
ROEHAMPTON CLASSICAL STUDENT RESEARCH: A CELEBRATION

EVENT REPORT

In June of 2016 the Classical team at the Humanities department at the University of Roehampton, where I work as a Visiting Lecturer, held a day of students presenting their research. That may not, in itself, seem very noteworthy. But what was unique about it, as far as anyone involved has been able to tell, is that the day involved not just postgraduates, as one might expect, but also undergraduates. Nor was this just students talking about their final-year dissertations – there were also a number of contributions by second-years who had done particularly well in their assignments for various modules. We have therefore brought together this collection of perspectives on the day, in the hope that this might spur other departments to consider Roehampton's example.

Susan Deacy, who organised the event, explains how it came about:

I was servicing the Humanities desk at a postgraduate open evening earlier this year. Two of the prospective applicants who came to meet with me were final-year BA History students interested in the MA in Historical Research. What they couldn't understand was why the programme was called *Historical Research*, when their studies as undergraduates already involved doing research. This encounter confirmed me in my view of something that is key to the learning culture at Roehampton – that research isn't begun at Master's or doctoral level. Rather, all students are researchers, and we're all of us – academics and students alike – involved in different ways in the research process.

One of the requirements of the MRes in Classical Research at Roehampton, which I convened in 2015/16, is that students give a paper at an academic event. The research day was initially planned to give these students an opportunity to fulfil this requirement, while also enabling them to develop their presentation skills and present their research at a time when they were moving into the final stages of writing their theses. Having been involved in marking some excellent undergraduate work, some of which – as one of our external examiners has confirmed – has the potential to be publishable, I decided to open the event to students at all levels. The then-imminent launch of the online journal *NEO*, founded by Roehampton students, further encouraged me to organise an event that would provide a snapshot of student research across all the programmes and levels.

According to Mike Edwards, Head of the Department of Humanities:



Fig. 1. Mike Edwards welcomes everyone

Classical Civilisation at Roehampton is very much a team effort, and we strive to make the students at all levels feel that they are an integral part of the team. Susan's idea for this student-focused event reflects that inclusive ethos, and I think the students, both presenters and in the audience, welcomed the presence of the staff and their genuine interest in what the speakers had to say. We also see it as a central part of our role to prepare students for their future careers, and one of the skills we wish them to develop is the ability to speak confidently in public – on the day, the speakers seized the opportunity to present their ideas in front of a receptive but critical audience. Well done all; it was an enjoyable day and we hope to make this an annual event.

Most of the rest of this piece is turned over to student views, since they were at the centre of the event.

Constantine Christoforou took a BA in Classical Civilization at Roehampton, and then the MRes in Classical Research. He has now begun his PhD studies here. He did not present on the day, but he was there for all the sessions, so he can provide an observer's perspective on the whole event.

Events such as the Roehampton Classical Student Research Day are both inspiring and insightful, and are something I feel should be a mainstay event in any classical civilisation course across the country. This particular event was a success for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the attendees of the event. The event was attended by BA Classics students, MRes classics students, PhD Classics students, past students and members of the Classical Civilisation staff at Roehampton. This is important for two reasons. To begin with it creates a safe atmosphere. For many of the students presenting (particularly BA students) it would have been their first time presenting and it would have been comforting to them to present their work in front of an audience in which they know the members of staff, and also in which most of the audience would have been students who are in, or would at some point have been in, the same position as them. It would be a perfect setting to present for the first time.

In addition, the fact that the audience consisted of Classics students and members of staff is important with regards to feedback and discussion. Many of the presentations were met with swarms of questions and interest. This is encouraging after a presentation, rather than being met with silence. The talks and presentations sparked debate amongst the audience which would have been particularly useful for those presenting. In particular, Phillip Rafferty and Jo Bagwell presenting back to back on madness in Greek

tragedy led to input from BA students, postgraduate students and members of staff, all offering differing insights into the matter.

Secondly, the fact that the research day had students ranging from BA to PhD made for a particularly inspiring occasion. Firstly, for the BA students: as a student myself, I feel that watching a student present a brilliant piece of MRes or PhD research is inspiring and encourages you to strive to that level. I am sure that many of the BA students in attendance would have considered postgraduate study after this event. Also, it is important with regards to the Classical Civilisation community at Roehampton. Having PhD, MRes and BA students conversing amongst themselves and sharing research interests I feel is an essential part of developing the field. Often it can feel as if the postgraduates are somewhat cut off from the university community and events such as this go far to bring the whole of the Classics community together.

Regarding specific presentations, I felt the day was both a celebration of student research, but also a celebration of the modern, forward thinking Classical Civilisation courses at Roehampton. We were treated to traditional talks, PowerPoint presentations, academic posters, and blogging and podcasting. A particularly refreshing segment for me was Cameron Witheridge Pearce discussing how his Gender and Sexuality module had altered his perspective of the classical world, stating that before university he would not have been interested in looking into gender issues in the ancient world. This is the power of a good module.

