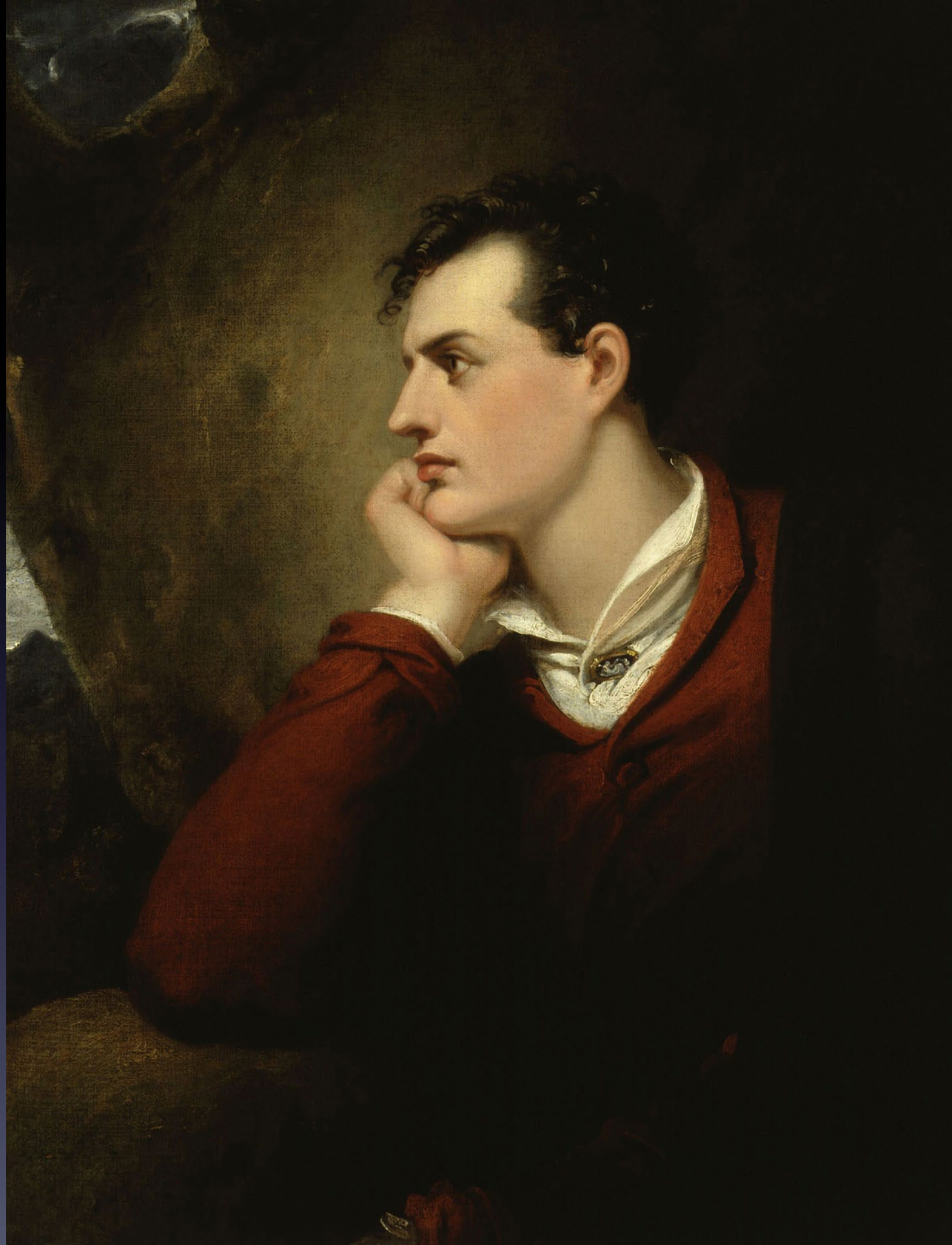


Byron and the Age of Sensation

JONATHAN BATE

Gresham Professor of Rhetoric



All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
All is centered in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

(Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, canto 3)

“sensation”

- ‘an operation of any of the senses; a psychical affection or state of consciousness consequent on and related to a particular condition of some portion of the bodily organism, or a particular impression received by one of the organs of sense’
- ‘the prime merit of genius, so to represent familiar objects as to awaken in the minds of others a kindred feeling concerning them and that *freshness of sensation* which is the constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence’ [SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE]
- ‘An excited or violent feeling ... a strong emotion (e.g. of terror, hope, curiosity, etc.) aroused by some particular occurrence or situation ... the production of violent emotion as an aim in works of literature or art ... a strong impression (e.g. of horror, admiration, surprise, etc.) produced in an audience or body of spectators’

THE
MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO,

A
ROMANCE;

INTERSPERSED WITH SOME PIECES OF POETRY.

