



Developing students' ideas of diversity in the ancient and modern worlds through the topic of Alexandria in the *Cambridge Latin Course, Book II*

by Jonathan Barnes

Introduction

My interest in undertaking a study relating to Classics and issues of diversity in the classroom is the result of several personal and circumstantial approaches to the subject, which have become more pronounced in my mind since the start of my Postgraduate Certificate of Education at the University of Cambridge.

In our decision to become teachers of classical subjects, my colleagues and I have also volunteered ourselves as respondents to continual questioning over the place and value of classical languages, literature and history in the curriculum of today. My own favoured response to this question is to relate the great value of studying the classical world in its capacity as a social mirror, whereby viewing the ancient past can allow us to inspect our own societal structure, culture and values in the present. I continue to believe there is a great possibility to engage and fascinate students to learn classical subjects in this approach, while similarly providing a 'functional' status for Classics in education as a subject of intercultural literacy and dialogue. The value of this in a 21st-century globalised world can be seen as increasingly important, and Bolgar recognised the role Classics could perform in this field in his *Theory of Classical Education* (Bolgar, p.19). This approach towards the classical world, however, is fundamentally established in an analysis of the extent to which the

people of the ancient Mediterranean were, or were not, 'like us'. But who is being represented by 'us'? Despite my own mixed, British and East African-Asian background, I must admit that the 'us' with whom I am drawing comparison is a collective of, if not specifically British, at very least European identity. This is the particular consequence of the cultural appropriation of the classical world by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European powers, which, seeking a precedent for their imperial ambitions, self-consciously constructed themselves as new Athenes and Romes. Bradley in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (2010) cites the construction of the British Museum as a significant example of the cultural equation of classical antiquity with a northern European, British identity (Bradley, 2010, pp. 2–4). The debt of this historical perspective on the classical world as a Eurocentric entity, I believe, remains not only in our national monuments, but also in our classrooms.

Since commencing my second professional placement, teaching at a large 11 to 18 comprehensive school in north London (which I will subsequently refer to as Harrovia Academy), I have realised the limitations and problems in fostering a comparison between the 'them' of the classical past and the traditionally European 'us' of present day. Harrovia Academy is an exceptionally diverse, multiethnic community, reflecting the ethnic and cultural diversity of its location in the London Borough of Harrow.

According to the Office of National Statistics Survey in 2011, Harrow had the second highest proportion of Indian ethnic groups in a British local authority at 26.4% and correspondingly the lowest White British proportion at 30.9%. (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Similarly diverse demographics are indicated among the student population by the recent 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) statistics of the school, with students whose first language is not English at 46.2% in the academic year 2015 to 2016, in comparison with the national statistic of 15.7% (Gov.UK, 2017) and numbers of individual students whose primary language was Gujarati registered at 269, Tamil at 200 and Urdu at 79. In addition to its South Asian population, the school also has large numbers of students from Non-British White, Afro-Caribbean and African (North and sub-Saharan) communities. Harrovia Academy is committed to the celebration of the range of students' cultural backgrounds and includes the 'appreciation of diversity' among the core values in the Academy's Mission Statement. The diverse, multiethnic dimension of this school, as a milieu for the teaching of classics, emphatically calls into question assumptions about the cultural background of the 'us' implicit in a classroom comparison between the contemporary world of the students and the ancient past. Indeed, this consideration was illustrated in a particular Year 7 Classics lesson I

observed, where the class were being introduced to the customary layout of a Pompeian house. The students were tasked with comparing the main areas of the modern and Roman home, followed by a class discussion of the similarities and differences in these domestic spaces. Several students identified specific areas and made anticipated comments on these, such as the different location of the garden in the centre of the house, rather than in the front or back of it, or the continuity of spaces allotted to dining and sleeping. One student from a South Asian background, however, remarked that an area which was similar in ancient and modern homes could be the presence of a family shrine to the gods, like those common among Indian communities. I was astounded by this comment or, rather, by my surprised reaction to a perfectly straightforward equation between Roman and British Asian customs. This comment caused me to reflect on the extent to which my own viewpoint has been characterised by the predominantly British, Christian context in which I had first learnt about the Roman house, where the *lararium* had certainly been determined an unfamiliar feature. However, this student had, without too grand an insight, recognised a simple element of continuity between the daily life of his community and that of people in ancient Roman culture, establishing his own unique relationship with the past.

This was the inspiration for this subsequent study, in which I seek to explore the opportunity for students to recognise elements of the classical world which resonate with their own cultural identities and similarly to provide a platform in a multiethnic classroom for these diverse voices.

