BYRON AND THE SYMBOLISM OF HIS POETRY AND POLITICS

All art is by definition symbolic, that is, a partial representation of what is a complex and sometimes inexplicable whole.

At one time, there was belief in a universe where power, politics and art were intertwined, and sought a unified culture founded on nature. Myth and religion were in the earlier stages identified as one, and absorbed difference. Cultural isolation served to propound those views which offered a sense of integrity and wholeness to the particular society.

Lord Byron as a classicist and poet had a unique awareness of his own provenance from earlier cultures, and knew that the more advanced the civilisation, the more humankind became out of touch with myth and nature. Byron’s impulse was to go backward towards myth rather than forward to rationale, and indeed the link between early religion and nature in the creation of poetry was part of his theme, written about so eloquently in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (Canto 3, Stanza 91)

Nor vainly did the early Persian make  
His altar the high places and the peak  
Of earth-o’ergazing mountains, and thus take  
A fit and unwalled temple, there to seek  
The Spirit, in whose honour shrines are weak,  
Upreared of human hands. Come, and compare  
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,  
With Nature’s realms of worship, earth and air,  
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer!

As a poet, Byron was aware that what happens as civilisation advances is that the myth becomes diffused and less potent, and his work was to create new myth, using symbols to convey complex realities.
Plato’s Republic was the first step away from myth, based as it was on the need for ordering society, through reason and philosophy, while Aristotle defines words as symbols of 'affections of the soul' or mental experiences. Symbolism is inherent in the very nature of thought, as argued by James A. Notolpoulos in his paper “The Symbolism of the Sun and Light in the Republic”, who wrote that symbolism in Plato is not merely the expression of a poet who gets the better of the philosopher but the result of the limitations of the human mind and its compromise with probability.”

As Plato taught, poetry has been problematic in the discourse of politics because it is drawn to beauty, and to the emotions aroused by beauty, which are not rational but based on nature and myth. And if we look back to the first Republic, Plato’s, we see that he found it necessary to banish the poets, because their appeal to the emotions and to aesthetics prevented them from making rational, therefore “good”, decisions. Further on, T. S. Eliot identified and located the division in Western culture, between thought and feeling, as the dissociation of sensibility which became particularly marked in the 17th century, as outlined in his famous essay in 1921 “The Metaphysical Poets”. By the twentieth century, the division in sensibility that Eliot had noted had widened to a gulf, and created modernism, which eschewed romanticism or emotion altogether as it tried to emulate the sights and sounds of the modern machine world.

Byron was one of the few Romantic poets to be directly involved in politics, and to understand the powerful interaction of symbolism with poetry and politics. Byron’s poetry is particularly exemplary of this conjunction between symbol, thought and action, through his own figuration as a poet, and together with his written oeuvre, he rehearses for his own public and for us who are acquainted with his legacy the possibilities of becoming involved in the causes and results of political action.
His writing is at its most political when it is most symbolic: (CHP3, 18)

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo!
How in an hour the power which gave annuls
Its gifts, transferring fame as fleeting too!
In ’pride of place’ here last the eagle flew,
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain,
Pierced by the shaft of banded nations through:
Ambition's life and labours all were vain;
He wears the shattered links of the world's broken chain.

This is where the symbol not only inhabits the verse, but animates it until it transcends its form and becomes more complex and more universal than any narrative of history.

Where he is most political, he is using a symbol to articulate those historical realities which by their nature are too complex for a straight-line plotting of deeds in aspiration or in sequence.

Byron’s interface with politics took place in real time, in history, and thus has a claim on actuality. He is the only major poet, with few exceptions as cited below, in our times to have managed to do both to a level where he is in the public awareness with all the resonance of myth, while retaining a historical dimension. Byron is a great poet precisely because he is both a poet of reason, that is thinking, and of emotion.

Byron was born at a time of tremendous tumult in politics, on the very eve of the French revolution, which came into being in the years after Byron’s birth. Revolution was the act, both real and symbolic, where the unnatural edifices and structures of society were torn down in an effort to be at one with the natural and the emotional, so in a sense it was going backwards, to Nature, qua Rousseau.

Byron understood this dualism of poetry and politics as a personal intuition, from his earliest writings “Fugitive Pieces” which were expressions of emotion in a new found personality, and which took place simultaneously with the development of his political thought which
took the form of his admiration of a supremely powerful individual, the political figure, Napoleon, the eagle referred to above in Canto 3, stanza 18 in “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” who has indomitable skills as leader and can inspire many to act in his name.

