

Reading Le Clézio: Simulating Empathy for the Marginalized Inhabitants of the Unwelcoming Global Village

In their incessant quest for world domination and the eradication of communist ideology during the Cold War, both American politicians and other educational policymakers seem to have forgotten how all of the distinct disciplines complement each other. For this reason, math and science have dominated the landscape of education in the United States for the past several decades. Moreover, the value of education itself has been reduced by our consumer society to its mere utilitarian purpose. For many Americans, the only reason to pursue higher education is to obtain a lucrative position that will ensure that one possesses all of the material comforts that our society valorizes. The result of this rigid pedagogical model is the creation of a misinformed, ignorant citizenry that is incapable of engaging in basic critical thinking exercises. Recent events, such as the debate concerning the creation of an Islamic cultural center near hallowed Ground Zero and the unfathomable, erroneous perception that President Obama is Muslim, concretize the unmitigated failure of the American educational system that is not adequately preparing its diverse population for the unique challenges that the many nations and cultures which comprise the global village must confront together.

Indeed, the only solution is a radical paradigm shift with an interdisciplinary focus that is cognizant of the invaluable contributions of all disciplines in the creation of a more inquisitive, egalitarian, and harmonious society in which different cultures cannot only coexist, but also thrive in an atmosphere of dialogue and mutual respect. Although the scientific method is important because it urges the subject to demand proof and it helps us understand the universe and the physical laws that govern it, this useful model also has

its limitations. Scientific logic can help the subject to ascertain a certain type of ‘definitive’ knowledge related to the cosmos, but it fails, at least in isolation from other fields, to compel individuals to ask difficult questions about the pervasive ideology that dominates their society. Given the current state of the modern world and a global economy which is sustained by quotidian transnational interactions, this shortcoming must be addressed. The purpose of this specific study is to demonstrate how the humanities, and specifically literary narratives, can help the American educational system to overcome this alarming, pedagogical deficiency.

Using both an educational and philosophical approach, this investigation will underscore how a veritable, balanced liberal arts education can stimulate critical thinking, mold minds, foster a meaningful dialogue that will allow individuals to communicate across cultural boundaries, and simulate empathy for the Other. Literature may not provide absolute truths, but it forces people to reflect about the critical issues of their time by posing disconcerting questions about divisive ideologies and the extreme inequalities that are emblematic of the modern world. Given the gravity of complex problems, such as the depletion of the earth’s natural resources, pollution, global warming, acute poverty, and clandestine immigration, the human family must learn how to live and work together in peace and harmony. In fact, the important decisions that our society will make in the coming years might determine the fate of the entire human race. As it attempts to offer possible solutions to the modern educational crisis in the United States, this study will be divided into the following six areas: I. Shortcomings of the global village II. New paradigm shift in Foreign Language teaching methodology III. Role of intercultural

education in society IV. Empathy and the literary narrative V. Who is J.M.G. Le Clézio? VI. Applying the intercultural model to Le Clézio's narratives.

I. Shortcomings of the global village

The term 'global village' was coined by the researcher Marshall McLuhan in the 1960's. However, as Rico Lie affirms, "It is unclear what the origins are of this concept. It is also unclear what McLuhan actually meant by it" (57). In spite of this original ambivalence, the notion of a global village soon became an important concept that would be indicative of larger humanistic aspirations. In academic circles as well as in the general public, McLuhan's term would be associated with the idealistic dream that modern technology would place divergent cultures in intimate contact like never before, thereby facilitating a greater understanding and acceptance of other ways of life. Explaining what the concept of a global village now encompasses, Tracy Novinger asserts, "In our world of expanding technology and shrinking geography, people of different cultures have increasing frequency of contact..." (ix). Inventions, such as the Internet, have indeed fundamentally altered the world in terms of eliminating traditional communicative barriers. If an individual has access to the appropriate device, the effects of geographical distance can be minimized.

Yet, this dream of creating a more cohesive world citizenry would soon be met with increasing skepticism. McLuhan was correct in his assertion that the many cultures of the world would now encounter each other on a daily basis as interdependent parts of a global economy. However, would the United States and the rest of the world be prepared for the challenges that this geographical compression would present? Summarizing both the hopes and fears of the global village, Dean Barnlund reflects,

What is in doubt is whether the erosion of cultural boundaries through technology will bring the realization of a dream or a nightmare. Will a global village be a mere collection or a true community of men? Will its residents be neighbors capable of respecting and utilizing their differences, or clusters of strangers living in ghettos and united only in the antipathies for others? (27).

After much reflection, Barnlund reticently concludes that the realization of the global village has unfortunately widened the economic disparity between those who have access to this dream, and induced far greater suffering for those on the periphery of modern society. Moreover, Barnlund reiterates that this close intercultural contact has perhaps created even more racism, bigotry, intolerance, and divisiveness. As the author summarizes, “Even events of recent decades provide little basis for optimism. Increasing physical proximity has brought no millennium in human relations. If anything, it has appeared to intensify the divisions among people rather than to create a broader intimacy” (27).

Other intercultural theorists seem to agree with the current nightmare scenario outlined by Barnlund in his essay. In her monograph entitled *Intercultural Communication: A Practical Guide*, Tracy Novinger explains, “Our global village is turning out to be an unstable and often unfriendly place, with ethnic nationalisms taking center stage [...] Individuals and organizations struggle to cope with problems in living and working with people of other cultures on a daily basis” (8). Similar to Barnlund, Novinger asserts that instead of uniting divergent cultures, the many different ethnic and religious groups that comprise the global village have yet to learn how to valorize difference and diversity. In the absence of a meaningful intercultural dialogue, the dominant majority seeks to expand its control of planetary resources and impose its

monolithic culture upon other minority civilizations within its sphere of influence.

According to Barnlund, the only solution to this dire, global crisis is improved intercultural communication, grounded in mutual respect.

