

Institution: King's College London
Unit of Assessment: 31 Classics / Centre for Hellenic Studies
Title of case study: Understanding modern Greek identity – Byron and the founding of the Greek nation-state.
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Following on earlier research which re-examined the construction of modern Greece, in 2008-12 Beaton researched the contribution of Byron (and Romanticism) to the creation of the Greek nation-state in the early 19th century, and has published the results in his 2013 book (3.4). The principal impact of Beaton's researches has been to challenge traditional Greek cultural and social assumptions about the continuity of their national identity from the ancient world. The main pathway is his distinctive contribution to the 200-year Greek debate about their national identity which has been intensified by the current socio-economic crisis. The principal beneficiaries are the Greek people, as reflected in public discourse in their mass media, and the non-Greek public interested in these issues. Other nascent beneficiaries are the worldwide community of Byron enthusiasts through cultural enrichment in their knowledge and understanding of Byron's role in creating modern Greece.
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) In 2005-09 Professor Roderick Beaton (at King's since 1981), with his colleagues Dr Philip Carabott (until 2011), and Professors Alexandra Georgakopoulou and David Ricks (both whole period), researched and promoted new approaches to the debate about the 19th-century construction of a Greek national identity. In September 2006 they organised an international interdisciplinary conference at King's on <i>The Making of Modern Greece (1797-1896)</i> , with 36 papers by historians, literary specialists, political and social scientists, linguists, and historians of religion. In 2009 Beaton and Ricks published a volume of essays commissioned from selected contributors to the conference, themselves included (3.1). The conference and volume, and other outputs (e.g. 3.2), which reflected current scholarship on contemporary cases of nation-building, proposed fresh insights into the historiographical, literary and other sources for the 19th-century construction of Greek national identity, and for the first time explored the cultural and ideological processes at work within it. This research challenged the long-held Greek self-definition of their national identity as the 'continuation' of ancient Greek civilisation and hence 'exceptional' among modern nations. Instead Beaton advocated treating Greece, the first new nation-state to be established and internationally recognised in 19th-century Europe (in 1830), as a paradigm for comparative studies of nationalism. In 2008 Beaton developed a personal project to re-examine the iconic role of Lord Byron in the Greek Revolution of the 1820s, using the extensive Greek and other unpublished sources he had located. The aim was to situate Byron's involvement with Greece in relation to his biography and Romantic poetics on the one hand, and to the emergent politics of the Greek state during the 1820s on the other. The project was supported by a Major Leverhulme Fellowship from September 2009 to August 2012. Following some previews of his ideas (e.g. 3.3), the resulting monograph, <i>Byron's War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution</i> (3.4), demonstrates that Byron was far more than a 'romantic' victim at Missolonghi, but had consciously transformed himself into a 'new statesman'. In the political confrontation between modernisers (supporters of a central government and European-style constitution) and warlords (with a localist ideology based on an ideal of self-sufficiency), Byron was a dedicated promoter of the former option, and thus had a decisive - and previously unrecognised - effect on the <i>internal</i> politics of revolutionary Greece, which resulted in the precocious formation of a nation-state six years after his death. Thus the debate about Greek political identity, which has since re-surfaced many times in Greek history and is again live today, can be traced directly back to the 1820s and the involvement of Byron and other western philhellenes in the political formation of the Greek nation-state (cf. 3.4).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1. R. Beaton and D. Ricks (eds), *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism and the Uses of the Past (1797-1896)*. Ashgate, 2009 [with chapters by both editors; all contributions refereed].
- 3.2. R. Beaton, 'Antique nation? "Hellenes" on the eve of Greek independence and in twelfth-century Byzantium.' *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 31/1 (2007) 79-98 [refereed journal].
- 3.3. R. Beaton, 'From ancient to modern: Byron, Shelley, and the idea of Greece', *The Athens Dialogues* 1 (2010) [refereed e-journal at: <http://athensdialogues.chs.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/athensdialogues.woa/wa/dist?dis=17>] (6,000 words).
- 3.4. R. Beaton, *Byron's War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, 2013 [xviii + 338 pp; peer reviewed; main outcome of a Major Leverhulme Fellowship (2009-2012) for 36 months, worth £136,476].

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

a) The main impact of Beaton's specified research to date has been on Greek public discourse, to the benefit of the Greek public and all others interested in modern Greek national identity.