There are two ways of looking at a symbol, what it means and what it does. When the meaning coincides with actuality or history, that is poetry and politics, they work together through symbols to attain the power and unity of myth. They are like two tokens which joined together to make a whole. Byron is the great exemplar of this comprehensive unity of thought and action, and is probably one of the last great poets of what symbolism can do in a positive sense. He did not jettison the spiritual and emotional values as often his contemporaries did in their search to found a new order on reason.

However, while Byron’s poetry draws on symbols to draw out meaning from political figures, he himself became symbolic as the figure of the poet. This figure of the poet has been a powerful symbol in itself, down to our day, the poet who represents, more than anything the very notion of possibility, and politics has been defined as the art of the possible. Despite the lamentable history, the interplay between poetry and politics is vital to our culture. In the ordinary political sphere it is precisely the banished emotions of love and beauty that can influence decisively the turn of events. In modern elections the newspapers are both factoid and yet at the same time drum up emotional response through a personality cult, which can have an invidious effect on debate and government since they arrive at an image for a politician which is simultaneously a cartoon and an impossible expectation of the need of wish fulfilment on a personal level from the voters. Byron remains above these cardboard cut-out characters because of the speech acts of his poetry which are original and which spring from his own ethical concerns, are coextensive with his beauty and his heroic aspirations, and furthermore he found a publisher who did not exploit him for merely
pecuniary ends as publishers tend to do today but rather held him and his work in a considerable respect and upheld him to his public.

A poet such as Byron articulates and makes available to us the sensibility of a new cosmos without loss to the multiplicity of meanings that the very idea of freedom and rebellion conjure up.

He writes in his note to the third Canto of “Child Harold’s Pilgrimage”

*In July 1816 I made a voyage round the Lake of Geneva: and, as far as my own observations have led me in a not uninterested nor inattentive survey of all the scenes most celebrated by Rousseau in his ‘Heloise’ I can safely say, that in this there is no exaggeration. It would be difficult to see Clarens.. without being forcibly struck with its peculiar adaptation to the persons and events with which it has been peopled. But this is not all; the feeling with which all around Clarens, and the opposite rocks of Meillerie is invested, is of a still higher and more comprehensive order than the mere sympathy with individual passion; it is a sense of the existence of love in its most extended and sublime capacity, and of our own participation of its good and of its glory: it is the great principle of the universe, which is there more condensed, but not less manifested; and of which, though knowing ourselves a part, we lose our individuality, and mingle in the beauty of the whole.*

It is not enough to say that at this point in his life he was merely following Wordsworth. Nor was he in love with any particular person at the time. What has happened is that the symbolic meaning of a place has given him the transcendent whole. Symbols are powerful markers throughout his whole oeuvre, and remembered well by his public, as in lyrics such as “She Walks in Beauty” when the woman, the night, and beauty are intertwined to achieve an effect
which amplifies them in part and in whole, as in “So We’ll Go No More A-Roving” he achieves an effect as universal as the soul which outwears the breast.

Symbolism is at the heart of poetry, and in our time, though we are in a sea of multiple meanings, we still seek, through meditation and mediation, and through poetry, a unified wholeness within and without, and we find this in Byron’s words. It is the journey, not the destination, and it progresses through poetry. However because in society and in human nature there is always the division between emotion and reason, and the distancing from nature, symbols allow only a partial representation, and calls forth a understanding when the part can represent the whole, as Byron did. This partial representation is foundational to how we view things today. It is this partial representation that allows the mind to be still and concentrate on an image, which in turn gives rise to language, itself a coded symbolism of sound, which in turn addresses the multiplicity of experience and the real world.

As a poet, Byron in his essence symbolises the revolutionary ideal, freedom, even to the point that the ambiguity and dissonance of its being played out in history, between the idealisation of the people and the absolute and potential power of politics, which only poetry can address.