In their discussion of how technology, specifically the internet, has transformed the entire world, Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, and Blake express similar concerns to those of Barnlund and Novinger. Underscoring the eradication of traditional geographical boundaries through technological advances, the authors affirm, “the global economy links people in desert and rural isolation in Mongolia via Worldwide Internet with those in urban areas of Minnesota” (174). Given that the number of internet subscribers has drastically increased since the inception of this powerful virtual tool all around the world, it is indeed possible to converse with people from all corners of the globe. However, it should also be noted that not everyone has access to this technology. While the wealthiest individuals in the modern world have expanded their economic control, poverty and illiteracy are still omnipresent in both industrialized and developing societies. For this reason, it could be argued that the internet is aggravating the problem of economic disparity. For those who are unable to afford internet service fees, a computer, or even electricity, they will have fewer opportunities to take advantage of all that technology has to offer. Since many lucrative positions require at least a basic understanding of computer software, it appears that this inequality of access is further compounding the inability of the global village to welcome marginalized and disenfranchised individuals that have been silenced by the ruling majority.

Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, and Blake also note that new technological inventions can often facilitate conflict. Although many people embrace tools which are designed to

place a plethora of information at their fingertips in an instant, some individuals remain proud of their traditions and customs. As the authors affirm, “Change is inevitable, and yet it often brings anguish, disruption, and a rearranging of our lives [...] Clashes between traditional and new ways of doing things can influence interpersonal relationships” (179). Some people are unwilling or simply too apprehensive to accept other possibilities with which they are not familiar. When traditional methods are considered to be antiquated and no longer useful because of new technologies, what happens to individuals in the modern world who refuse or are unable to make this transition?

Furthermore, how does the global village impact traditional civilizations, such as the nomadic Sahrawi, who continue to live in harmony with nature as their people have done for many generations? Although such communities might not seem to participate in any sort of global dialogue, they are not immune to the ramifications of modernity. Pollution, global warming, and the exploitation of the earth’s non-renewable resources affect all members of humanity. For this reason, all civilizations, large and small, deserve an equal voice in discussions related to the common problems that the entire human family now faces. The gross inequalities that are emblematic of the global village have ensured that primordial societies are more excluded and ignored than ever before.

II. New paradigm shift in Foreign Language teaching methodology

Given the inability of the American educational system to prepare students for the demands, pitfalls, and potential benefits of the global village, Foreign Language teaching methodology is currently undergoing yet another paradigm shift. Although Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has indeed addressed many of the inherent

flaws of previous methods of FL instruction, such as the Audio-lingual method and the grammar-translation approach, recent studies unequivocally underscore the failure of CLT to prepare today's learners to be responsible, compassionate, and informed citizens of the modern world. A troubling report published by the Modern Language Association entitled "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World" in May 2007 perhaps best summarizes the current pedagogical crisis. As the ad-hoc group in charge of this investigation affirms, "In fulfilling its charge, the committee found itself immersed in a dynamic, rapidly changing environment marked by a sense of crisis around what came to be called the nation's language deficit. The United States inability to communicate with or comprehend other parts of the world became a prominent subject for journalists [...]" (MLA n. pag.). It is important to note that the MLA report not only explores the linguistic deficiencies of the American educational system, but it also cites the necessity of improved transcultural competence.

The only way to combat the pervasive insularity in American society is to increase our knowledge and appreciation of the rest of the world. We cannot merely transport our culture elsewhere and expect everyone else to conform to our monolithic model. As this study has already clearly established, America's current students and future policymakers must learn how to valorize the unique contributions of the cultures with which they live in close daily proximity if they are to succeed. As Gilberte Furstenberg declares,

Yet, a profound change has taken place in the last 10 years: It is the growing realization, brought on by the globalization of our world, that our students will work and interact with people of diverse cultures and will therefore need to be able to communicate effectively across boundaries that are not just linguistic. This means that our mission as language teachers is more important than ever and that our goal should no longer be limited to helping students develop and achieve linguistic and communicative competence (330).

In a hostile, anti-intellectual climate¹ that often questions the validity of the humanities in general and disciplines like foreign languages, Furstenberg convincingly argues that speaking both another language and another culture are more important skills than ever before in human history. A meaningful transcultural dialogue that will allow divergent peoples of the world to confront modern global challenges together necessitates both profound linguistic and cultural knowledge that can only be acquired in the Foreign Language classroom.

In their essay entitled “Creating Intercultural Competence: A Proposal for Anglophone Studies in Restructuring University Curricula in English as a Foreign Language,” Zoreda and Flores Revilla echo the sentiments of Furstenberg and the MLA ad-hoc committee. In reference to the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model for foreign language instruction, Zoreda and Flores Revilla explain, “The current drive toward not only linguistic but also cultural competence in foreign language study has also been expressed by national, regional, and international educational policy statements” (3). Specifically, Zoreda and Flores Revilla refer to the renewed cultural focus of “the U.S. *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996), the European Community’s *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference* (1996), and the UNESCO’s *Education in a Multilingual World: UNESCO Guidelines on Language and Education*” (3).

Ardently defending the ICC paradigm, UNESCO’s guidelines clearly state,

The cultural component of language teaching and learning should be strengthened in order to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures; languages should not be simple linguistic exercises, but opportunities to

¹ For a more comprehensive discussion of the anti-intellectual climate in the United States, see J. Parke Renshaw, p. 297, and Susan Feagin, p. 248. All of the pertinent bibliographic information is provided on the works cited page.

reflect on other ways of life, other literatures, other customs (qtd. in Zoreda and Flores Revilla 3).

This contention rejects the strictly utilitarian view of education in general, as well as in Foreign Language teaching. It also represents a realization that not all knowledge can be reduced to measurable quantities that can easily be assessed on high-stakes examinations. Moreover, a profound knowledge of other cultures might not necessarily help students earn more money, but it will allow them to participate in global discussions that could very well determine the future of this planet.