BY
ANN RADCLIFFE,
AUTHOR OF THE ROMANCE OF THE FOREST, ETC.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

Fate sits on these dark battlements, and frowns,
And, as the portals open to receive me,
Her voice, in fullen echoes through the courts,
Tells of a nameless deed.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1794.



This attempt to describe the effects of the Sublime & Wonderful is dedicated to M^r G Lewis Esq^r M.P.



J. Callow del. &c.

TALES of WONDER !

Published 1801 (1802) by H. Thompson 49, St James's Street, London.

While Captains Wentworth and Harville led the talk on one side of the room, and by recurring to former days, supplied anecdotes in abundance to occupy and entertain the others, it fell to Anne's lot to be placed rather apart with Captain Benwick; and a very good impulse of her nature obliged her to begin an acquaintance with him. He was shy, and disposed to abstraction ... He was evidently a young man of considerable taste in reading, though principally in poetry; and besides the persuasion of having given him at least an evening's indulgence in the discussion of subjects, which his usual companions had probably no concern in, she had the hope of being of real use to him in some suggestions as to the duty and benefit of struggling against affliction, which had naturally grown out of their conversation.

For, though shy, he did not seem reserved: it had rather the appearance of feelings glad to burst their usual restraints; and having talked of poetry, the richness of the present age, and gone through a brief comparison of opinion as to the first-rate poets, trying to ascertain whether *Marmion* or *The Lady of the Lake* were to be preferred, and how ranked the *Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*, and moreover, how the *Giaour* was to be pronounced, he shewed himself so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he repeated with such tremulous feeling the various lines which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry, and to say that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly.

MARMION;
A Tale
OF FLODDEN FIELD.

BY
WALTER SCOTT, Esq.

*Alas! that Scottish Maid should sing
The combat where her lover fell!
That Scottish Bard should wake the string,
The triumph of our foe to tell!*—LEYDEN.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY J. BALLANTYNE AND CO.
FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY, EDINBURGH;
AND
WILLIAM MILLER, AND JOHN MURRAY, LONDON.
1806.

THE
LADY OF THE LAKE.

A POEM.

BY
WALTER SCOTT, Esq.

THE EIGHTH EDITION.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR
JOHN BALLANTYNE AND CO. EDINBURGH;
AND
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, AND
W. MILLER, LONDON;
By James Ballantyne and Co. Edinburgh.
1810.

THE GIAOUR,

A FRAGMENT OF

A TURKISH TALE.

BY LORD BYRON.

"One fatal circumstance—one sorrow that throws
"It's black shade alike o'er our joys and our woes—
"To which Life nothing brighter nor darker can bring,
"For which joy hath no balm—and affliction no sting."
MOORE.

LONDON:
Printed by T. Davies, Whitefish,
FOR JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.
1815.

THE
BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

A TURKISH TALE.

BY LORD BYRON.

Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met or never parted,
We had not been broken-hearted.
FRANK.

FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:
Printed by Thomas Davies, Whitefish,
FOR JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.
1815.



Stationing himself close by her, he seemed to mean to detach her as much as possible from the rest of the party and to give her the whole of his conversation. He began, in a tone of great taste and feeling, to talk of the sea and the sea shore; and ran with energy through all the usual phrases employed in praise of their sublimity and descriptive of the *undescribable* emotions they excite in the mind of sensibility.

The terrific grandeur of the ocean in a storm, its glass surface in a calm, its gulls and its samphire and the deep fathoms of its abysses, its quick vicissitudes, its direful deceptions, its mariners tempting it in sunshine and overwhelmed by the sudden tempest -- all were eagerly and fluently touched; rather commonplace perhaps, but doing very well from the lips of a handsome Sir Edward, and she could not but think him a man of feeling, till he began to stagger her by the number of his quotations and the bewilderment of some of his sentences. "Do you remember," said he, "Scott's beautiful lines on the sea? Oh! what a description they convey! They are never out of my thoughts when I walk here. That man who can read them unmoved must have the nerves of an assassin! Heaven defend me from meeting such a man unarmed."

‘What description do you mean?’ said Charlotte. ‘I remember none at this moment, of the sea, in either of Scott’s poems.’ ‘Do you not indeed? Nor can I exactly recall the beginning at this moment. But—you cannot have forgotten his description of woman—*Oh. Woman in our hours of ease—* Delicious! Delicious! Had he written nothing more, he would have been immortal.