Literature

The consideration of the growing diversity in the Classics classroom, and the importance of acknowledging this in teaching practice, accompanies the increasing recognition of the diversity of the Graeco-Roman world within Classics academia over the past four decades. Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, the first volume of which was published in 1987, is a notable and controversial example of

classical scholarship, which challenged the traditional academic perspective on Greek civilisation by recognising the influence of other peoples of the ancient Mediterranean. Cartledge (1998) reflects on Bernal's work as an attempt to counter a longstanding discourse within the Classical discipline, which cultivated an unchallenged white, European claim for the achievements of Classical Greece. Bernal, Cartledge writes, sought to destabilise this connection, primarily by reclaiming the ancient civilisation's 'Afro-asiatic' origins and asserting the cultural debt which Greece owed to non-white, non-European peoples – the Egyptians and the Phoenicians (Cartledge, 1998, p.22). In his paper 'Classics: from a discipline in crisis to (multi-)cultural capital', Cartledge raises the scholarly inadequacies of this reconstruction of the ancient past but he recognises, nonetheless, the important contribution of Bernal's *opus* in extending the established horizons of Classics and elevating to prominence the less-considered cultures and identities present at the fringes of the discipline (Cartledge, 1998, p.28). Indeed, despite the contention surrounding the *Black Athena* idea, Bernal's considerations have resonated throughout subsequent academic approaches within Classics. For example, in the introduction to her most recent book, *Introducing the Ancient Greeks* (2015), Hall identifies the success of the ancient Greeks, not for their autonomous cultural hegemony, but rather as a consequence of their skill in amassing diverse, borrowed information from their distinct, neighbouring cultures (Hall, 2015, p. xvi). Hall's indebtedness to Bernal's approach is indicative of the presence the idea of ancient diversity has accrued within the discipline. Furthermore, Cartledge identifies the resonance of the work in relation to the 'ongoing mutation' of Classics in school institutions (Cartledge, 1998, p.27). Cartledge views the emerging value of classical subjects within the secondary curriculum as a specialised form of cultural studies, where an increasingly inclusive and diverse scope of material would benefit the subject in this role (Cartledge, 1998, p.27).

With specific regard to the issue of diversity and Classics pedagogy, several individual articles written by teachers present their own encounters with

diversity in school communities and particularly their experience of bringing classical subjects to this environment.

Nesbitt (1979) wrote her article 'Classics and multicultural education' at a time when certain areas of Britain experienced a significant diversification in the ethnic and cultural demographics of their populations, a moment which may be regarded as the initial recognition of the increasingly multicultural status of the country. Nesbitt describes her direct experience of teaching Classical Studies and Latin in the 'cultural plurality' of a girls' comprehensive school in Coventry and her discovery of the previously unacknowledged ideological connotations which surrounded a classical education in this environment, where one in five children in the first two years of the school was of Indian or Pakistani origin (Nesbitt, 1979, p. 79–80). In her paper, 'Latin for All Identities' (2016), Sawyer declares the increasing importance of acknowledging individual differences among the student population taught in educational institutions, while directing the reader to the abundance of opportunities within Classics, in ancient poetry, mythology and history, for the inclusion and representation of diverse identities. Sawyer, however, also identifies the obstacles which continue to restrict the presentation of diversity in Classics teaching, such as the limitations inherent in commonly used resources on the subject.

At the outset of this study, it is necessary to qualify what is entailed by the term 'diversity'. Diversity relates in governmental policy to broad differences which occur between groups of people within society, and furthermore to distinctions in the perspectives and values between individual people, which may be the consequence of family background, religion, national or ethnic culture. It also importantly refers to individuality associated with life circumstances including sex, gender or sexual orientation, disability or age within the context of these background and public cultures. (Harrow Council, 2017). It is a term as expansive as the number and range of social groups it encompasses. The discussion of diversity, particularly in relation to a British public milieu which provides a service, such as a school institution, is fundamentally premised on the recognition and respect of these

individual differences and their equal value in the face of discrimination, as detailed in the British Government's Equality Act 2010 (Gov.UK, 2017). With specific regard to education and the responsibilities of teachers, this has been reiterated within the 'inclusion' statement of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014), that 'schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for *all* pupils' to allow them to fulfil their potential regardless of their background (DfE, 2014, pp. 1–2).

Both Nesbitt (1979) and Sawyer (2016) refer not to a school's formal adherence to the legal codes of preventing discrimination, but rather to diversity as an issue of inclusion of individual differences within the conduct of classroom pedagogy. Nesbitt and Sawyer promote the importance of not only acknowledging diversity, but rather representing it in the learning environment and in the school curriculum (Nesbitt, 1979, p.80; Sawyer, 2016, p.35). Sawyer highlights the importance of this representation of diversity by describing its potential invisibility as an issue, where unacknowledged and uncriticised 'cultural privilege' can 'allow people of majority groups to go through life with more ease than other groups'. Stating that 'our goal should be to include and affirm members of all identities in our classroom', Sawyer positions the maintenance of a reflective approach to the issue of diversity, and the integrated representation of students with minority identities, as a fundamental aspect of inclusive practice in school education (Sawyer, p.35). Discussing this same notion of 'cultural privilege' in relation to ethnic minorities, Nesbitt emphasises that diversity exists as an issue not only for minority groups, but rather for all students, since these children are 'no less members of a multiracial society'. (Nesbitt, 1979, p.80). The commitment to the representation of diversity extends, in Nesbitt's view, beyond an issue of inclusion, but rather forms a substantial contribution to the 'social and cultural consciousness' of all students (Nesbitt, 1979, p.80). Sawyer also advocates the importance of making all students aware of different identities (Sawyer, p.35). In this both authors recapitulate the exhortation of the Classics educationalist Sharwood Smith. In *On Teaching Classics* (1977), he advocated the responsibility of teachers to not solely follow the dictates

of a syllabus, but rather to employ elements of this to prepare students for their adult lives, therefore achieving not only 'an education in Classics' but 'an education through Classics' (Sharwood Smith, 1977, pp. 4–9). Diversity, which includes issues relating to sex and sexuality, should also be recognised as one of the sensitive topics outlined by Hunt (2016), which arise incidentally through the routine acts of teaching and learning in the classroom, which teachers have a responsibility to address as an important part of schooling (Hunt, 2016, p.31).