In our materialistic society, sometimes the intrinsic value of education itself becomes lost in our unending zeal to accumulate more wealth. Authentic learning related to other cultures renders students cognizant of other possibilities and ways of knowing. By studying a FL culture, American learners are able to shed their ethnocentric cloak and realize that their society does not possess definitive answers to life's greatest enigmas and world issues. As the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* affirm, "American students need to develop an awareness of other people's world views, of their unique way of life [...] as well as learn about contributions of other cultures to the world at large and the solutions they offer to the common problems of humankind" (qtd. in Zoreda and Flores Revilla 3-4). In terms of both the complexity and urgency of the problems that the human family and its future generations now face, foreign language teachers are in a unique position to create a new and improved global village by utilizing intercultural communicative competence techniques.

In her article entitled "Four Good Reasons to Use Literature in the Primary School," Irma Ghosn also embraces the ICC model of second language acquisition. Moreover,

Ghosn reiterates the importance of implementing FL instruction at the elementary school level. Furthermore, Ghosn also lauds the essential role of literature in terms of creating intercultural citizens that possess the necessary knowledge to understand the Other, collaborate with divergent cultures, and to empathize with those who are excluded from the system. In reference to the larger purpose of education, Ghosn asserts, “In the increasingly global world, language and critical thinking skills, intercultural awareness and emotional intelligence would seem to be high priorities, especially in our struggle to create a more just and peaceful world” (8). According to Ghosn, the only way to combat the current hostilities that prevent isolated communities from functioning as a cohesive social whole is to implement mandatory intercultural curriculum at the earliest levels of education.

In his investigation of the relationship between language, literature, and culture in the modern Foreign Language classroom, Daniel Shanahan identifies the two dominant pedagogical ideologies that divide educators. As Shanahan articulates, “Today, university teachers of foreign language (FL) in the U.S. face a pedagogical environment in which two camps have developed, one basing its emphasis on communicative competence, the other on the importance of exposure to culture and, especially, literature” (164). After exploring the logic of both sides, Shanahan also contends that students need both communicative language skills and intercultural values in order to succeed in the modern world.

Similar to Furstenberg, Zoreda, Flores Revilla, and Ghosn, Shanahan also criticizes the strictly pragmatic view of education that fails to take into account the greater importance of a true liberal arts curriculum that prepares learners for active and ethically

responsible citizenship. In reference to this overly simplistic pedagogical vision, Shanahan notes, “the prevalent attitude in the U.S. [is] that FLF learning is fundamentally an exercise with utilitarian (i.e. career) goals and that those goals should be the predominating factor in the development of the language curriculum” (165). At the end of his essay, Shanahan encourages FL teachers at all levels to continue to incorporate rudimentary humanistic principles into their daily teaching activities regardless of whether American society valorizes, respects, or understands their efforts. Attempting to empower FL colleagues, Shanahan unwaveringly declares, “Our fundamental goal as language professors is to expand and enrich the lives of our students and the society in which they live. Our dedication to this goal [...] has sustained our commitment to humanistic study even when it exists [...] on a bleakly unreceptive landscape” (170-171). Preparing Foreign Language students to be able to communicate effectively in the target language in addition to fostering intercultural awareness is a daunting task given both time constraints and the other inherent limitations of the classroom. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that today’s students are in drastic need of both profound linguistic and cultural training that allows them to not only function but to also thrive in the global village, regardless of whether everyone in American society realizes the limitations of the utilitarian model of education or not.

III. Role of intercultural education in society

The aforementioned paradigm shift in foreign language pedagogy reflects a global, interdisciplinary trend. Many educators from around the world have now abandoned the multicultural model in favor of interculturality. Although these terms are often used synonymously, these two divergent concepts are quite different in fundamental ways. In

his acclaimed essay *L'Interculturel ou la guerre* 'Interculturality or War,' Issa Asgarally clearly delineates the distinction between multiculturalism and interculturality. Implying that multicultural values can even be detrimental to social cohesion, Asgarally declares, "Le risque du multiculturalisme est de mettre des gens dans des boîtes et d'ethniciser notre vision de la société. On réduit la personne à une catégorie et l'individu à un collectif" 'The risk of multiculturalism is that it places people into boxes or ethnicizes our worldview. One reduces the human being to a category and the individual to a collective identity' (21; my trans.). Insisting upon the originality of interculturality, Asgarally criticizes the multicultural paradigm because it creates artificial cultural distinctions that do not truly unite humanity but which separate individuals into distinct ethnic groups.

Whereas multiculturalism celebrates and highlights difference, interculturality emphasizes the universal characteristics shared by the entire human family. In fact, the entire intercultural model is predicated upon the scientific premise that only one human race exists. This contention is hardly surprising given that the majority of the anthropologic community now considers the very notion of a race to be nothing more than a social construct.² For this reason, intercultural educators attempt to deconstruct ethnic labels that represent sources of profound hostility and animosity in the modern world. Instead of first valorizing difference, interculturality initially identifies the commonalities that are emblematic of the human condition that afflicts all members of every society.

Moreover, Asgarally and other intercultural practitioners contend that interculturality is more appealing than multiculturalism because it allows educators to transcend the

² (c.f.) P.R. Spickard, "The illogic of American racial categories," in M.P.P. Root, ed., *Racially mixed people in America* (Newbury Park CA: Sage, 1992), 12–23.

frustrations associated with the latter paradigm. As Suciú Marta-Christina asserts in the context of globalization and European education,

We need to foster respectful exchanges of views between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds on an equal basis. We want to go beyond multicultural societies, where cultures and cultural groups simply coexist side by side, where they live ‘parallel lives.’ We need to become intercultural societies where plurality of cultures cooperates in dialogue and in shared responsibility (649).

Marta-Christina’s contention is quite revealing because it exposes the problematic nature of multicultural civilizations. In the modern global village, contact between divergent social groups is often limited to pragmatic concerns. Since no authentic communication is taking place, every social or ethnic minority is isolated into a specific enclave. In order for a meaningful dialogue and fruitful collaboration to transpire, every element of society, especially the moral majority, must become more open-minded in terms of appreciating the unique contributions of other cultures.

