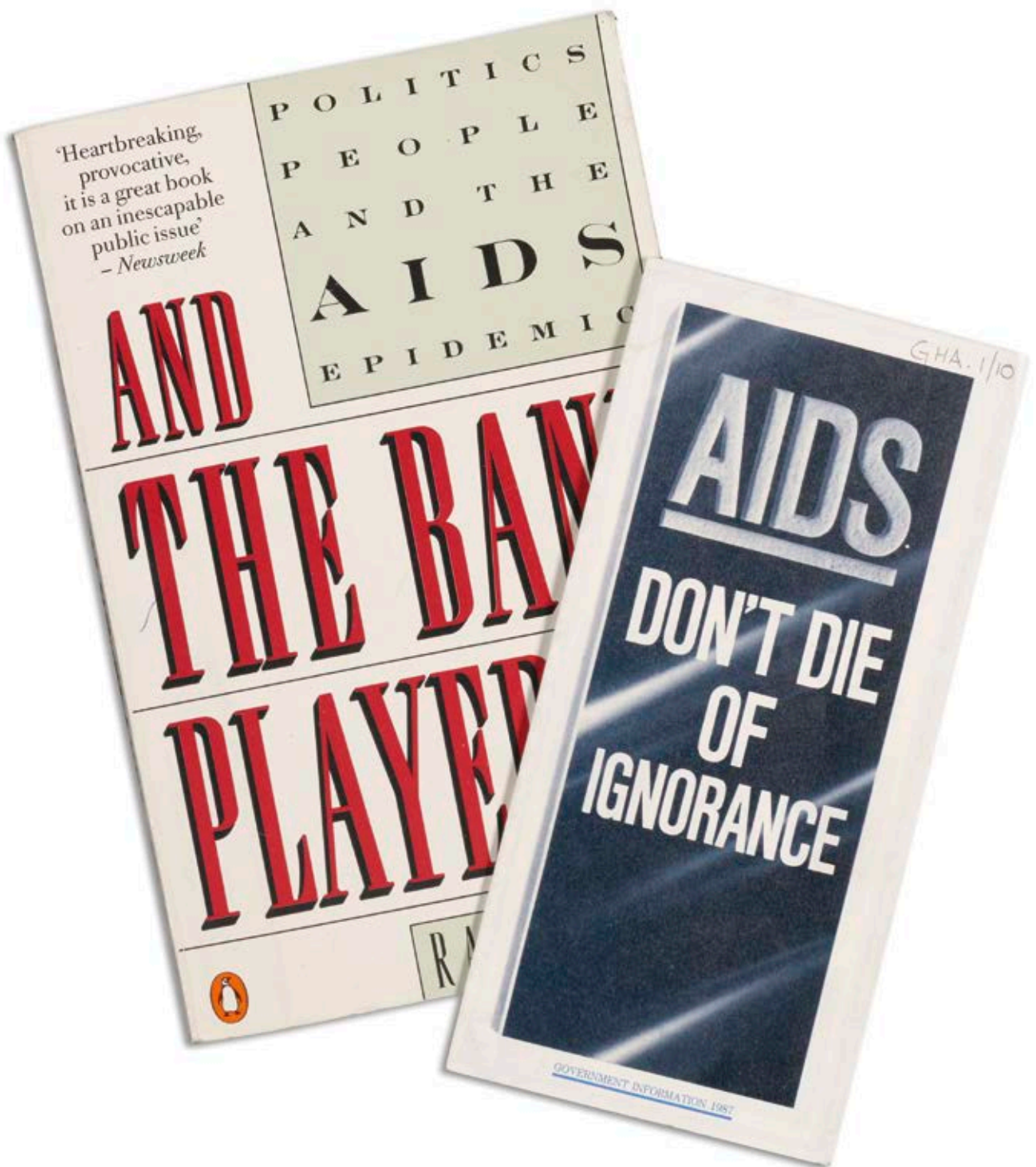
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TESTING TIMES

AIDS – and the fear of AIDS – cast a long shadow. Journalist and author Damian Barr gives a visceral, touching account of a gay teen's agony



It looks like the last full-stop from a Biro that's been on the way out for ages – barely bigger than a pore but perfectly, medically, round. Impossible to remove, it sits in the crease where my right arm bends – the blue is a vein fluttering beneath the tiny puncture of private white. Unlike my birthmark – mortifyingly by my collar, exactly where you'd get a love-bite, or the twin freckles locked in a slowly expanding orbit on my right forearm – I wasn't born with this. Barely visible, I can find it instantly, far more easily than I can put my finger on the words to tell you how I got it.