The poet today holds no political power. If the poet has to decide between reason and the emotions, he is at once enthroned in his subjectivity or objectivity whichever he is drawn to; his writing can lose its effectiveness, as when the heavy inanition of the poet’s promise is weighed down by day-to-day materialist concerns that now need, in a market culture, to be translated into bread. The Romans had bread and circuses, the Romantics bread and roses, but they forgot, with the exception of Byron, that over the chains of rationality and civilisation they had merely thrown a heap of flowers that atrophied and died by the gaze and wilful blindness of the audience, who during the period of post-Enlightenment Romanticism more than in any modern other era resembled the mob.
If we look at the iconography of Revolution, “Liberty Leading the People”

which was painted by Delacroix for the revolution of 1830 but which has come to symbolise the earlier revolution in 1789, we see a woman holding aloft a banner, so it is doubly symbolic, or even triply symbolic, the people representing the untold multitudes, the dead and maimed at her feet, and the woman, bare-breasted and free from the constraints of clothing which would confine her to a section, or class of society, yet wearing the Phrygian slave cap and carrying the banner, with its contrasting colours. Delacroix depicted Liberty as both an allegorical goddess-figure and a robust woman of the people, and which had something in common with the Social Realist movement in the communist countries in the mid-20th century.

There we have seen the excess of rationalism become, in an even darker emotion, love of power and control. The division between thought and feeling became even more intrinsically problematic in this era of the Russian revolutionary state when the central core of
intelligentsia, the poets, were banished in the fictive notion of power being seized on a temporary yet permanent basis by the most conservative who were also the most coercive: hence the more radical and personal, the more romantic the poetry the more it became an obstacle in building a state on reason and rational perspectives and ends, to the point that artists and poets were persecuted and driven to extinction by the dictates of moral values translated into the clumsy aesthetics of social realism, proving that the more conservative romantics were more attuned to the power of art than were social revolutionaries and reformers.

It was a power-induced myopia, and simple human intransigence in the face of experience. Having banished emotion, they still needed symbols; in fact the symbol became a necessary bridge between the idealised political trajectory and the stasis at the centre of conservative cohesion. But in that era, which is relatively recent, the symbol was obvious, coarse, lacking in the necessary mystery which relates to the totality of the cosmos, it has more or less become a sign. Therefore, a symbol cannot fully exhaust its meanings, often, when it tries to do so as in this case, it denotes a vacancy in the integrity of the society as a whole. In our era of decadence, with its true meaning of “falling from”, it isn’t possible to see the full implications of romanticism, which were more visible in the early stages. But we are aware of its implications.

Byron has a poet even in the period of revolutionary and rational excess did not lose his potency as a symbol, especially as a political symbol. In the portrait of him in his Albanian costume, by Thomas Phillips, which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery,
we can see that he represents an at one-ness with the people, a willingness not only to take up their cause, but to be one with them. The aristocrat in folk costume is a powerful image because only an aristocrat can truly symbolise freedom, his privilege translated into a pure act of will which will transform society. It is the will, also, of the general public who elected Napoleon, Byron’s hero. This image of Byron denoting freedom and freely choosing a people, can be amplified to multiple meanings, with freedom at the core, signalling for example one aspect, such as our contemporary obsession with identity, where gender fluidity and a soft line between classes and castes is the most du jour and which has won for Byron identification with these causes in the years since his death and down to our own day.

We can surmise therefore that the poet as symbolic figure holds a unifying function over the complexities of culture or existence.
Among the many narratives of today, however, the figure or symbol of the poet can become lost and his or her power diluted. What we have then is representational art, or abstract art both of which are one-dimensional, and however consummate the artist, the end result may be reduction and replication. Byron, while he symbolises the way we understand romanticism as a lexicon of emotion, also symbolises the progress of our reason, and these aspects of Byron’s myth helps to symbolise and heal the divide.

In the years since the great revolutions we can also see the inheritance of the application of reason. We can see how poetry can imbue the actors with emotional intensity and purpose, and that often it is once read, it has to be re-enacted and performed before an ever-hungry audience, who will be pushed forward by its propensity to dramatise and hence propel them to enact their political desires and predicaments. It is important therefore that the symbols cohere and do not obstruct or obscure the reality of political action.

Byron’s work predates the French symbolists by almost half-a-century, and anticipates studies by those such as Jung who in the last century tried to schematize symbols as working at the unconscious level: indeed Jung believed that too direct access to symbols was dangerous, as what happened in Germany in the nineteen thirties, when the icons and symbols of national identity were orchestrated and manipulated to what became barbaric acts resulting in tragedy and catastrophe. Therefore Romanticism has its dangers, its source as concern with nature was a worthy enterprise in its day and drew out poetic energies which were healing and transcendent, but as we have seen in exemplars such as Wagner, how this can be unfortunately misinterpreted through symbols in the field of political action.