Although facilitating greater communicative intimacy amongst distinct social entities represents a tremendous challenge both in society as a whole and in the classroom, Marta-Christina reminds us that “While globalization poses challenges, it also offers powerful opportunities for the higher education community to play a key role in shaping and reshaping the future” (649). The present realities of the global village might be disquieting, but perhaps it is not too late to (re) appropriate /reconstruct the modern world. Other educators have also embraced this humanistic dream that confronts the unpleasant realities underscored by theorists such as Barnold and Novinger and attempts to offer a possible solution that will create a more egalitarian and peaceful society through mutual dialogue and respect.

However, in order to take advantage of this potential opportunity, intercultural education would need to be adopted as an essential component of the curriculum. In spite of divergent opinions from the general public regarding the validity of teaching intercultural values, several European countries have already implemented nationwide policy changes that reflect these fundamental humanistic values.³ In reference to the origins of intercultural education in the Netherlands, Yvonne Leeman and Guuske Ledoux affirm, “Educational policy measures to deal with the consequences of immigration were first initiated at the end of the 1960s. An important goal was to stimulate, through ‘intercultural education,’ the socialization of young people for citizenship in a multicultural society” (576). Moreover, Leeman and Ledoux reiterate, “Intercultural education has been a compulsory part of the curriculum in all sectors of education since the mid 1980s” (577). Yet, Leeman and Ledoux also importantly note that many educators do not have the proper training to transmit intercultural principles effectively to their students. Although political leaders embraced interculturality, teacher training programs did not evolve to reflect the incorporation of these new concepts.

In her study dedicated to intercultural education in Germany at the elementary level, Pamela Oberhuemer echoes the sentiments of Leeman and Ledoux concerning the necessity of molding young people into informed and active world citizens. In an adamant affirmation, Oberhuemer declares, “What is important, is that intercultural activities become a matter-of-fact and integral part of the curriculum and are not seen [...] as something exotic and out-of-the-ordinary” (10). Similar to Leeman and Ledoux, Oberhuemer also addresses how immigration has profoundly altered German society,

³ It should also be noted that the European Union officially designated 2008 as the “Year of Intercultural Dialogue.” See Suciú Marta-Christina, p. 649.

thereby creating a situation in which many different ethnic groups must interact with each other on a daily basis. Additionally, Oberhuemer notes that German society was not prepared for the influx of Turkish immigrants that would seek a better life in Western Europe.

Since the cultural background of many of these Turkish citizens differs drastically from that of the majority of the German population, social tension, misunderstanding, and intolerance are inevitable consequences of this cultural clash. As Oberhuemer explains, “Numerous incidents of overt violence towards asylum seekers and in particular a series of horrifying cases of arson against members of the Turkish population have shocked the majority of Germans. Unfortunately, it has taken this extreme situation to heighten public concern about effective ways of combating racism and violence and educating children for democracy in a multicultural society” (2). After these deplorable manifestations of xenophobia and violence, German politicians were forced to confront the problem. In the wake of events, such as Brewer’s controversial clandestine immigration policy in Arizona, what will it take to awaken the consciousness of the American public? When will American legislators finally reject the ‘melting pot’ paradigm, and realize that only authentic dialogue can perhaps save the global village from its own self-inflicted wounds?

Likewise, Miguel Puwainchir, a mayor of a municipality in Ecuador and member of the indigenous Shuar community, also expresses his sincere hope that the assimilation model for creating social cohesion will be abandoned by the leaders of his country. In a passionate essay entitled “The Globalization of Interculturality,” Puwainchir asserts, “I am a Shuar. I am proud to be one that nature made me so. This is why I walk and work

as a Shuar does. I come from a family of warriors that shrank human heads. Today we want to shrink human egos so they will accept a globalization of cultures that does not merge the many into one” (n. pag.). As Puwainchir correctly notes, promoting intercultural values is also an exercise in humility. In order for a veritable exchange to occur, the dominant social group must overcome its ethnocentric attitudes to be able to valorize the Other.

Perhaps this challenge is even greater in the United States given the country’s undeniable global economic and cultural influence. Unfortunately, the uneven balance of power in the modern world, dominated by the U.S., has convinced many Americans that they control the rest of humanity because their culture is superior to other ways of life. As Genelle Morain elucidates, “Perhaps the most valuable benefit from studying another culture is humility. While all countries tend toward ethnocentrism, the geographic isolation of America and the growing importance of the English language have given us a disproportionate sense of power” (3). Furthermore, Morain also warns, “Americans are unprepared to operate with sensitivity in cross-cultural situations” (1). Whether Americans like it or not, they reside in the same global village that now unites most human beings. A superiority complex has resulted in the creation of a society that is willfully blind to the contributions of other cultures. Without learning to be more modest and to listen to other viewpoints, future Americans will not only fail their own country, but also the entire world. The gravity of the issues that the global village now faces together is much too dire to allow this destructive myopia to linger.

IV. Empathy and the literary narrative

When individuals learn to be humble, they also begin to empathize with those who have traditionally been excluded from mainstream society. As Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, and Blake assert, “empathy is the bedrock of intercultural communication” (106). If the capacity to empathize with those that are different or which are suffering from discrimination is the cornerstone of ICC, then it behooves educators to cultivate this complex emotion in the classroom. However, in order to take advantage of the veritable force of empathy and its unique ability to enact social change, teachers must understand what it means to empathize and how to foster the development of these profound sentiments. In his essay entitled “What is it like to be someone else? Simulation and Empathy,” Ian Ravenscroft offers the following definition: “I will use the term ‘empathy’ to refer to the capacity to bring about in ourselves another’s affective states without actually placing ourselves in their situation” (171). Since no individual shares the same exact experiences in life as someone else, our ability to conceptualize anguish from which we have not personally suffered is what allows human beings to relate to others on a meaningful level.