In 1987, the plummy voice of the government spreads the danger of AIDS from every telly in the land. I'm 11 and sit cross-legged on our living room floor surrounded by squabbling cousins, all momentarily shushed by the doom unfolding on the screen where words are being chiselled on a giant black gravestone.

"There is now a danger that has become a threat to us all," intones the English man's voice I recognise from something else embarrassing – the film I started with my mum before she clicked it off saying, "I feel sorry for them." My fingers reach for my birthmark, sure it's really one of the lesions I read about in the *News of the World*, the ones that covered the black and white film man my Granny Mac liked. A church bell tolls on the telly: "It is a deadly disease and there is no known cure." My cousins snigger at the next bit: "The virus can be passed during sexual intercourse." I kid on join in but really feel the way I do before an asthma attack. "Anyone can get it," the voice threatens. "Man or woman, so far it has been confined to small groups. But it's spreading."

I'm in that small group – I've not admitted it but I know. After all the stuff me and my Mark do when I stay at his we've probably both got it. He's getting all these spots, even there. I'm still waiting for pubes. It's not fair. On the telly the epitaph is complete: AIDS.

Next morning, I wake sticky from nightmares of being buried. Soon the official leaflet arrives and somebody at school says night-sweats are a sign. The mark on my neck is scabbing but I can't stop clawing and imagine pulling it out trailing long thin bloody roots. Mark and I promise to stop but soon we're bored and back in the bushes down by the burn. "We might as well," he laughs and it's not funny, really not, but what can you do?

The test is the only way to be 100 per cent. But the only person who can do it is our doctor and she'll tell. The news is full of skeleton men pinned under blankets thinner than their skin. My mum says

● We toss a coin to see who will do the test because if one of us has got it, we both have it. Heads, I win. Mark says he'll book it so we crowd into a phone box ●

Princess Diana is brave for touching them. I nod along and she kisses the top of my head saying she won't be able to soon because I'm getting like my dad.

DISCOVERING THE SCENE

Following the trail of phone-numbers found on the wall of the toilet in the new McDonald's, Mark and I discover 'the scene' in Glasgow. School in the week, Bennett's at the weekend. Everybody's older than us 'chickens'. Mark loves the spotlight but I don't, even when it shines on lanky, specky me. When some of the faces we see those spinning Saturday nights disappear, AIDS is whispered. We dance on determined to find boyfriends so at least somebody will feel properly sad for us when we die. When *Beaches* comes out, we sob and rewind, sob and rewind, vowing to be the wind beneath one another's wings. Nobody will come to our funerals.

We hear about a clinic that will do the test but you've got to be 16. I count down the weeks and months. Me and Mark take turns phoning the number we found in the book then hanging up. We toss a coin to see who will do the test because if one

of us has got it, we both have. Heads, I win. Mark says he'll book it so we crowd into the old red phone box far from both our front doors. Even so he keeps his voice down. "Leighton Barr," he says, giving my middle name. Cunning.

Tuesday is test day. Sixteen years and one day old I get the bus to Motherwell saying I'm going to the library. I get off the stop after the health centre then walk back. Like every council building, like our house, it's pebble-dashed like it was made in a factory. I kick my feet outside till there's nobody about then bolt in. Screaming signs for Sexual Health all point up the only flight of stairs and I scurry-blush through the packed waiting room sure they all know exactly where I'm going and why.