While in agreement with the essential importance of diversity, not just as an inclusion issue for students of minority identities but as a key feature of the social and cultural development of all students, there are distinctions between the papers in what the authors represent as the main identities relevant to this term. Nesbitt, writing from her own experiences as a teacher, presents an approach to diversity essentially concerned with racial and social groups, concentrating on the inclusion of the experiences and traditions of 'New Commonwealth' national and cultural groups in the classroom and particularly with regards to classical subjects (Nesbitt, 1979, p. 79–80). On the other hand, Sawyer, writing nearly four decades later provides a more expansive definition of diversity. While she commences her discussion with the issues of multiethnic and cultural inclusion similarly to Nesbitt, Sawyer continues to focus more predominantly on the representation of diversity in terms of gender and sexual orientation in the learning environment. In the time between the publication of these two papers, these identities have become subjects of more recent societal reflection and discussion in Britain and these frequently sensitive aspects of students' personal identity resonate even more significantly with Sawyer's initial comment of the perils of invisible identities in the classroom, in the face of the unconsidered and un-addressed privileging of certain cultural normalities.

In advocating the importance of diversity in the classroom, both Nesbitt and Sawyer present two main areas of educational practice which act as particular sites for the inclusion and representation of diversity - in the materials used in classroom teaching and in the pedagogical approach of the

individual teacher. Nesbitt places responsibility primarily upon the shoulders of individual classroom teachers, writing that 'sensitive teaching can enhance the child's pride in his or her heritage, which is frequently suppressed' and that 'surely the teacher of Humanities... has a key role in this.' (Nesbitt, 1979, p.80). While understandably critical of 'the average teacher's ignorance of the background from which a pupil speaks', Nesbitt's expectation of the cultural knowledge and insight of every classroom teacher appears idealistic, particularly in multicultural classrooms where there is no singular minority group of significance. Nesbitt does recognise the limitations of positioning the teacher as the key instrument in the institution of classroom cultural exchange and diversity, but only in criticism of the teacher and the limitations of educational practitioners in comprehending the detailed background origins of individual students. Nesbitt does not discuss an approach of diversity within teaching resources, but rather implicates the teacher's use of these and the 'wider implications of the material they present'. (Nesbitt, 1979, p.81). Sawyer similarly places an emphasis on the agency of individual teachers to make an impact on their classroom's awareness of diversity, encouraging teachers to counter silence on the issue and be active in their approach in order to be an ally to people of all identities (Sawyer, 2016, p.35). Unlike Nesbitt,

however, she does not place the entire onus of progress on the role of the teacher. Sawyer describes the improvements required at an institutional level within the education system in order to increase the presence of diversity in the classroom, as well as the individual efforts of day-to-day pedagogy. Sawyer is critical of her own lack of formal instruction in her teacher training on the centrality of diversity as an element of an inclusive classroom (Sawyer, p.35). Furthermore, she comments on the significant role played by resources in the successful integration of diversity within the classroom. With specific regard to Classics, Sawyer acknowledges the efforts of certain learning resources to include ethnic diversity within its material, mentioning in particular the evident diligence of the *Cambridge Latin Course* (CLC) to present ethnic diversity through

the settings chosen for its Latin language narrative. Pompeii is the setting for beginner students to discover and familiarise themselves with the world of the ancient Romans in *CLC I*, before the narrative progresses to Alexandria. There are, therefore, ongoing opportunities for the students undertaking the Latin translation exercises to experience the diverse ethnic populations present in the ancient world through the life of these port cities. Sawyer writes that the *CLC* is also concerned with describing the presence of a diverse ethnic population within the cultural background information which accompanies each 'Stage' of the textbooks. The author's issue with the textbook series, however, is the extent to which it commits to actively representing diversity. While students are told factually that Pompeii contained a multiethnic community, there is less opportunity for students to encounter this as they work through the textbook, owing to the absence of racially diverse characters in the cartoon drawings which accompany the stories (Sawyer, p.36). Sawyer finds no immediate solution to the issue of racial and ethnic inclusivity in Classics teaching within the constraints of available resources. She, however, encourages teachers to contribute to the diversification of school curricula and the pedagogical environment by confronting the issue within classroom teaching practice.