Before exploring how empathy can be honed and nurtured in the classroom, this study will investigate different schools of philosophical thought related to this phenomenon. Explaining why human beings empathize has long been a subject of debate in the philosophical community. In recent years, much of the discussion has been in the context of two divergent paradigms. Whereas some philosophers support the Theory-theory (TT) model, other researchers insist that Simulation Theory (ST) is a more accurate explanation for human empathy. Moreover, a few hybrid representations combine elements of both of these dominant theories (Maibom, 2007).

The TT paradigm posits that “our capacity to understand others is primarily a capacity to *theorise* [sic] about human behavior” (Ravenscroft, 171). Proponents of TT offer a rational explanation for a subject’s deep feelings of empathy toward others who are in a dangerous, painful, or disadvantageous situation. As Ted Rockwell explains, “The pure theory-theory says that recognizing that someone is in pain is not that different from recognizing that something is made of sulphur, or is on fire [...] Epistemically, our knowledge of other people’s pains is not significantly different from our knowledge about anything else” (59). According to theory-theory, the origins of human empathy are quite cerebral in nature. Human beings are able to conceptualize analytically how it might feel to be in a given circumstance because of their capacity to create theories using what is called *folk psychology*. In reference to this phenomenon and utilizing the example of a distressed climber, Ravenscroft elucidates,

As it is standardly conceived, the theory-theory is an account of our ability to attribute propositional attitudes to others, and to predict and explain their behaviour in terms of those attitudes [...] Seeing the climber’s situation and noting his behaviour, we reason (via folk psychology) to claims about his mental states: he is afraid; he wishes he had not embarked upon such a dangerous climb; he believes that if he can just gain the next good hand he will be saved; and so on (172).

Simulation theory, however, proposes a less rational explanation for empathic responses. Instead of logically deducing typical reactions using folk psychology, ST contends that a subject actively imagines the challenges of someone else’s predicament, and places himself or herself in this unenviable position. As Ravenscroft underscores, “According to simulation theory, we attribute mental states to others by simulating their mental economy [...] Simulationists therefore speak of imaginatively identifying with the target, or of adopting pretend versions of the target’s perceptual and cognitive states”

(177). The basic tenets of simulation theory correspond to the wisdom of the Amerindian proverb which warns “Do not judge your neighbor until you walk two moons in his moccasins.” Proponents of the ST paradigm seem to suggest that human beings are indeed capable of affectively imagining what it would be like to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes.

It should be noted that much of the philosophical community is starting to embrace the ST model. Many researchers contend that simulation theory addresses many of the shortcomings of theory-theory. In her book review of a recent monograph by the renowned theorist Karsten Stueber, Giuseppina d’Oro outlines contemporary criticisms of TT. As d’Oro asserts, “Stueber describes the perspective of the theory theorist as ‘detached,’ external, third-person perspective that ignores the internal monologue that moved the agent to act” (130). Moreover, d’Oro also notes that Stueber warns against “over-rationalizing the human agent” (132). Current scientific research also seems to support the ST paradigm. Specifically, studies with infants and young children which investigate their empathic responses to certain stimuli appear to validate simulation theory while exposing the inherent flaws of the TT model (Ravenscroft, 181).

The implications of recent philosophical and scientific findings related to simulation theory for both the teaching of Foreign Languages and Literature in general cannot be overstated. If imagination and empathy are intertwined, as ST unequivocally affirms, then perhaps literary narratives offer educators an invaluable tool for fostering and developing empathic responses that could help create a more humane and egalitarian global village. In reference to simulation theory and the role of literature, Susan Feagin declares, “It is possible to put oneself into [...] a psychological condition such that one

simulates or models the mental processes or activities engaged in by a particular person during a given period of time [...] Empathizing is also an ability, and like other abilities it can be exercised or neglected, honed by practice or left to rot” (94-95). In her monograph *Reading with Feeling: The Aesthetics of Appreciation*, Feagin asserts that educators must harness the power of literature to create intercultural citizens that are capable of breaking their own ontological shell of being and wearing other moccasins.

Moreover, in a section of her book entitled “Punching Bags for the Mind,” Feagin fervently affirms, “Appreciating fiction stretches and flexes the human mind; it provides us with exercise that both sustains and enhances a capacity of our imagination called affective flexibility” (242). Although American society seems to have almost completely forgotten the value of humanistic education in our desire to lead the global village, the destructive limitations of the only disciplines that our culture valorizes are becoming painfully evident. ‘Cold’ fields, such as Math and Science, do not appeal to students’ emotional sensibilities, thereby affecting profound inner transformations and preparing learners for active and ethically responsible citizenship in the modern world. Only a truly interdisciplinary re-visioning, which includes a renewed focus on Foreign Languages and the human sciences, of the current educational system can remedy this crisis. As John Sinnigen notes, when students acquire another language, they also encounter another culture and learn about other possibilities. In particular, Sinnigen asserts that FL students “not only learn a second language but also come to see the world through other eyes” (24).

Similar to Feagin, Bachrudin Musthafa and Wachyu Sundayana laud the unique ability of the humanities to help students hone their “emotional muscles, which are

essential for emotional resilience needed by intercultural persons” (61). Although it might not always directly translate into dollar signs, Musthafa and Sundayana emphasize the role of the human sciences in expanding students’ horizons. Given the veritable diversity of the global village and the undeniable contact between civilizations, the intrinsic value of disciplines such as, language arts, literature, philosophy, and history, has never been higher.