Overall, the day gave a great opportunity to present and receive feedback, a chance to discuss research interests with fellow students, and an opportunity to be inspired by fellow students' passion and enthusiasm for Classics.

Cameron Witheridge Pearce, one of the students mentioned by Constantine, was a second-year student, now a finalist, whose talk was a brilliant example of how a good module can change a student's perceptions. He writes:

Presenting my work at the Classics Student Research Day was a brilliant opportunity which I thoroughly enjoyed. I had never before presented my work in an academic environment without assessment and thus found the experience very useful for my presentation skills. Presenting on 'Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece' was something I would never have expected to do, when I consider that before the module (of the same name) I had never studied the subject. As such I had already opened new borders of my classical understanding, and to have the chance to convey this to an audience was a new challenge. The idea of the day was that of a celebration of student research, so I was flattered to be asked to present and indeed I found the whole occasion highly stimulating and incredibly motivating.

One challenge I faced was the issue of colleagues Skyping in to present from Athens. Unfortunately this proved not possible. Despite the issue I found the challenge one that helped improve my presentation abilities, aided by the receptive audience. In all, the presentations were made in an extremely professional manner and expressed the abilities of students to research, analyse and present arguments to an exceptional level.

Finally, and significantly for me, the day provided the opportunity for a new student journal, *NEO*, to be announced. As an editor of the journal I could not think of a better time to announce the project. *NEO* is created by students and for students, and is an opportunity to showcase much of the amazing work and ideas of students and to help develop students themselves to understand what is required of them in academia. The Research Day and

NEO share a similar sentiment in that the ideas and work of students are exciting, important and worthy of celebration; so I believe the two complement each other perfectly. The whole day was an enjoyable celebration of the research performed by students of all levels at Roehampton and is an event I am pleased to have attended.

For myself (Tony), I was constantly impressed by the self-confidence that was projected by the students. All the papers were of a high quality, and opened up interesting perspectives on antiquity. The incorporation of undergraduates into the research culture seems to me to be something that can only be positive. And I would very much endorse Constantine's comment that this was an excellent exercise in building a community. Particularly pleasing was the presence of colleagues from other parts of the Humanities department, showing a keen interest in what is going on in the Classical Civilisation programme.

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The Varvakeion Statuette: Nike

From Zeus to Athena: The Iconographic Journey of Nike

Enlargement of the Varvakeion Nike

The Varvakeion
The Varvakeion statuette, shown above, was discovered in 1880 in Athens near the Varvakeion School after which it was named. Like the Lenormant statuette, the Varvakeion is a copy, c. 300 AD, of Pheidias' giant 40ft *chryselephantine* (gold and ivory) statue of Athena Parthenos, 438 BC, which would have resided in the central chamber of the Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis.²

Varvakeion Athena
Athena Parthenos, represented by the Varvakeion statuette, as in the Pheidonian original, is depicted in Athena's most fully attributed fashion. The Athenian eponymous goddess wears the Gorgoneion aegis, a triple crested Attic helmet. Inside her shield is either her son, Eriktionios, shown in snake form, or the guardian snake of the city. Significantly for us, alighting on her right palm is Nike.³

Introduction
Athena Parthenos is not the only epithet of Athena to be seen on the acropolis, the Athena Nike temple and assimilation has sparked much debate and intrigue, specifically, as to the significance of the epithet for Athena's character and attributes but also as to why it was Nike of all the other deities that the Athenians saw fit to unite with their city's patron.⁴ However, Athena is not unique in this assimilation. Athena's father, Zeus was prior assimilated with Nike as Zeus Nikephoros. This fact leads to further interesting questions as to the movement of the Nike attribute from Zeus to Athena. **What does this tell us about the movement of attributes or power? What about the relationship between Athena and Zeus?** These questions in relation to Nike have never before been asked; this poster attempts to commence the debate.

Who Is Nike?

- ◆ The Greek winged goddess of victory.
- ◆ She had her own altar from 566 BC on the acropolis in Athens.⁵
- ◆ Nike was born to Styx and the Titan Pallas. Her sibling deities included Zelus (Aspiration), Cratos (Power), and Bia (Might).⁶
- ◆ After the Titanomachy, having fought alongside her mother for Zeus, Nike was honoured by the newly crowned king of the gods and was hence frequently pictured alongside him.⁷

Depictions Of Nike
In her propensity as the goddess of victory Nike's role in depictions both pictorial and literary is one of reward: Bacchylides depicts her standing next to Zeus on Mount Olympus judging the award of *arete* (virtue) to gods and men.⁸ As such, Nike is most often portrayed holding a crown of victory above the head of a conqueror or winner.⁹ Pausanias points out that the Athenians even had a wingless Victory, in order to "never let her leave".¹⁰ Nike's appearances on the Parthenon affirm her nature and her close relationship with Athena. For example, on the west pediment Nike drives Athena's chariot and encourages her into the battle for Athens against Poseidon.¹¹ Could Athena really lose?