Upstairs, the nurse at reception has boy-short black hair and looks about my mum's age. She smiles and hands me a black clipboard with a form gripped on it and a pen. I start filling it out where I stand. "Over there, son," she says, gesturing towards an empty row of plastic chairs that look bolted down. I don't want to sit because who knows who else has but I do. I tackle the form like an exam only sure I've failed. Have I done this, have I done that, how many times and with whom? One box is 'Homosexual'. I leave it unticked. As soon as the nurse leaves reception I dash over and lay my clipboard down where it won't slide on to the lino then zip back to my seat. I'm the only one here and I'm glad.

The nurse returns and slips my form from the clipboard scanning it wordlessly before taking it over to a door where she knocks and waits. "Yes?" despairs the man's voice from within. In she goes then out she comes asking for "Leighton Barr". When I remember



What brings these three collection items together? Follow the QR code opposite to read the story.



that's me, I jump up – my back sticks to my T-shirt which peels off the plastic seat. The nurse pats my shoulder as she ushers me in.

Ahead, an old bald man sits scalpel straight in a white coat, his hands clasped together on a clean steel table. My form is the only piece of paper in front of him.

"Mr Barr?" I nod. Nobody has called me Mister before.

"Sit."

The nurse stands to the side. She's left her smile at reception. I sit.

The doctor's not got a name badge. He places one hand on my form and holds it down it while he pulls a biro from his pocket. Then he asks me all the questions: anal, oral, active, passive? Words I've never said out loud. "Speak up," he says. I cross my legs and wish I'd gone to the toilet. After all my answers, he talks over my head to the nurse and she squeaks across the lino to some drawers.

"What do you want to do?" the doctor asks, standing up and tugging gloves from a box on his desk. "After school?" He pauses, looking right at me for the first time. He can see all the things me and Mark have done. He knows. "Hairdresser?" he wonders, pulling on the gloves. "Journalist," I stammer. He looks surprised. The nurse hands him a packet which he opens standing over me.

The needle.

It looks bigger than the packet it just came out of.

"Arm," he commands. I lay my right arm across his desk and the metal feels cool. The nurse snaps a sort of elastic band round my arm just below my T-shirt sleeve. "Come on," he says, standing there,

syringe in hand. "Make a fist!"

The nurse shows me with her hand and I copy but before anything can happen the doctor leans across me and pulls the band tight like a Chinese burn. This is the first time he's touched me. I am unable to look away as my veins make themselves visible, flooding like the burn in winter.

"Right," he says, his breath hot on my face. Without warning he flicks my new blue veins. I yelp and he tuts again. The nurse lays a hand on my shoulder then lifts it off. Without warning he flicks me again and I push myself back in the chair. "Shy," he says, stretching my skin taut over the biggest bluest vein.

I close my eyes.

"Hold still."

I'm not moving.

"Hold still!"

The bottom of my stomach falls as the needle goes in. When it digs about I scream. My eyes are open and there's blood – my blood, but darker and thinner

● My blood spurts in a neat arc like school milk from a carton and the doctor says nothing, just turns surprisingly gracefully to keep his coat white ●

than I imagined. It spurts in a neat arc like school milk from a carton and the doctor says nothing, just turns surprisingly gracefully to keep his coat white. The needle is sticking out of my arm, steel among red. "Snapped," he sighs, taking his hand off my shoulder to click his fingers at the nurse who holds out a little silver dish that he drops the still-empty syringe in. She hands him another packet while my blood pools in my elbow.

"Fist," he says, bunching his fingers in my face.

DRY YOUR EYES

I do as I'm told and as I screw my eyes shut I realise I'm crying. Air whispers where it shouldn't as he pulls out the first needle. I hear him open the second packet but there's no pause. The next needle slides in cold and I feel something like release as the syringe fills.

"Done," he says, finally. "Dry your eyes." I didn't even feel him taking the other needle out. He stands back, unscrewing the syringe then drops the vial of my blood in a clear plastic bag.

The nurse presses on my arm with a ball of cotton wool like the ones my Mum takes her make-up off with then takes my hand and places it over hers before gently slipping her own away so I'm pressing it myself. I watch the cotton go from white to red to brown while the doctor finishes his notes and the nurse takes everything I've touched and puts it in a black and yellow bin by the door.