Yet, in spite of the undeniable urgency of a balanced liberal arts education for the creation of a more peaceful and democratic world, never has the utility of the humanities been debated to such a great extent by both policymakers and the general public. In her discussion of how literature can transform a subject by fostering deep empathic sentiments for the Other, Susan Feagin states, “The benefits of physical capacities, like the benefits of intellectual or cognitive capacities, are these days not often questioned [...] We need to rethink the value of fictional literature as equipment for exercising our minds” (248). As Feagin notes, a country that cannot think is especially vulnerable to the dissemination of misinformation and illogical propaganda. If the United States continues to only properly fund fields that are directly related to materialistic success in our consumer society, then our often mislead and naïve citizenry will still believe unfounded theories, such as the aforementioned notion that Obama is a Muslim. By reconceptualizing both the extrinsic and intrinsic value of education and by returning to a true commitment to a liberal arts curriculum, perhaps educators will finally be able to prepare the leaders of tomorrow for the unique challenges and opportunities of the global village.

In her study entitled “Literary Texts: A Passage to Intercultural Reading in Foreign Language Education,” Ana Matos discusses how the literary narrative helps students to exercise their affective and intellectual muscles. Matos reiterates that quality literature “transports” readers to an exotic elsewhere (58). In support of the ICC model and its focus on both communicative language skills and intercultural competence, Daniel Shanahan claims that this paradigm can propel “students into voyagers across intercultural space” (170). A level-appropriate, poignant work of fiction from another cultural background serves as a catalyst for symbolic journeys in which FL learners discover other possibilities and learn to empathize with marginalized individuals who benefit the least from the system put into place by the ruling majority. Moreover, during these simulated voyages, students realize that other civilizations are attempting to answer many of the same problems that plague our contemporary society. Furthermore, other cultures might propose a different solution to a given situation. When a confrontation takes place, in which fundamental differences between divergent cultures are exposed, the literary narrative reminds the reader that no civilization possesses infallible answers to the greatest issues that the modern world faces. After an exercise in humility, the student traveler is now able to empathize and to understand others.

Not only does a powerful story allow students to view the world through another lens during literary excursions, but it also represents a source of knowledge that is not always valorized in the United States. As Scott Stroud muses, “What exactly is the value of literature? [...] the cognitive value of literature can be labeled the ‘Subjective Knowledge Theory.’ Such an account of literature places its value in the subjective perspectives or experiences the narrative opens up to the reader” (19). Moreover, Stroud underscores

that the affective experience of reading a text might even possibly result in improved ethical decision making. Stroud emphasizes that although each individual's base of experiences is limited given a variety of factors, literature can help to fill this void. In reference to this possibility, Stroud declares,

What the literary narrative gives one is a simulated experience of what it would be like to occupy a different subjective position [...] As individuals acting in life, we have only a finite amount of choices that we can make; each choice precludes (in practice) other choices [...] One can become a lawyer, but such a career choice (and all its subchoices of school, place of work, etc.) limits one's ability to do something else [...] Literary narratives that involve the simulation of subjective experience can be a valuable way to make up for this inherent deficiency because that allow one to experience what such a perspective or life would be like (28-29).

Through the process of simulation, the reader is able to imagine what it would be like to find oneself in a certain position. The powerful empathetic responses generated by this experience can destabilize and move the subject, thereby compelling him or her to action. Even if the reader does not respond to the ethical summons extended by a certain protagonist with concrete action, he or she will perhaps decide to live otherwise. If nothing else, fictional narratives allow students to catch a glimpse of the Other and his or her daily struggles in the global village.

In an overtly political essay, Paul Gorski urges both multicultural and intercultural theorists to pose difficult questions about contemporary American society, regardless of whether these issues stir controversy within the walls of the classroom or with the general public. Gorski contends that educators are often too 'complicit' with the values of the majority even when they attempt to celebrate diversity and difference. Moreover, the author notes that many of these cultural activities, such as international food fairs, that are designed to promote acceptance and respect are so artificial that they lack the necessary substance to address real problems or to create an authentic dialogue amongst social

groups. Blaming himself and other colleagues with positive intentions that are too apprehensive in terms of offending conservative citizens to tackle the true issues, Gorski affirms, “we offer workshops that never address the underlying issues of inequity such as racism and sexism, or that never provide a larger context for these inequities through an examination of corporate capitalism and US imperialism [...] Students are rarely provided sufficient opportunity to learn about the complex nature of poverty [...] or the ways in which their class privilege relates to others’ repression” (172). Gorski offers a compelling argument that it is only by not being afraid to confront unpleasant realities, such as capitalistic avarice and exploitation, which will allow educators to create future citizens that are ethically and socially conscious members of the modern world that will strive to create a better system that no longer solely benefits those at the very top of the social ladder.

Eva Lezzi echoes the sentiments of Gorski in her exploration of children’s picture books related to the Shoah. Although Lezzi’s essay does not have a political tone, she discusses the reticence of certain educators to implement narratives that investigate somber issues. Moreover, in reference to parental concerns related to representations of the Holocaust in juvenile fiction, Jens Thiele elucidates, “They look at picture books with the projections and wishes for their children in mind, and they thus become afraid when these books take on serious and difficult topics” (qtd. in Lezzi 31). Although it might make parents and others uncomfortable, if intercultural education does not address important sensitive issues, then it will ultimately fail the young students that it wishes to mold into responsible adults. Sheltering children from the realities of the modern world, or from previous pitfalls that have induced much trauma and destruction, will not prepare

them for a global village that is currently unwelcoming, dogmatic, unreceptive, and riddled with inequality. If the future leaders of this planet are to build a better society for all, then understanding the Other and fostering empathy must begin at an early age.

V. Who is J.M.G. Le Clézio?

Perhaps more than any other contemporary author, J.M.G. Le Clézio possesses an astute awareness of the ramifications of globalization. Moreover, the 2008 Nobel Laureate in Literature gives a voice to those who have been silenced by the majority, including immigrants, migrants, traditional civilizations, and both ethnic and moral minorities through his fiction, public discourses, and occasional newspaper articles that take a stand on current social issues.⁴ Although the humble Franco-Mauritian writer does not claim to have any definitive answers for the complex problems that plague the modern world, he realistically depicts the anguish of those that are caught on the periphery of society. Moreover, Le Clézio refuses to ignore the horrors that transpire on a daily basis in the evaporated dream turned nightmare called the global village.