Both Nesbitt and Sawyer are adamant in claiming that Classics has a unique contribution to make to the promotion of diversity within schools, as a subject which encourages 'the formation of less prejudiced attitudes towards cultures other than one's own' in an increasingly multicultural Britain (Nesbitt, 1979, p.79). The multiplicity of diverse racial, gender and sexual identities present in the mythology and culture of the ancient world ensures that there is an abundance of existing material to include in Classics classroom pedagogy, while the distance of classical antiquity in time provides an unemotional framework in which to discuss these topics. (Nesbitt, 1979, p.82; Sawyer, p.36). This is supported by Hardwick's concept of 'critical distance', where the act of comparing humanity in ancient and modern times facilitates students to reflect on contemporary society (Hardwick, 2003, p.9). In considering the

identities discussed in the literature by both authors, whose representation constitutes an effective approach to the issue of diversity, my opinion is aligned with Sawyer's concept of diversity as a spectrum of varied identities, inclusive of ethnicity but also gender and sexuality, more than that of Nesbitt's, concerned primarily with the issue of race.

The conscientious and vigilant inclusion of issues of gender equality and the consideration of the identities of LGBTQ students remain important, in my opinion, owing to the specific invisibility and personal nature of these identities, in comparison with the more apparent distinctions between students in terms of ethnicity and cultural background in the multicultural classroom. Nevertheless, in my own study into the representation of diversity in the classroom at Harrovia Academy, I will concentrate on discussions of ethnic and cultural inclusion in line with Nesbitt's paper on diversity, owing to the strong multiculturalism present in the student population and the limited scope of this investigation.

The research

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of heightening the presence of diversity in a study of third-century Alexandria, through classroom teaching and existing teaching resources, in order to extend and enrich students' understanding of diversity in ancient Roman civilisation. The further ambition of the investigation was to examine whether students could relate their learning about diversity in the ancient past to multiculturalism in contemporary urban society and even in the classroom environment. I wished to gain through this action research study, a greater understanding of how a consistent emphasis on this issue in regular teaching practice can influence students' awareness and opinions on diversity in the classroom. Continuing from the discussions of Sawyer and Nesbitt particularly, I decided to conduct action research which made fundamental use of the resources available, but which re-worked or expanded on this material in order to explore this subject further with the students of a Year 9 Latin class.

I planned and delivered a sequence of four lessons. Within this sequence, I observed and collected data on students' perspectives on diversity whilst they progressed through Stage 18 and 19 of *CLC II*, which takes the city of Alexandria as the setting for its Latin language narrative. At each stage of this sequence, I reflected on my pedagogical practice, on my students' contributions, both in class discussions and in their written answers and I consulted my colleague, who observed each lesson. These reflections allowed me to evaluate my approaches in extending pupils' conception of diversity in Alexandria. As a result, I was able to amend my practice and the content of my lessons accordingly at each forthcoming stage in the study.

Rationale for Scheme of Work

When I assumed the regular teaching of the Year 9 class the students had already gained a firm introduction to the city and culture of Alexandria as a topic at Stage 17 of *CLC II*. Through this, the students had already been introduced to the key concepts which I intended to explore further. In the Stage's Latin stories, such as *tumultus I* and *tumultus II*, the students had gained some knowledge of the presence of ethnically diverse communities in the city and equally of the friction which existed between the distinct groups. The Romans, the Greeks and the Egyptians were presented by *CLC II* as the main players in this understanding (through characters in the stories), although there was also some (albeit nominal) mention of other groups, such as the Jews and Syrians. The concept of cultural syncretism between these differing communities was also accessible to the students through the *ad templum* passage, which introduced the cult of the uniquely Alexandrian deity, Serapis.

They had also recently completed an introductory project, creating a tourist brochure advertising the main 'sights' and mercantile opportunities in the city. The suggested use of the background information pages for this piece further confirmed that the students had gained some insight into the multicultural qualities of the city.

In each of the lessons dedicated to this investigation, I led a class discussion

on the subject of ethnic and cultural diversity in Alexandria. This was intended to coincide with specific episodes in *CLC II*, such as the beginnings of chapters and certain translation exercises, which I had selected as particular opportunities for the examination of the subject of diversity. It was my intention over the sequence of the four designated lessons to influence and affect the opinions of the students on the subject of diversity in the ancient world. With consideration for the issues raised in the literature on Classics pedagogy and the subject of diversity, I wished to measure the effect of an exposure to certain materials, heightened by teacher-led discussion, on students' perspectives on Alexandria, and by extension, on the ethnic diversity of Roman civilisation. The central aspect of this study of students' responses to cultural diversity in third-century Alexandria inevitably encompasses sensitive issues of experience surrounding race and ethnicity. Indeed, in relation to the ancient world, the issue of race is further complicated by the strong social distinctions which were determined by ethnicity. In the background of third-century Alexandria, there is a discourse of power, evident in the narrative and background information of the *CLC*, in which the lighter-skinned Greeks and Romans have exerted colonial superiority over the native, darker-skinned Egyptians. Similarly, students encounter the Egyptians as occupants of the lower social echelons, as unnamed slaves or a craftsman in the shop of Eutyclus, while the 'European' Greeks and Romans are members of a cultural elite – the (Greek) character of Aristo is introduced as a writer of tragedies.