If ever there was a man who *felt*, it was Burns. Montgomery has all the fire of poetry, Wordsworth has the true soul of it, Campbell in his pleasures of hope has touched the extreme of our sensations—*Like angels' visits, few and far between*. Can you conceive anything more subduing, more melting, more fraught with the deep sublime than that line? But Burns—I confess my sense of his pre-eminence, Miss Heywood. If Scott *has a* fault, it is the want of passion. Tender, elegant, descriptive—but *tame*. The man who cannot do justice to the attributes of woman is my contempt. Sometimes indeed a flash of feeling seems to irradiate him, as in the lines we were speaking of—*Oh. Woman in our hours of ease*—But Burns is always on fire. His soul was the altar in which lovely woman sat enshrined, his spirit truly breathed the immortal incense which is her due.'

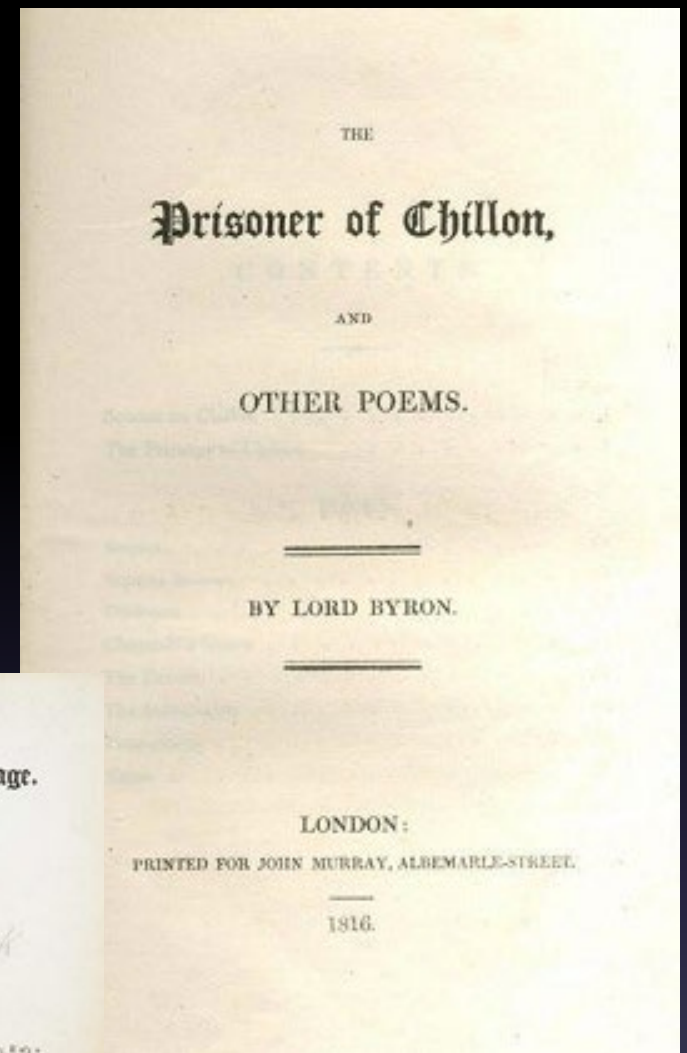
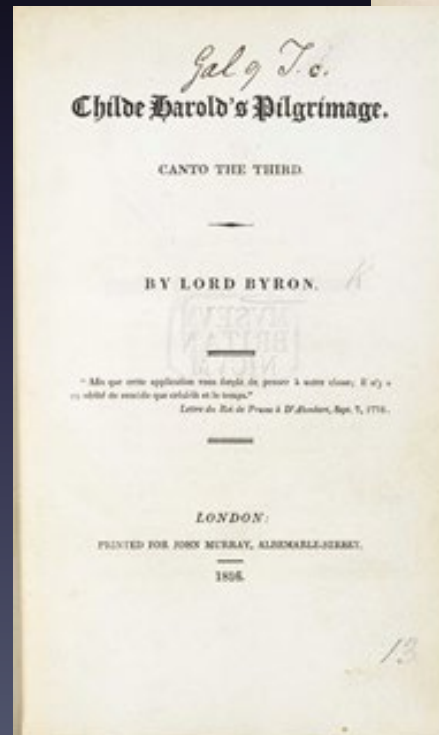
‘I have read several of Burns's poems with great delight,’ said Charlotte as soon as she had time to speak. ‘But I am not poetic enough to separate a man’s poetry entirely from his character; and poor Burns's known irregularities greatly interrupt my enjoyment of his lines. I have difficulty in depending on the *truth* of his feelings as a lover. I have not faith in the *sincerity* of the affections of a man of his description. He felt and he wrote and he forgot.’ ‘Oh! no, no,’ exclaimed Sir Edward in an ecstasy. ‘He was all ardour and truth! His genius and his susceptibilities might lead him into some aberrations -- but who is perfect? It were hypercriticism, it were pseudo-philosophy to expect from the soul of high-toned genius the grovellings of a common mind. The coruscations of talent, elicited by impassioned feeling in the breast of man, are perhaps incompatible with some of the prosaic decencies of life; nor can you, loveliest Miss Heywood,’ speaking with an air of deep sentiment, ‘nor can any woman be a fair judge of what a man may be propelled to say, write or do by the sovereign impulses of illimitable ardour.’ This was very fine—but if Charlotte understood it at all, not very moral; and being moreover by no means pleased with his extraordinary style of compliment, she gravely answered, ‘I really know nothing of the matter. This is a charming day. The wind, I fancy, must be southerly.’ ‘Happy, happy wind, to engage Miss Heywood's thoughts!’ She began to think him downright silly.