Although the writer is sometimes considered to be merely a naïve, pantheistic, or even mystical thinker by misinformed critics, the vivid, austere realism of works, such as *La Ronde et Autres Faits Divers* and *Coeur Brûle* casts little doubt that these unflattering literary assessments are oversimplified and entirely inaccurate.

VI. Applying the intercultural model to Le Clézio's narratives

Given the humanistic nature of much of Le Clézio's literary endeavor, his narratives fit well into the intercultural communicative competence paradigm. His eloquent and often poetic prose is emotionally rending, as it compels the reader to reflect upon the

⁴ It should also be noted that the Nobel Laureate recently co-launched a philanthropic initiative with Issa Asgarally called *La fondation pour l'interculturel et la paix*. For more information, visit the official website of the FIP: <http://www.fipinterculturel.com/>

grave realities of our consumer society and the plethora of issues that the modern world must confront. By exploring the unequal distribution of power and privilege that is emblematic of the global village, Le Clézio's works foster both humility and empathy. By means of the process of simulation, the reader is struck by the epiphany that many individuals suffer greatly as an ever dwindling economic elite, which the writer terms the 'Happy Few' in his Nobel acceptance speech, reaps the benefits of the current situation (77). Moreover, several influential American journalists and theorists have recently expressed concerns that the U.S. is on the verge of becoming a 'banana republic' or a corrupt political infrastructure with a progressively disappearing middle class and minute portion of the population that possesses nearly all of the monetary capital.⁵ This alarming suggestion is reflected by the unpleasant reality that in the wealthiest nation in the world, millions of Americans do not have any access whatsoever to basic medical care or the opportunity to pursue higher education without severely indebting themselves to the major conglomerates that control governmental policy. Similar to the original vision of the global village, the so-called 'American dream' has been reduced to an ironic caricature.

Many of Le Clézio's narratives explore the gross inequalities that abound in all of western society. In his acclaimed novel *Désert*, the author also juxtaposes the traditional values of marginalized civilizations, such as the Tuaregs, with the capitalistic profit motive that drives the modern world. Although the desert nomads of the Sahara lead a very precarious existence in one of the harshest climates on this planet, their society is not governed by a wealthy elite that exploits the rest of the population. However, Le Clézio does not idealize the social paradigm of these nomadic peoples, as many poignant

⁵ (c.f.) <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100612/banana-republic/>

passages underscore the bleak nature of their daily struggle to survive. Although Tuareg society is undoubtedly more egalitarian than the western model, the shadow of mortality is omnipresent for all of its citizens. Every element of Tuareg civilization is vulnerable to serious issues, such as famine, infant mortality, and infectious diseases.

When the protagonist of *Désert* Lalla is forced to leave her homeland, she hopes for a better life as an immigrant in France. However, she soon discovers that only a privileged few will ever fully experience the glamour and glitz so often advertised by the media. Moreover, not only is this materialistic ideal impossible to reach for the vast majority of people, but it is even more improbable for those who are never integrated into the system at all. As an uneducated, clandestine citizen of Marseilles, Lalla is forced to live in abject poverty with other ostracized and disenfranchised members of society in a dangerous ghetto known as ‘le Panier.’⁶

This sinister area removed from the rest of the city literally reeks of desperation, destitution, and violence. In reference to how she survives in this environment, Lalla explains, “Il faut simplement fermer la bouche et respirer lentement, à petits coups, pour ne pas laisser entrer à l’intérieur de son corps l’odeur de la pauvreté, de la maladie et de la mort qui règne ici, dans ces escaliers, dans ces corridors, dans ces recoins où vivent les araignées et les blattes” ‘You must close your mouth and breath slowly, with short breaths, in order to not allow the odor of poverty, of sickness, of death that reigns here enter inside of your body, in these stairways, in these corridors, in these hiding spots where spiders and cockroaches live’ (290; my trans.). Few opportunities exist for the inhabitants of ‘le Panier’ to climb the social ladder. Moreover, Lalla is the victim of

⁶ It should be noted that although Lalla embarks upon an improbable journey which leads to fortune and fame, she will return to the desert where her baby will be born and raised. Moreover, the rest of ‘le panier’ does not appear to have this unlikely choice.

racial prejudice and xenophobia because of her Northern African origins. Not only has this ethnic group been historically persecuted in France, but they have also been misunderstood and ignored by the majority. The author's realistic descriptions of the anguish of this alienated community deeply resonate with the reader. Furthermore, Le Clézio reminds us that many immigrants do not receive a warm welcome in their host country, and they consequently struggle to cope with a difficult situation and to find a place in a society where no one wants to share a small portion of their proverbial pie with anyone else. Although the writer does not propose a solution for this complex worldwide problem, he forces readers to ask themselves disconcerting questions about the marginalized citizens of their country. This exercise in compassion perhaps represents the first step in the creation of a more just and empathetic global village.

Le Clézio is also a literary visionary who was extremely cognizant of the realities of globalization before the term was in common use. Moreover, his early works, such as *La Guerre* and *Les Géants*, denounce the sinister, unnamed capitalistic forces that control our consumeristic society by means of effective propaganda designed to manipulate the masses. In reference to these hidden and powerful entities, the author of *Les Géants* affirms, “On voudrait bien voir le visage des maîtres, entendre leur voix, sentir leur haleine. Mais les Maîtres ne sont pas là. Ils n'existent pas [...] Ils n'ont pas de visage. Ils n'ont pas de corps, ni de voix. Leur pouvoir est invisible, dans le genre d'un gaz, et tout le monde respire” ‘We would really like to see the masters' faces, hear their voice, feel their breath. But the masters are not there. They do not exist [...] They do not have a face. They have no body, no voice. Their power is invisible, like a sort of gas that everyone is breathing’ (180; my trans.). This short passage, taken from a novel that was

published in 1973, closely resembles an explanation of the covert nature of global power proposed by two researchers twenty-five years later. As Thomas Popkewitz asserts, “globalization becomes [...] a perceived source of anonymous ‘forces’ that have no historical ‘home’ or author” (264). In the early 1970’s, a very astute young author identified a developing problem that was receiving little attention, and Le Clézio encouraged his readers to revolt against the system as he foresaw even bleaker times ahead. As Gorski unequivocally underscores, narratives that force the subject to reflect upon the larger foundations of his or her society foster invaluable critical thinking skills. After over forty years of incessant writing, Le Clézio continues to pose disquieting questions about the nature of Western society, and its impact upon the rest of the world.