However, if symbols retain their unifying cohesion without cost to the exiguous need to reign in the unconscious, the poetry or art can achieve a high and resonant note in the culture. In Byron’s work, the extraordinary thing is that poetry works both ways, both in the figure of
the poet as a powerful living symbol and by using the language of discourse to invigorate and extend and sustain this symbol. Without this interlocking of poet and symbol which the Greeks defined the word, we are left either with impotent political leaders who lack an emotional dimension or with poets who opine and ventilate but who are not taken seriously except in a sort of Sunday school secularism. The division of poetry and politics and the distance from myth needs a nuanced balance, without this we risk the danger which in the past has given us the barren landscapes and waste lands that T. S. Eliot, wrote about so eloquently, and which ended up either in the Gulags or in the death camps of Auschwitz. Therefore, as well as Byron the great Romantic, we have Byron the Thinker as portrayed by Richard Westall in 1813, also in the National Portrait Gallery.
predating the famous **Thinker by Rodin** by more than 100 years, the latter in the intervening years an illustration of what has been lost, reduced possibilities, and multi-dimensionality eroded.

![The Thinker by Rodin](image)

It is part of Byron’s charm that not only is he the perfect emotional vector for love and freedom, but his political actions show that he is a thinker of the first degree. However, from early on, he chose to emphasise his poetry, so his political actions fall into an intermediary ground best understood as symbolic acts rather than historical deeds. On attaining his majority, he wrote to his solicitor, John Hanson, on 15 January, 1809, making his position plain:
“I shall take my seat (in the House of Lords) as soon as circumstances will admit. I have not yet chosen my side in politics, nor shall I hastily commit myself with professions, or pledge my support to any men or measures, but though I shall not run headlong into opposition, I will studiously avoid a connection with ministry... I shall stand aloof, speak what I think, but not often, nor too soon, I will preserve my independence, if possible, but if involved with a party, I will take care not to be the last or least in the Ranks. As to patriotism, the word is obsolete, perhaps improperly so, for all men in this country are patriots, knowing that their own existence must stand or fall with the Constitution, yet everybody thinks he could alter it for the better.” (qtd. in Joanna Richardson, 23, from Marchand, Byron’s Letters and Journals, Vol. 1, 57-8)

His position therefore was for a free conscience, and to take up those matters which were bound up with freedom, based on his foundational admiration for Napoleon, who embodied the personal will at its most powerful. Byron’s maiden speech in the House of Lords in 1812 which defended the frame-breakers, was in defence of freedom, but given around the same time as he had published English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, which strongly indicated where his energies lay, in literary causes and battles, which all but exhausted his enthusiasm for a life as orator. So from the beginning Byron’s political speeches and acts had a symbolic quality, that is to say only took up part of his energy: he quickly found he had not the patience to deal with the daily discipline of life as a politician of causes. He already showed signs of having a disinclination for well worn parliamentary politics and of favouring Dionysius rather than Apollo: before setting out on his travels, he was giving parties at Newstead, which marked his reputation as a young buck given to drinking a great deal of wine and having a great deal of fun (Richardson, 25) but may reflect, in modern understanding of psychology, a healthy reaction to the earlier indoctrination of Calvinism.
propounded by his nursemaids who abused him. But the image of the libertine has stuck. It has stuck to the point where Byron has come to symbolise romantic excess and passionate abandon, whereas we should also remember that Byron worked very hard almost every day on his writing.

As regards his direct political actions, we know that in his days in Ravenna with the Guiccioli family he stored guns in his house, but there is no record that he ever used them. It may be that his links with the Carbonari in Italy were more a symbolic association, based on his love of Italy and his love of an Italian woman, Teresa, whose family were involved in the struggle for an independent Italy. What plans he may have made have been lost to posterity, and we can never be quite sure what these political links were with the suppressed organisation, the Carbonari, as his transcripts of his time and the record of the nature of his allegiance to them were given to a Venetian friend Angelo Mengaldo, and, these were thrown into the sea in Venice (described by Iris Origo in her book *The Last Attachment*).