Zeus Nikephoros
The assimilation of Zeus and Nike was most famously represented in the Pheidonian *chryselephantine* statue of Zeus Nikephoros (bringer of Victory) at Olympia.¹² This union was one dictated by mythology and it would seem only logical that Zeus would possess the power of Victory. **Why then is Athena so prominently displayed as Nikephoros?**

Athena Nike
We know that the assimilation 'Athena Nike' was an exaltation of Victory; is it possible that Athena Nike then is the wingless Victory that Pausanias comments on? Keyes notes an instance of a winged Minerva Victrix discovered in Ostia and proposes that Athena Nike might also have been winged.¹³ **Might she also then have been wingless?** And thus worshipped as an embodiment of the fusion of Nike and Athena, or purely as herself, Athena, the bringer of Victory.

The Oresteia
As we see in the iconographic so we also see in literary: the movement of power, of Nike, from father to daughter. In the *Oresteia*, Victory is first linked innately with Zeus¹⁴ yet as the trilogy goes on this essence of Nike is wholly assigned to Athena. Orestes' last lines in the *Eumenides* demonstrate this remarkably: his last word to Athena is *νικηφόρον* (nikephoros).¹⁵ These extracts further demonstrate the Athenian sentiment towards the Athena-Nike assimilation. *Their* Athena, thus became a worthy recipient of such a transference.

Conclusions
Nike evidently results in being an embodiment of one of Athena's attributes, of divine right, inherited from her father, Zeus Nikephoros, the original Nike-Olympian assimilation.¹⁶ Perhaps, the Athena-Nike is the audacious declaration of Athena's power as an agent of Zeus or even succession over him. Which ever the route, the end state of Athena-Nike speaks to the reverence in which both goddesses were held, individually, and as one.

Primary Sources

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Reconstruction of the Parthenon Nike - Nashville, TN.

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Fig. 2. Olivia Huntingdon-Stuart's poster

Olivia Huntingdon-Stuart and Ellicia Petersen were two third-years at the end of their undergraduate careers, but not necessarily at the end of their scholarly lives – Olivia for one is planning a further academic career. They presented posters prepared for a module on *Athena the Trickster*. Olivia shall have the final word:

Aside from the obvious assessment presentations, this was the first time I'd been invited to speak at an academic conference. It was exciting. As a student who is certainly at university for the academia perhaps rather than purely for career progression one often looks on at professors and the many conferences and workshops that occur with a slight child-like awe, eagerly anticipating the time when that will be you going off to research conferences,

sharing your own ideas and discussing them with the intellectuals of your field. This is how it often felt to me, anyway.

When my tutor, Susan Deacy, invited my peer and me to present at the University's Classics Student Research Day along with the likes of postgraduates, a thought zapped through my mind: 'Yes! I'm in!' If you've ever seen the rather cringe-inducing *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People* with the wonderful Simon Pegg, then you will know what I mean when I say that I felt like I'd moved to the 'Second Room'. I'd taken my next step on the ladder.

Interestingly, on the day itself, our Head of Humanities, Mike Edwards, said something similar in his introductory speech, commenting that everyone in the room, professors and undergraduates alike were all at various points on a 'railway track'; some were clearly further ahead than others but nonetheless all were on the same track. A rather insightful and encouraging metaphor, I thought, and perhaps a little more open than the room analogy.

We'd spent the day before in the library writing our presentation scripts, Ellicia and I, and by 'writing' I mean gossiping and looking at silly videos on social media. 'Luck favours the prepared', or so I hear, so we weren't about to be on Lady Luck's good side.

Though maybe we didn't need Lady Luck; maybe we had someone like Athena instead in our corner. I wasn't unusually nervous when it came time to present. I had a friend next to me. Ellicia and I had presented together many times before over the past few years of university. In addition to this the Student Research Day materialised as the perfect first conference. The delegates were made up of Roehampton University students and Roehampton Classics lecturers. No unfamiliar faces, no large group; the day was intimate and friendly, the air of encouragement was undeniable.

Our presentation went rather well, I thought! We were presenting on our academic posters which we'd created for an Athena module. We were proud of our work and I think this came through in how we were presenting. More than this, however, we wanted to portray the enjoyment, sense of achievement, and even the odd twinge of frustration that we'd felt in the making and development of these posters. It was a new experience for us and perhaps hearing about a poster was a new experience for our audience.

So maybe the presentation didn't run quite as smoothly as all that; there were a few parts where we quite obviously lost our places and it took us a few seconds to find ourselves again by having to search through our oh-so-well prepared presentation scripts. On the whole, however, we presented with confidence and didn't take ourselves too seriously. We all know how dull it can be listening to a presentation from someone who sounds and looks like they might crack and disintegrate should they even attempt to smile or lift their voice from its millstone monotone. So we smiled, and laughed and had a good time about not being the world's most competent speakers, yet.

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with contributions from **Constantine Christoforou,**
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