"Two weeks," he says without looking up and waves me towards the door which the nurse is opening. "I'm sure we'll be seeing you again."

LORD BYRON AND THE NEW ROMANTICS

It was a working-class pop music movement, fuelled by fashion and escapism. Dr Emily Bernhard Jackson, Lecturer in 19th-Century Literature at Exeter University, explores its roots in earlier rebellion

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Covent Garden nightlife suddenly found itself filled with pirates, exotic Eastern fantasies, painstaking facial decoration, and gravity-defying hair.

Duran Duran looked for the TV sound; Spandau Ballet worked 'til they were musclebound; Boy George took the coats. New Romanticism had arrived. A few years later it was gone, but during the brief period of its flourishing it became one of the most defiant, joyous, and reviled movements in British music, fashion, and art.

New Romanticism was an odd movement. Academics who study popular culture largely pass over it; music journalists sneer at it. Even people who were labelled as part of the movement were often anxious to make it clear that no, they were absolutely not New Romantic: "New Romantic was nothing to do with Adam and the Ants," said Adam Ant in a 2012 interview. "The Ants was a punk band, or a post-punk band if anything, and so historically it's inaccurate. New Romantic was basically, in my mind, clubbers with too much

makeup on with stupid clothes." When a man who wore make-up and a frilly shirt is that determined to differentiate himself from a movement full of other men who wore make-up and frilly shirts, you know there's something significant at stake.

In perhaps the final ignominy, though, the New Romantics didn't even get to name themselves. And in this way they resemble the group they allegedly connected to, the Romantics. The Romantics were first called Romantics by others, and their defining characteristics were first determined by others, which is how Wordsworth and Coleridge became linked with Byron and the Shelleys, who in life dismissed the two older men ("He is a slave," Mary Shelley wrote about Wordsworth after reading his poem, *The Excursion*). Similarly, the press first used the label New Romantic and set its parameters. This is why Adam Ant, who may not think of himself as a New Romantic and certainly at one point was not one, at one point most definitely also was one.

As it happens, though, when the press came up with the New Romantic label

they almost surely weren't associating it with the whole Romantic movement, which was best known for its investment in nature, its turn toward simplicity and naturalness, and its emphasis on the sublime – the New Romantics could just about have been described as looking sublime, but they definitely weren't invested in simplicity, and the movement itself was relentlessly urban.

THE BYRONIC HERO

No, when the newspapers and magazines used the label New Romantic, they were almost certainly thinking – at least in some vague way – of what stands in for Romanticism in many people's minds: the Byronic Hero. And that means that when the press said 'Romantic' (as in New Romantic), they meant 'Lord Byron'. For New Romanticism, whether self-labelled or not, whether acknowledged or not, even whether known by its participants or not, is directly descended from the public image of George Gordon, Lord Byron.

Academics have a term that's helpful in explaining this: indexicality. Indexicality

● New Romanticism, self-labelled or not, whether acknowledged or not, even whether known by its participants or not, is directly descended from the public image of George Gordon, Lord Byron ●



Adam Ant still maintains his dandy highwayman persona, at least on stage

A New Romantic make-up tutorial based on Boy George finds its place among other publications about 80s icons



is the meaning that something – an object, a word, an event – has in context. This isn't the same as its actual meaning. It is, rather, the meaning it has for those who are using it at that moment (an inside joke is a perfect example of indexicality). From very early on in his career, Byron had a clear indexicality. This indexicality derived in part from popular images of him, disseminated via engravings that featured in the front of many of his books. The Byron in these representations had a haughty profile, curly hair, and almost always an open collar. Even now, these attributes telegraph 'aloof, independent, rebel'.