Ever since the early 1800s a conspicuous strand in Greek public discourse has been devoted to the question of defining modern Greek identity in relation to the ancient past, and since the 1850s also the Byzantine past. For a century and a half this discourse has been dominated by insistence on the 'continuity' of the Greek nation from antiquity to the present. The research described here joins forces with recent work by academic historians in Greece (e.g. Kitromilides, Liakos, Michaelides, Veremis) to challenge that assumption, and itself derives in part from a heated exchange in the Greek national press between public intellectuals Nasos Vayenas and Antonis Liakos on this issue in 2005, as is more fully explained in Beaton's 2007 paper (3.2). A new impetus was given to this clash of ideologies in Greek public discourse with the financial and social crisis that began in 2010.

It was at exactly this time (October-December 2010) that Beaton was in Athens conducting documentary research for *Byron's War*, and was able to take opportunities to present the results of his and his colleagues' recent research directly to the Greek public. He was immediately invited to give the interviews described below and to speak at the Onassis Foundation, primarily because of his pre-existing public reputation in Greece as an authoritative (and fluent Greek-speaking) commentator on Greek culture and identity built up from widespread interest in his 2003 book on the poet and leading intellectual George Seferis (the Greek translation issued in 2003 sold 10,000 copies in 6 months, making it a best-seller) and because of his expertise attested by numerous publications in Greek, on related issues, since the early 1990s.

On 14 November 2010 *To Vima*, the national newspaper of the Centre-Left, published a 1,500-word interview of Beaton by Markos Karasarinis; on 9 January 2011 *I Kathimerini*, the national newspaper of the Centre-Right, published an 1,800-word interview by Ilias Manglinis (5.1). The latter focussed on Beaton's profile as a researcher into and commentator on modern Greek history and culture, the former on issues such whether the revolutionary nature of the foundation of the Greek nation has yet been generally appreciated, and whether on the Romantic model intellectuals should be men of action. Beaton's invited paper to the high-profile *Athens Dialogues* organised by the Onassis Foundation at its Centre for Arts and Letters on 24-27 November 2010 (3.3, 5.2), on Byron, Shelley and the idea of Greece (previewing his ongoing research), was warmly received by an audience of several hundred and streamed worldwide to an audience claimed by the organisers at 40,000. This led to more interviews in the Greek national media during the event (details not kept), to Beaton's participation in a public discussion of the current Greek crisis, again at the Onassis Centre, on 13 December 2012, attended by several hundred members of the public, including former prime minister Kostas Simitis (5.2), and an hour-long in-depth interview on the *Apostrofos* programme on national radio (ET3) broadcast on 4 April 2011. Interviews with Beaton

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on Byron and the foundation of the Greek state were made for inclusion in the serialised TV documentary *1821* on the Greek Revolution of the 1820s, which was broadcast on the independent channel Skai in 8 hour-long episodes during early 2011 (and subsequently issued as a DVD), and in another high-profile TV documentary (for *The Time Machine* programme) on the same topic, broadcast by the national channel ET1 on 25 March 2012, the National Day of Greece, and again on 25 March 2013. (Note: the national ET radio and TV service was closed down by the government in June 2013, so corroborative data are now irretrievable.)

These forms of public engagement in Greece secured wide dissemination for the results of the King's conference and volume and of work-in-progress on Beaton's Byron project, and brought Beaton and his work directly into public discourse on the hotly controversial topic of modern Greek identity, a rare achievement for a non-Greek (5.3). This impact is ongoing and sustainable, and now merging with the impact of Beaton's book on Byron (see end of b) below).

b) The more recent, and still developing, impact of Beaton's work on Byron is on public knowledge and understanding of Byron, to the benefit, through cultural enhancement, of the international general public interested in Byron, the Romantic poets and Greek history.

Public dissemination of Beaton's discoveries about the political significance of Byron's contribution to the Greek revolution began in spring 2011, while research was still in progress, through invited lectures to local Byron Societies at, for example, London, Edinburgh, Dublin, and Missolonghi (Greece). These independent public-interest societies co-operate through an international association, and aim to provide events, information and contacts for Byron enthusiasts everywhere (5.4). Beaton made available previously unknown documents about Byron's role, which he had identified in archives in Athens, for public dissemination on a non-academic website maintained on behalf of the International Byron Society (5.5). As a result, King's was invited by the President of The Byron Society (London), to bid to host the 39th International Byron Conference in 2013, an annual forum for worldwide public interest in Byron. The bid was accepted by the International Byron Society, with a budget of £10,000 provided by The Byron Society (London) - a concrete expression of interest in and support for the research and public profile of Beaton and his colleagues, and the conference took place at King's on 1-6 July 2013. Beaton was chair of the Programme and Organising Committees, and himself a plenary speaker. There were 124 registered participants (despite a registration fee of £250) from 22 countries, mostly amateur enthusiasts, writers and journalists, and a few academics. The theme, building on and extending Beaton's research on Byron's activities in Greece, was *Byron: the Poetry of Politics and the Politics of Poetry*. Feedback forms and individual messages to Beaton attest to the public cultural enrichment derived from this event (5.6): the many positive (anonymous) comments include 'it certainly had an impact on my approach to Byron's poetry and politics'. The President of the Missolonghi Byron Society has invited Beaton to address her members again in 2014 because, she writes, 'From what we heard . . . your work is going to change the way we think about the British hero of our Independence'; the President of the Byron Society (London), commenting on the success of the conference, continued: 'I think your new book *Byron's War* has had, and indeed will continue to have, a significant impact on the way both Byronists, historians and enthusiastic amateurs view Byron's role in the Greek War of Independence and the origins of the modern Greek state. As you know the Byron Society comprises predominantly non-academics and this is very much the sort of area that society members are interested in.'