Scheme of Work for Investigation

I chose to conduct the study as a series of worksheets, where students responded to defined questions which they answered immediately after a classroom-based activity or discussion relating to the instalment in the study's scheme of work. I considered a series of defined questions would provide a structured format for students to record their opinions.

Lesson 1. This lesson introduces the subject of diversity in Alexandria through a survey of the variety of ethnic and cultural groups who lived in the city.

Students will be asked to consider whether the city of Alexandria is culturally, socially or politically aligned to one of these individual culture-groups or to consider whether Alexandria should be considered a multicultural society, in which several groups exert an influence on the cultural demeanour of the city.

Lesson 2. Coinciding with the beginning of *CLC II* Stage 19, the objective of this lesson is to introduce and emphasise the concept of cultural syncretism among the students, primarily through the cult of the goddess Isis. This extends from the class' recent translation of *pro taberna Clementis* in Stage 18 of *CLC II*, in which Clemens, as a Roman freedman, is portrayed as a devotee of the Egyptian goddess. Through the use of both Egyptian and Graeco-Roman artistic representations of the goddess, students will be introduced to an understanding that the Greek and Romans adopted the goddess into their own religious pantheon, demonstrating an influence from the cultures surrounding them.

Lesson 3. Following the class' translation of the *pompa* passage in Stage 19, students will be set a two-week homework project focused on producing a creative 'diary entry' describing an experience of the *pompa* from the perspective of an invented character. This character can be Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Jewish, Syrian or African and there will be a scaffolded research worksheet to support students in constructing a profile for their character. Students are asked to draw on previous class discussions on the topic of diversity in Alexandria and, using the background information in *CLC II* as additional help, to present a culturally authentic experience of the procession of the goddess Isis for their character. Students will be asked to complete the 'research worksheet' to structure their thoughts before writing this as a diary entry. The intention of this exercise is for students to empathise with the cultural background of their selected character.

Lesson 4. The final instalment of the investigation will coincide with the conclusion of Stage 19 in *CLC II*. A questionnaire worksheet, which briefly summarises the topic of diversity in Alexandria and reminds the students of both the conflict and confluence of cultures in the city, will ask them to reflect on their own opinions in relation

to this subject. The specific question on the cultural identity of Alexandria, whether Roman, Greek or Egyptian, initially presented to the students at the outset of the study, will be repeated in the same phrasing in order to scaffold students in reflecting on their changed or unchanged opinion about this example of diversity in the ancient world.

This will accompany a further question asking students their thoughts on diversity in the ancient world more generally and whether studying Alexandria had surprised them or changed their original perspective on ethnicity in Roman civilisation.

In describing this, I am not criticising the presentation of this material in *CLC II*; rather I am directing attention to the problems of undertaking any study or investigation of race in an ancient context, where the presence of prejudicial attitudes towards colour and ethnicity is to a certain extent inextricable from the essential material. The benefit, on the other hand, of the use of third century Alexandria as a medium for the discussion of cultural and (unavoidably) racial diversity relates to Hardwick's concept of 'critical distance', where the distance of the ancient past from the present establishes a degree of objectivity in the examination of potentially sensitive material. Nevertheless, in a classroom environment where eight students were of either South Asian, North African or Afro-Caribbean origin and a further three of mixed-race heritage, I was concerned that an unmanaged classroom discussion relating to race and skin colour could achieve the opposite of my intentions in this study, isolating and embarrassing individuals rather than positively exposing students to the presence of diversity in the ancient world.

This concern regarding sensitive issues consequently influenced the methodology of this study, particularly with regard to the collection of data from students. The most immediate impact of this resides in my decision to use only written work produced by the students at each activity in the planned sequence of the study as contributing evidence towards the conclusion of this investigation. The discussion of Nesbitt in *Researching Children's Perspectives* (2000) on research conduct when investigating children's perspectives on the sensitive topic of religious belief, provided influential

considerations for this methodology, particularly in the choice of using written data over a recorded class discussion. Nesbitt (2000) relates the importance of avoiding any possible experience of embarrassment on the behalf of the student, when asking them to respond to potentially sensitive issues, and suggests supplying students with the opportunity to write down their opinions in order to remove perceived sensitivity (Nesbitt, 2000, p.137). Furthermore, an individualised, written response to a set series of questions prevents any 'immediate blocking in the conveyance of student meaning' (Nesbitt, 2000, p.137). The presence of classroom dynamics means that it is not uncommon for individual student voices to influence the direction of a class discussion. Nesbitt (2000) and Piaget (1929, p.10), however, also underline the possible misleading influence of the teacher's voice, where an unconscious bias or over-easy equations can misdirect the student in their articulation of their opinion, rather than 'to let the child talk freely, without ever checking or side tracking his utterance' (Nesbitt, 2000, p.138; Piaget, 1929, p.10). In accordance with the guidelines of the British Educational Framework Research Framework (2004), I did not inform students that they were the subjects of my study, but rather conducted this as part of their routine classes. In this, I hoped to integrate the issue of diversity with a measure of regularity in the classroom structure, as was the intention of this study.