Peter Cochran has dealt with Byron’s Romantic Politics in his book, and the problem of metahistory. Although Dr Cochran might overplay the role of Byron’s sexuality in the poet’s political decision making, particularly in Byron’s going to Greece to take up the cause of independence, (in the company of Teresa’s brother Pietro) as when Cochran surmises that Byron had tired of Teresa Guiccioli and was interested in pursuing homoerotic experiences, his books are, on the whole, a valuable counterweight to exaggeration that Byronism tends to lend itself to, but I still think the power of myth and symbolism more important to the public than the actual historical context. I find myself in agreement, therefore with Professor Roderick Beaton’s argument in a recent lecture in Dublin, (2012) that there was a Promethean quest underlying Byron’s action in Greece. However I found Dr Cochran’s book to be very useful in emphasising the historical record in cases where he writes about how Byron made political distinctions, as, for example, between French revolutionary figures, and
also how Byron’s political thought was not fully developed, for example, in his belief that
reform and revolution as being identical. The crucial difference between reform and
revolution has been a topic in a recent review by Jonathan Israel, the Enlightenment scholar
in the TLS, but we must remember that in Byron’s time in the early decades of the 1800s it
was not possible to have this clear analysis of overview. Hence the poetry in this instance
provides a more reliable index, for example, Byron at the battlefield place of skulls in Childe
Harold in Canto 3, and in Canto 4 the roll-call of civilisations which have fallen due to
human fallibility, while his early poems point to lessons learnt from the classics such as the
lines written on his first European tour when he was just twenty-one years old.

*Through cloudless skies in silvery sheen*

*Full beams the moon on Actium’s coast*

*And on these waves, for Egypt’s queen,*

*The ancient world was won and lost.*

Critics like Bernard Blackstone have remarked on the classical economy of such writing,
marking Byron’s emergence at this point as a major poet, and he only twenty-one. I draw the
reader’s attention as to how the naming of place can create a cosmos; here a brief reference
recreates the ancient classical world, an act of symbolism which creates a doorway into it.

In relation to Byron’s last voyage, the expedition to Greece Dr Cochran’s book gives
examples from Byron’s letters and journals as to Byron’s real state of mind when embarking
on an action, for example, he quotes from Lady Blessington’s “Conversations with Lord
Byron” (Medwin) that he wanted to demonstrate that his taking up the Greek cause was more
an affair of principle than feeling (Cochran 315), though the lady seems to have been
unconvinced.
However, to many of Byron’s admirers, his last political act has been looked upon as real politick: and he had a most definite role in fund-raising and in marshalling an army for Greek independence. However, it is his early death before the battle, from multiple causes due to medical incompetence after his contracting pneumonia while out on a walk, which to this day marks his participation in the Greek struggle.

What is remembered is a vital call to reincorporating the revolutionary ideal, as written about by the late Right Honourable Michael Foot who has described it as the most famous of all the great songs of liberty.

_The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece_

_Where burning Sappho loved and sung_

which “captivated an audience at once, and has never seemed to lose its brightness and force and summons to resistance.” It is resonant to this day, and is coupled with the symbolism of his early death, giving us an ambiguous representation of what death in revolution means. Because the actions of revolution spill over to violence, there inhabits, at its centre, a ghostly presence and prescience of what might have been, lambent possibilities that are forever inspirational but also conflated with violent deeds so the picture becomes a mask of double effect: murder/accomplice, action/defeat of the revolutionary ideal - hence it is also necessary to see that at its most essential this symbol embodies the act in a bloodless way, for example, in the iconography of a hero’s death, such as this painting of Byron’s deathbed scene, by Joseph Denis Odevaere (1825) in the Groenigsmuseum Bruges, Belgium, which is
powerful symbol of youth sacrificed in a noble cause.

The painting of Byron’s death also bears a relationship to the iconography of Christ and his self-sacrifice at a similar age. The painting by the Russian Borovikovksy of Christ in the tomb was made towards the end of the artist’s life in 1825, just a year after Byron’s death. It is probably that the image of Byron on his death bed gains is power by a powerful, even unconscious identification with Christ.
And that figure of a god in the throes of dying harks back even further. The symbolism of Byron’s early death and self-sacrifice in heroic action can be understood as another retelling of the story in Ancient Egypt of Isis and Osiris. Here, dismemberment and death of the hero are central to the myth. This myth has two key motifs: love, and destruction of a loved one. Osiris was first a nature god, embodying the spirit of vegetation when he ascended the Egyptian throne, Osiris took his sister Isis as his wife, (this does not necessarily
signify incest, and it may very well be that in practice the aspects of fraternal love were combined in the idea of marriage for example the word sister and woman were cognate in Egypt). However this possibility adds another dimension to Byron’s life as a mythical symbol in that his relationship with his half-sister symbolised the ancient sacred bond as well as over-throwing the assumptions of society based on family. Byron’s relationship with Augusta was a way to simultaneously endorse and rupture that narrative, which also indicates an early post-modern sensibility which adds an irony to the story of rupture coupled as it is with the actuality of a modern scandal, foregrounding historicity with myth.