Byron's works helped to create a similar public image, and so a similar indexicality. His hugely popular poem *Childe Harold*, featured a hero who was, in fact, aloof, independent, and a rebel. Because of the connection between Byron, this hero, and all the heroes he wrote in the works that followed (who were also aloof, independent rebels), George Gordon, the real Lord Byron (a man with a bad leg, who struggled with his weight, worried about the state and colour of his teeth, and began to go bald in his mid-thirties), became conflated with the aloof, independent rebels of his works. In other

● This indexicality stretched into whatever culture became popular. Byron is, for example, the model for all vampires in English literature ●

words, the indexicality of Lord Byron was as a tortured but noble man, possessed of impeccable style and an immovable love of liberty, sexually available and possessed of a fluid sexuality, a rebel who always sided with the underdog and undermined the status quo. Some of this was true of the real Lord Byron, certainly, but some of it was simply what the word 'Byron' came to stand for: in a way, 'Byron' began to equal 'The Byronic Hero'.

This indexicality continued long after Byron's lifetime, stretching its tentacles into whatever culture became popular. Byron is, for example, the model for all the vampires in English literature – this is

quite literally true, since the first vampire story in English was written by his doctor John Polidori, who modelled his vampire on Byron (in *The Vampire, A Tale*).

But Byron's influence shows up in more unexpected ways, too. For example, in the famous Rudolph Valentino film, *The Sheik*. In stills for that film, Valentino's costume is a precise copy of the outfit Byron wears in one of his best-known portraits, *Lord Byron in Albanian Dress*, painted by Thomas Phillips in 1813. And as if the visuals aren't striking enough, the hero of *The Sheik* is a white man adopted by Arabs as an infant, a Westerner 'gone native' who is both noble in personality and a bit of a rebel.

ANDROGYNOUS BEAUTY

Consider, too, *Lawrence of Arabia*, the film, released in 1963. Its hero is also an Englishman gone native, a troubled soul of androgynous beauty who is an admirable rebel. And Peter O'Toole's T.E. Lawrence also dressed remarkably like Byron in his Albanian portrait.

Both *The Sheik* and *Lawrence of Arabia* were hugely popular – *Lawrence* is one of the best-known and most influential films in history. Both also helped to keep a certain indexicality of

Byron alive in popular culture, even as the clear connection between Byron and that indexicality was lost: people understood that a certain kind of person or hero would have certain characteristics, but they didn't know those characteristics were originally linked to Byron.

Nonetheless, the symbols lingered on in cultural memory, so that a photograph taken in 1981 shows Boy George wearing an outfit that echoes Byron's Albanian portrait almost scarf for scarf.

What's more, this isn't the only instance of direct, although not necessarily conscious, influence of Byron on the New Romantics – even on New Romantics who didn't know they were New Romantics. Remember Adam Ant? He's said in interviews that his 'dandy highwayman' persona was influenced by his memories of British pop star Tommy Steele starring as Jack Sheppard (a famous 18th-century thief) in the film *Where's Jack?* (1969). One can see this connection in Ant's costumes, which mimic the loose, open-collared white shirt and cutaway coat Steele wore in the movie. But Steele's shirt and coat themselves mimic the clothing worn by Byron in another of his pictures, the *Cloak Portrait* (also by Thomas Phillips, 1813), where they give him the look of dashing insouciance.

In fact, on at least one occasion Ant skipped the middleman and drew directly on Byron. Another famous portrait of Byron, if not the most famous, is an engraving of him done in 1816 by George Henry Harlow. He is captured in aloof, androgynous profile, his high coat collar folded behind the crisp white linen of his shirt, his curls tumbling over his brow. A publicity still of Ant from 1981 is virtually an identical match: Ant wears make-up that suggests an 18th-century fop, but still, there he is in androgynous profile, his folded coat collar framing the snowy linen of his shirt, his curls tumbling over his brow. Someone (I like to imagine it was Ant himself, since his art-school training would have exposed him to a wealth of images) spotted the power in that image of Byron, and his physical resemblance to Ant, and decided to exploit both.

So it seems undeniable that Byron was an influence on the New Romantics. But now the question becomes, Why? Had Byron simply become a stand-in for exoticism, for flash and dash, for Romantic dress? Well, in part yes, but in part there's something more, and that more lies in Byron's indexicality as an outsider and a rebel. *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Sheik*, and even *Where's Jack?* all show his influence as a symbol of rebellion and transgression, but Byron

● In such circumstances, dressing up is a political act, a call to be seen as valuable and vibrant in the face of supposed irrelevance ●

was a hero to rebels almost from the start.