Presentation of Data

In order to present the data I collected from the Year 9 Latin class in a comprehensible form, I have selected the work of four students from the total class size of 17, whose written work will form the foundation of my data analysis. I will assess the level of development in the opinions of these four students across the four lesson instalments of the investigation. Interpreting the variety of individual opinions presented by the students on the worksheets, I will categorise their responses into the following bands, according to their engagement with the subject of diversity as presented in the third-century Alexandria of *CLC II*.

'Simplistic': This term relates to the work of students who have approached the exercises in a factual manner, repeating information as it is set out in the textbook and in class discussion. This response show little reasoned explanation for the student's opinion with regards to questions of cultural identity. Across the course of the study, students with a 'simplistic' approach demonstrate little change or development of opinion across the four instalments of the lesson. This draws parallels with the 'comprehension' stage of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956).

'Engaged': This term relates to students who show evidence of engagement with some elements of the topic of discussion. Students with an 'engaged' approach demonstrate some development and greater understanding of the topic of diversity in third-century Alexandria in their written answers. This is shown by pupils making reference to aspects of multiculturalism and expressing their own view upon this. This draws parallels with the 'analysis' stage of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956).

'Reflective': This term is reserved for students whose responses display the most engagement with the issues of cultural identity and diversity as encountered through the material from *CLC II* and drawn out through discussion in class. Beyond providing reasoning which justifies their opinions, students with a 'reflective' approach demonstrate an understanding of diversity in third-century Alexandria, whilst also drawing upon modern-world experiences of multiculturalism. Within this, students are shown to successfully reach the highest form of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), at the 'creating' stage. Students are developing their own engagements with diversity in an ancient setting which are reflective of their own personal identities and experiences.

Data and Analysis

Student Anjali

In a similar fashion to the other members of the class, the student clearly recollects the information on the differing peoples discussed in the *CLC II*. Beyond a straightforward repetition of these facts the student further qualifies the list of ethnic groups with the description

'multicultural'. The student's use of reflective terminology at this introductory point in the first question is consolidated further in the opinion-based question on diversity; in defining Alexandria, the student does not engage with the monocultural labels for the city - Greek, Roman or Egyptian - instead describing the city as 'more of a multicultural city, because they have all of the cultures put together'. Furthermore, the student's definition of diversity at this introductory stage is qualified as a positive attribute, since the multiculturalism makes it 'an attractive city'. In the second instalment of the study, this student provides factual detail in her answers to the questions on the identity of Isis, associating the goddess with Egyptian religious tradition, as was intended by the sequence of questions. When challenged with the opinion-question on how other cultures would respond to this Egyptian phenomenon, the student responded: 'The other culture groups would feel strange. Most people would want to join the celebration in order to learn about the culture.' The student's understanding of cross-cultural encounters is couched in an empathetic description. The student imagines a response of mixed-emotion, of uneasiness as the cultural foreignness of the *pompa*, but which ultimately is a positive interaction. Once again the encounter of cultural difference is presented as an opportunity 'to learn about the culture'. This response is interesting, given the students emphatic recognition of the conflict which existed between the various groups of people in Alexandria, as presented by *CLC II*, where 'they didn't live comfortably because they had different opinions'. In her '*Pompa* Diary Entry', Anjali created the character of Agatha, a Roman girl, who lives 'in a multicultural city in Egypt called Alexandria'. Through the voice of her fictional protagonist, the student represents the *pompa* as an event which 'us Romans, Greeks and many other ethnical groups in Alexandria celebrate [sic]' and relates this to the unique status of 'Alexandria as a multicultural city'. Beyond articulating the factual presence of diversity, Anjali described the procession with personal emotion, as a thing 'which I am really elated and proud about as well', since it 'brought all of us like a community to this city together'. In her reflection on the ultimate worksheet of the study, Anjali maintains her perspective on Alexandria as

a 'diverse city, where a different culture formed together'.

Student Bethany

This student responded to the questions involved in Lesson 1 of the study sequence with informed, straightforward factual information. She identified the significant cultural groups in Alexandria, 'Jews, Egyptians, Greeks, Africans, Romans', as presented by the *CLC* and repeated in lesson discussion. She presented her understanding of the 'conflict and rivalry across/between communities'; in this, however, the student displays some existing understanding of social relations through her description of the 'lack of community cohesion' which existed between the peoples of Alexandria. Initially, Bethany considers Alexandria to be 'a Greek city, because it was known for its knowledge and philosophy which was brought in by the Greeks'. Bethany did not produce any written information for the second instalment in the lesson sequence of the study, owing to an 'End of Stage Assessment' which several students were required to undertake during the usual Latin period. Although Bethany was present in the classroom space while her classmates participated in Lesson 2 of the study, she was engaged with a distinct learning activity. Despite the absence of input for the second instalment in the planned research sequence, I have decided to include the remaining work of Bethany as evidence within this study, owing to its particularly interesting relevance to the discussion of diversity. The sophistication which Bethany displayed in the introductory activities of the study in her use of terminology to discuss community relationships is similarly reflected in her two-part creative writing piece. Using the supplied Alexandria helpsheet, Bethany creates the following profile for her character as part of her '*Pompa* Diary Entry Research':

Name: Sophronia

Profession: Craftswoman

Religion: Greek Gods

Culture Group: Greek

Furthermore, Bethany's character is described as living 'on the outskirts of

Alexandria, but is always coming into the city for trade and work'. The further description of the background of 'Sophronia' distinguishes Bethany and her engagement with this activity from her peers in the Year 9 Latin class:

She was born in the horn of Africa to an african father and a greek mother.