In tandem with the conference, the exhibition *Byron and Politics: 'Born for Opposition'* opened on 24 June 2013 (continuing to 25 September) at the Maughan Library, King's College London, in collaboration with the National Library of Scotland. This brings together for the first time Byron manuscripts from the John Murray archive from the NLS, rare printed items from the Foyle Special Collections at King's, and Byron memorabilia in private hands, many of them never exhibited in public before. Selection of exhibits and catalogue entries in the section relating to Greece were determined largely by Beaton's research, and Beaton advised the curators. An illustrated catalogue of the exhibition was supplied free to visitors during the exhibition thanks to £6,000 raised from private sources (mainly Byron enthusiasts), with an institutional contribution by King's, to fund its production; it is now freely available online. The private funding itself shows belief that Beaton's

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research is having impact beyond academe, which is also attested in the voluntary comments left by visitors to the exhibition (5.7).

Byron's War (3.4) was published in UK on 25 April 2013 and in the USA in July. A contract for a Greek translation (by Patakis) was signed in May 2013 (for an advance of €2,000, a clear indication of enthusiasm). Laudatory reviews have appeared to July 2013 in non-academic media such as *The Spectator*, *Economist* and *Literary Review*. Beaton promoted dissemination beyond academia by contributing an article to *History Today* 63/6 (June 2013) 3-5. He has also received e-mails from individuals attesting how his book has enriched their understanding of Byron and the creation of the Greek nation-state (5.8). The impact of publication of the book is only just beginning and will be sustainable for several years. For example Beaton has accepted the proposal of the British Embassy in Athens to hold a launch event at the embassy for the Greek edition of his book (on 12 September 2013) and another from the Byron Society of Missolonghi (for spring 2014). He has also accepted a proposal from the Greek Embassy in London to organise a Byron-centred event, including presentation of his book, at Edinburgh (in spring 2014) as one of the cultural events to mark the Greek presidency of the EU (5.9).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1. Newspaper interviews: <http://www.tovima.gr/culture/article/?aid=367052>
http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcqi/w_articles_ell_2_09/01/2011_428088
- 5.2. Information on *Athens Dialogues* 2010: <http://www.athensdialogues.org/academic-events/conference/>;
participants at December 2012 event: <http://www.greecelands.com/molibixarti/o-πολιτισμός-είναι-ανάγκη-όχι-πολυτέ/ - .Uqi5tRZgNFI>
- 5.3. Dossier of press cuttings, reviews, and individual e-mails from members of the Greek public in response to Beaton's radio and TV appearances (*).
- 5.4. *The Byron Journal* (ISSN 0301-7257), p. ii of every issue and 40.2 (2012) 201-11, and websites of the Byron Society (London) (<http://www.thebyronsociety.co.uk>) and the International Byron Society (<http://www.internationalbyronsociety.org/>).
- 5.5. New Byron sources online: <http://petercochran.files.wordpress.com>; internal links to 'Byron and Alexander Mavrocordatos'; 'Byron's correspondence 16: Greece, 1823-1824'.
- 5.6. Attendance registers and feedback forms from the International Byron Conference (held by Arts & Humanities Research Institute, King's).
Dossier of responses to the Byron conference (*).
- 5.7. Exhibition catalogue: D. McClay, K. Sambrook, S. Breen, C. Kenyon-Jones, R. Beaton (eds), *Byron and Politics: 'Born for Opposition'* (London 2013); and now available online at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/collections/archivespec/docs/Byron-Catalogue-2013-webonly.pdf>
Attendance records and visitors' book from the exhibition *Byron and Politics* (held by Dept of Rare Books, Maughan Library, King's).
- 5.8. Dossier of individual responses to *Byron's War* (*).
- 5.9. Correspondence about 2014 Byron events (*).

(* Copies of all sources are on file at King's and are available on request.)