TELEGRAPHED HIS REBELLIOUSNESS

As early as the 1830s, the Chartists loved the poet who wrote, 'I wish men to be free/ -- As much from mobs and kings as you and me' (*Don Juan*, *Canto 9*, stanza 25). Although the main reason for this was his poetry, Byron's image telegraphed his rebelliousness without the need to read a word of him. A man who had his portrait painted in Eastern costume, or with his shirt collar open, was a man who didn't care about social expectations, a man who had a sense of himself as different and pleased by that difference. So Byron is also a representative of proud difference, of acknowledgement of the value of individuality, particularly unconventional individuality. This aspect of him, too, found echo in the New Romantic movement. New Romanticism has often been condemned as a movement all about surface, empty of any deeper political or social import: in his book *England is Mine*, Michael Bracewell has

argued about the New Romantics that "politics, when you were dressing like Lord Byron... came fairly low down on your list of social responsibilities".

Leaving aside the question of why fashion and music need to be political, this remark seems to me to miss one of the central points of New Romanticism. The members of the movement were largely working class, or at least lower class: the very stratum of society that 80s Toryism was doing its best to undermine, not to say destroy. In such circumstances, dressing up becomes a political act, a call to be seen as valuable and vibrant in the face of supposed irrelevance.

And here, too, is a connection between Byron and the New Romantics: they both challenge the belief that you can recognise political weight by its lack of style. Byron and the New Romantics knew that sometimes style goes hand-in-hand with substance, and both have been discounted because of it. But then, as Adam Ant once said and Byron would surely have agreed, "Ridicule is nothing to be scared of."

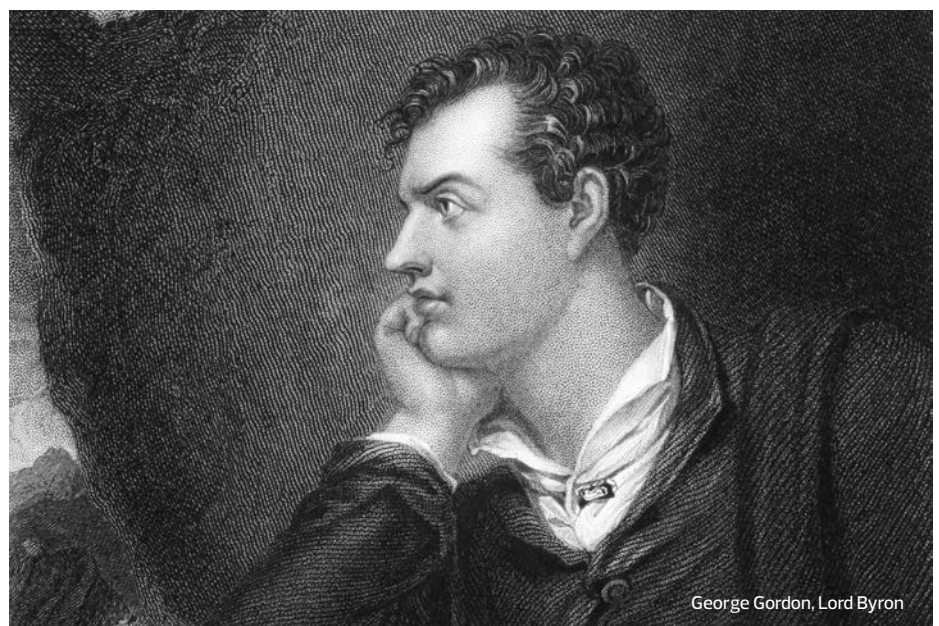
FURTHER READING

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The vampire: a tale, by John William Polidori (London : Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1819) [National Library shelfmark: NF.617.a.12]

Don Juan by Lord Byron (London : G Nones, 1846) [National Library shelfmark: AB.1.79.259]

England is Mine: Pop Life in Albion from Wilde to Goldie by Michael Bracewell (London : Flamingo, 1998) [National Library shelfmark: HP.98.4247]



George Gordon, Lord Byron