Therefore, like the story of Osiris, Byron’s biographical sketch as a more than modern libertine also works on a symbolic level, as a metaphor for energies to do with sex, birth, trauma, and death. **Osiris was King of the Dead** which is a symbol of love destroyed by the elder brother Seth, who cut up Osiris’s body which Isis then had to search for to reassemble. A further reading in the modern context is that Byron’s story and his love poetry can be read as a symbol of the corpus of knowledge and authority to be challenged: therefore it can be seen as a critique of the compartmentalisation of knowledge, that poets are on a quest to rediscover, for example the figure of Byron can symbolise the “I” in agency of a fractured fragmented society, and of the unresolved complexities in a living, (but simultaneously dead) culture, which they as poets challenge and rebel against in their search for unity and integrity. (See illustration from “Flight into Reality” by Rosemarie Rowley, the present writer.)
Byron has taken over the role of the god underground today, symbol of the powers of creativity driven from our rational society, but always about to be resurrected through his poetry of love and the power actions in his politics, which are inseparable, and form a caduceus of healing.

Further, the death of Osiris remains a powerful symbol of the underworld, (4) suggesting the shady depths of Byron’s life, the prostitutes, the boys, the multiplicity of partners as distinct from the ordered world of marriage envisioned by society, but also that he was a victim of this society.

So Byron is not only the dying god, but also the god of fertility and possibility. He indeed may be a modern Osiris.
And I here argue that the **Byron myth** is more powerful than ever, and the part played by his politics was as engagement with an intellectual energy that was only partially rational and partly understood.

The symbol also works as a transfer mechanism, in which the private or national psyche of one country can be imposed on the situation in another.

After Byron, poets tend to espouse cultural nationalism, as did Yeats in his symbolic poems, such as “The Red Rose Tree” while Heaney has written of the need to make history and poetry rhyme, though eschewing direct involvement in politics himself, save as the voice of conscience in the republic. These poets of cultural nationalism have their ancestry in Byron.

There is in our time a return, the everlasting revolution, to nature, a modified kind of nature, such as is found in the poetry of Wallace Stevens, while Czeslaw Miloz carries on an engagement with politics in the modern world, again, he tends towards the diplomatic rather than the revolutionary pose.
Byron tried to re-integrate poets into the fabric of politics. And in this he succeeded very well. To this day, he is revered in Greece, home of Plato and Aristotle, but world-wide he symbolises the need to advance the modern concept of all art being possible along with politics, even if none of these are capable of being fully realised.

All symbols depend for their ultimate meaning on a futurity that cannot be told, and a present that is not fully present because it is caught in the manifold complexities of what symbol and myth work at in human consciousness and unconsciousness.

So it is not surprising why Byron remains such an enigmatic figure, precisely because his ultimate meaning to any given audience in a particular place is to some extent unknowable, therefore he symbolises what is universal.

Politics and Poetry correlate through symbols: action and thought in suspension and in balance with each other. There is no need after all to banish the poets, although from time to time in period of romantic excess, such as popular music today, the prospect of banishing them can be tempting.

Byron remains the only poet in the Romantic era to bestride the world and relate to it in the field of action, as a Colossus, with his feet in both the camps of rationality and emotion. His political actions, though largely symbolic, have been as potent as his romantic lover legacy. He is immortalised, and is never completely dead, therefore he also has a continuing ongoing dialogue with ideas of resurrection. This also ties in with the embryonic Christianity he expressed towards the end of his life, in empathising and sympathising with Jesus, whom he believed, were he to come again, would endure the same fate of crucifixion. (Medwin, Conversations of Byron with Lady Blessington).
Therefore this tentative exploration in Byron meets the symbolism of resurrection, real and imagined, and although he often despised the cant of his native land, he remains as potent as the figure of Albion dancing a resurrection. It is as if, following Byron’s death in Missolonghi after the inclusive insurrection, we await a Resurrection, for some of us it is a Christian resurrection in the tradition, for others it is Albion and Jerusalem comes to
England’s fair and pleasant land.

So Byron’s connection with us remains at a deeper level whose source is myth: his works are immortalised in our culture and already have passed the human span and are a living embodiment in our culture, both political and poetical.

Politics is the art of the possible, poetry the art of the visionary. Byron may have died hors du combat, but there was no doubt he was intricately involved in that combat through his poetry and his aspirations for a better world.
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