She has two brothers who are all attending to procession to teach her brothers about Greek/Roman/Egyptian culture [sic].

Within this activity, she was the only student who articulated the experience of cultural diversity in Alexandria in the terms of a mixed-race character through the identity of her constructed character. I find this decision of the student to explore this within her writing particularly fascinating given her own personal circumstances - Bethany is herself of mixed-race British and African heritage. Given this significant correlation between the backgrounds of Bethany and her fictional 'Sophronia', who also possesses European and African heritage, it is tempting to consider whether the student is using the setting of Alexandria as a means of expressing some aspects of her own feelings of cultural identity. Through her character, Bethany presents both cohesion and conflict in her consideration of the experience of diversity in Alexandria. Her character demonstrates an appreciation of cultural difference since she 'grew up away from the cultures of Greece/Rome/Egypt and is fascinated with their religion and gods. She is excited to finally learn more.' In her vivid description of the experience of the procession in her '*Pompa* Diary Entry', the student, however, also represents contrary reactions to diversity:

It was clear when we reached the procession because there was a large crowd gathered. Everyone was crowding around apart from some men leaning on a wall with angry looks on their faces. Making sure to keep my brothers away from the men we bought some colourful petals from a seller.

Bethany eventually further described these as 'angry Jews on the sideline'. The

student did not provide an explanation for their hostility to the procession, but was perhaps drawing on the background information on *CLC* p.90, which details a violent riot of the Jews under the Emperor Claudius. In response to the repeated question about the cultural identity of Alexandria as the conclusion of the study, Bethany wrote:

I think that Alexandria is none of the options [Greek, Roman or Egyptian] because it was unique... I think that the children of all the different cultures coming together would feel like Alexandrians.

In this, Bethany displays the change in her stance through the programme of the investigation, from her consideration of Alexandria as an essentially Greek city at the outset of the study to more of a multicultural environment. The student reflects with interest upon this change in her perspective:

I would have thought that the Ancient World would have been less accepting. I was surprised that they brought in and not only tolerated but allowed other religions/ideas into their own.

Student Gurtaj

At the outset of the scheme of the study, Gurtaj's initial understanding of diversity in Alexandria is as a source of conflict. It is 'because of the different cultures' that there is 'disturbance in the peace of the city'. In consideration of the identity of the city, Gurtaj had an initial understanding of the problems of placing the city in a definite category according to one culture, relating that 'You cannot define Alexandria as a Roman, Greek or Egyptian city, because historically it is Greek/Egyptian, but it is ruled by the Romans'. Following the introduction to the figure of the goddess Isis in Lesson 2, the student also presents balance in his consideration of the integration of cultures in Alexandria, writing that 'The Greeks and Romans took quite a few Egyptian ideas but they were only slightly influenced by them', since 'they altered them slightly to make them different from the Egyptians'.

In response to the creative writing activity, Gurtaj creates the character of

Dionysius, a Greek doctor who ‘follows the Greek tradition and their gods’. In the research completed for his ‘*Pompa* Diary Entry’, the student again refers to the different cultures in Alexandria as a source of friction for his character, who is antagonistic to the celebration of Isis, who ‘hates Egyptians... [and] doesn’t want to start a dispute with a worshipper of Isis’. At the beginning of the piece, however, his character has completely changed his view on the Egyptians and their culture and considers ‘the cultural ideas of these people... [are] a good thing’. Although Gurtaj’s account of the procession, through the voice of Dionysius, is described in highly positive terms of enjoyment, the student did not present any significant engagement with the experience of diversity, except to relate that it was positive. In his final reflection, Gurtaj repeated his thought ‘that Alexandria should not be considered Greek, Roman or Egyptian’, but qualifies here that this is because it is ‘its own, multicultural city’. Gurtaj relates in conclusion: ‘now I think it is a diverse area that holds all kinds of cultures’. However, this appears to re-articulate the conception of Alexandria which he possessed at the beginning of the study.

Student Daisy

This student articulated similar considerations to her peers at the introduction of the investigation. She presented factual information about the range of culture groups and demonstrated some understanding of the conflict between peoples in Alexandria, describing some of them as ‘rowdy’. Daisy initially considered Alexandria a ‘Roman city due to the fact that the Romans have power and people adopted their culture’. Through the content of Lesson 2, however, she displays some change in her opinion in response to the class discussion about the goddess Isis, where she comments:

I think the Greeks and the Romans were heavily influenced by the Egyptians in Alexandria... I believe that after a while you would probably become a part of a culture if you are surrounded by it.

The creative piece written by Daisy is an interesting perspective on diversity in the

way this is presented from the viewpoint of its fictional protagonist. The student provides interesting detail about the activities of the procession. However, I was surprised at the deliberate cynical tone with which this information was put forward. The student describes that ‘those crazy Egyptians were having a celebration of yet another goddess (Isis, I think)’. Yet, with continued condemnatory language, the student continues to display a good comprehension of the diverse participation in the festival:

I was pretty sure Isis was an Egyptian goddess, so why was that so many Romans and Greeks turned up to the procession? I suppose they’ll just take any excuse for a party.