If she could not be won by affection, he must carry her off. He knew his business. Already had he had many musings on the subject. If he *were* constrained so to act, he must naturally wish to strike out something new, to exceed those who had gone before him; and he felt a strong curiosity to ascertain whether the neighbourhood of Timbuctoo might not afford some solitary house adapted for Clara's reception. But the expense, alas! of measures in that masterly style was ill-suited to his purse; and prudence obliged him to prefer the quietest sort of ruin and disgrace for the object of his affections to the more renowned.



John Murray II,
publisher of both
Lord Byron and Jane Austen



It is always difficult to separate the literary character of a man who lives in our own time from his personal character. It is peculiarly difficult to make this separation in the case of Lord Byron. For it is scarcely too much to say that Lord Byron never wrote without some reference, direct or indirect, to himself. The interest excited by the events of his life mingles itself in our minds, and probably in the minds of almost all our readers, with the interest which properly belongs to his works.

MACAULAY ON BYRON

John Martin, illustration
of Byron's *Manfred*



In the wind's eye I have sailed and sail, but for
The stars, I own my telescope is dim.
But at the least I have shunned the common shore,
And leaving land far out of sight, would skim
The ocean of eternity. The roar
Of breakers has not daunted my slight, trim,
But still seaworthy skiff, and she may float
Where ships have foundered, as doth many a boat.

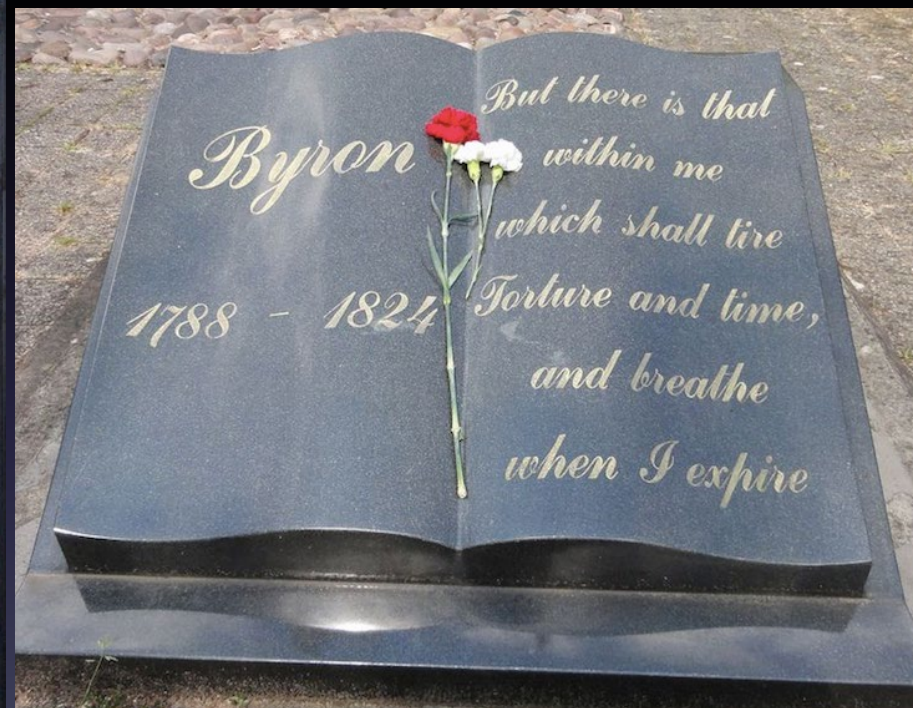
(Don Juan, canto 10)

Weigh'd in the balance, hero dust
Is vile as vulgar clay.

Thy scales, Mortality! are just
To all that pass away

...

Or like the thief of fire from heaven,
Wilt thou withstand the shock?
And share with him, the unforgiven,
His vulture and his rock!
Foredoomed by God—by man accurst,
And that last act, though not thy worst,
The very Fiend's arch mock;
He in his fall preserv'd his pride,
And if a mortal, had as proudly died!



Byron 1788 - 1824 *But there is that within me which shall live
Fortune and time, and breathe when I expire*