Nevertheless the character created by Daisy continues to observe the procession and the reason for the event is eventually explained by their ‘Greek friend’, followed by the procession itself. It is only at the end of her ‘*Pompa* Diary Entry’ that Daisy reveals the Jewish identity of her character, in the concluding line: ‘if any of them were to convert to Judaism, my door would undoubtedly be open’. In her piece, therefore, the student displays both an understanding of diversity of Alexandria and the mixing of cultures at annual events like the *pompa* but balances this in a portrayal of the realistic prejudices which a distinct individual culture, such as that of the Jews, might possess. When questioned at the conclusion of the study, Daisy displays a change of opinion on Alexandria as a ‘Roman city’ to one which ‘is a mix of all these cultures [Greek, Roman, Egyptian]’, reasoning that ‘although the Romans controlled it, Egyptian religion became accepted by many different racial groups, and it is almost a culture of its own’. When reflecting upon this, she remarked that ‘the fact that Isis was adopted by different cultures changed my mind’.

Conclusion

Across the four stages of the sequence, all the students discussed in this study engaged differently with the issue of diversity in Alexandria. I determine that both Anjali and Daisy adhered to an ‘engaged’ relationship with the

information, displaying an understanding of the number of diverse cultural groups who lived in Alexandria across each of the exercises. Anjali provides some reasoning for her description of the city as ‘multicultural’ and reflects on the material through personal judgements on the topic of diversity - that it could be considered a source of pride to her fictional character. Daisy presents well-reasoned judgements on diversity in Alexandria. At the conclusion of the study, she attests to the development of her own perspective on this issue, in response to the activities and information presented to her. In her ‘*Pompa* Diary Entry’, however, the student displays an understanding not only of the factual information but of the differences in perspective between cultural groups, which she emphatically presents through the Jewish persona of her fictional character.

I would argue that Bethany demonstrates a ‘reflective’ engagement with diversity, in both her written answers to the questions provided and her diary entry. In response to the worksheets, Bethany presents not only a comprehension of the factual information presented, but her use of language and from the outset of the study demonstrates an approach to diversity in Alexandria which resonates with this issue in the present day. This is further evidenced in the student’s ‘*Pompa* Diary Entry’, where her constructed character in the ancient world possesses some equivalence with a modern cultural identity, and indeed perhaps her own experience.

In relation of the research objectives of this study, these three students have successfully demonstrated an enrichment in their perception of diversity in an ancient context. The strategy of using visual material - the comparable representations of the goddess Isis - appears to have been effective in leading students to ‘engage’ with the similarities and differences in cultural perspectives, while introducing the concept of shared culture in Alexandria. Daisy appears to have particularly responded to this. The strategy of using a creative writing activity also provided an effective opportunity for students to explore and imaginatively consider the experience of diversity, which further enriched their understanding of the subject. Furthermore, the creative exercise of the

'Pompa Diary Entry' facilitated Bethany in 'reflecting' on ancient diversity on an individual and perhaps personal level, allowing for the demonstration of original thought on ancient diversity which relates to modern-day experience.

Gurtaj in contrast appears to demonstrate a 'simplistic' approach to the subject of diversity. The student recognises the presence of diversity in Alexandria and discusses its 'multicultural' identity at both the outset and conclusion of the study, with little change between these points. The student, however, provides little explanation for the use of this term in response to written questions. In the creative writing piece also, the student displays little engagement with this opportunity to reflect and explore experiences of diversity. Gurtaj's 'simplistic' engagement with the experience of ancient diversity could be due to the absence of sufficient modelling in class discussions. If I had included more frequent, in-depth class discussions of the interactions between cultural groups as features of in the lesson stages of the study, it is probable that Gurtaj would have had a greater resource of empathetic viewpoints with which to articulate his understanding on diversity.

In future practice, therefore, I would continue to include the strategic elements such as the use of visual material and creative writing activities, which have appeared effective in this study for 'engaged' and 'reflective' students, while improving the extent of modelling in activities, in order to support students with a more 'simplistic' engagement with the subject of diversity.

Ultimately, the scope of this action-research enquiry was limited in terms of time and content and subsequently cannot determine the long-term enrichment of the promotion of diversity among these students at Harrovia Academy. However, this investigation of this Year 9 Latin class has shown some success in the promotion of diversity in the ancient world, or at least among the students whose written work has been discussed. While these four students are to an extent representative of the general engagement of their class-group with this subject, the restrictions of this analysis are evident. The variation between the student engagements presented here are a testament to how individual perspectives on diversity are themselves inherently diverse. This is

reflective of the nature of the topic of diversity, which resists measurement in the conventional format of an action-research study. This should however not deter teachers from actively engaging pupils with the topic of diversity in the ancient world. As demonstrated by the results of this study, involving students with different perspectives in the Ancient World can produce new insights and positive engagements with Classics in the classroom.

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