Reading Le Clézio’s extremely diverse fiction is not only an exercise in compassion and profound introspection, but his texts also implore individuals to be more humble. Instead of conceptualizing the human race as the center of the universe and one’s particular culture as the model *par excellence* to be emulated, the Nobel laureate exposes the inherent flaws of any type of ideology that creates a superiority complex. In *L’Extase Matérielle*, the author reminds the reader that we are merely particles of matter that are part of a larger cosmic force. As minute elements of this interconnected, interdependent universe, human beings have the same intrinsic right to exist as anything else. For this reason, Le Clézio underscores the ‘petitesse’ of humanity in an intertwined cosmos in this early seminal essay. The author’s deconstruction of the catastrophic and scientifically erroneous separation between us and the rest of the material universe also has important ramifications for the entire global village. The egocentric mentality that the remainder of the cosmos, including other living creatures, only exists to help us live more abundantly

threatens to destroy the ecological equilibrium that sustains life itself. By mindlessly exploiting planetary resources, including other organisms, are human beings engaging in an ignorant form of self-destruction that will undermine the future vitality of the universe for other generations?

Ironically, Le Clézio notes that the current ecological crisis could have easily been averted if a true intercultural dialogue would have existed between Amerindian societies and the world powers that would displace them and destroy their entire way of life. If European colonizers would have less motivated by greed and more open-minded to other forms of knowledge, they could have at least listened to the wisdom of Amerindian civilizations. Native Americans understood the delicate chain of existence that links all things together, and therefore attempted to protect the sacredness of the earth. As Le Clézio elucidates in a collection of essays entitled *La Fête Chantée* inspired by what he learned from the Emberas and Waunanas during his stay with these indigenous societies in the Darien region of Panama from 1970-1974, many Amerindian voices, which were silenced or simply never heard, predicted the modern ecological situation based on their vast knowledge of the universe.

As stated by Chief Seattle in Le Clézio's translation of the leader's apocalyptic plea urging Europeans to defend the integrity of the cosmos,

Nous le savons: la terre n'appartient pas à l'homme, c'est l'homme qui appartient à la terre [...] toutes choses sont liées comme le sang qui unit une même famille. Toutes choses sont liées. Tout ce qui arrive à la terre arrive aux fils de la terre. L'homme n'a pas tissé la toile de la vie, il n'est qu'un fil de tissu. Tout ce qu'il fait à la toile, il le fait à lui-même.

We know this: the earth does not belong to man, it's man that belongs to the earth [...] Everything is connected like the blood that unites a single family. Everything is connected. Everything that happens to the earth happens to the threads of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he

is only a thread of fabric. Everything that he does to the web, he does this to himself (234; my trans.).

Convinced of their moral, intellectual, and cultural superiority, the European settlers ignored Seattle's rending warning. Originally blinded by ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and avarice, Western society can no longer afford to dismiss the ghosts of lore who possessed a type of knowledge, although mocked during Seattle's time, which should have been valorized. Although the planet might be forever tainted because of this willful refusal to engage in a meaningful dialogue with a rich culture that had much to offer the modern world, it is not too late to prevent future tragedies from occurring. Chief Seattle's words also concretize a bittersweet hope that behooves different cultures to collaborate in a true spirit of cooperation. Interculturality represents much more than a pedagogical trend, the success of this humanistic endeavor is intertwined with the fate of the entire human race. Humanity has already seen the repercussions of failure; the toll of myopic, dogmatic sectarianism is not an abstraction.

By eliminating the arbitrary and calamitous division between human beings and the other organisms that inhabit this planet, reading Le Clézio also simulates empathy for other living creatures. After the Franco-Mauritian author highlights the interdependency of all substances comprised of matter in his early works, his profound ecological consciousness specifically targets the rest of the animal kingdom in later works such as *Pawana*. In her study of the philosophical origins of empathy related to simulation theory and the English literary canon, Barbara Hardy Beierl notes that compelling narratives, such as Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *A Dog's Mission*, and Marshall Saunders' *Beautiful Joe*, attack the affective sensibilities of the reader. Moreover, a powerful literary text which elicits profound emotional responses

can lead to transformative experiences that drastically alter the subject's worldview and behavior. As Beierl concludes, "when readers are exposed to literature that triggers and deepens our sympathetic imagination [...] (this) results in the establishment of a positive human-animal bond" (220). After initially probing our egocentric desire for self-preservation in his discussions of cosmic interconnectedness in *L'Extase Matérielle* and *La Fête Chantée*, Le Clézio proceeds to simulate strong feelings of compassion for fellow animate organisms in *Pawana*.

The short text *Pawana* is a re-adaptation of the classic novel *Moby Dick*. However, a stark contrast exists concerning the moral of the two narratives. Whereas in Melville's work humanity is pitted in an eternal struggle against the raging forces of nature, the whales in *Pawana* are the innocent victims of pure capitalistic greed and ignorance. Blinded by their zeal to accumulate immense wealth, the whalers destroy a hidden, privileged site that had been spared from human contamination since the beginning of time. Although the team does become incredibly wealthy because of all of the oil that is extracted from this previously unspoiled lagoon, the earth is irreparably decimated and its scars will never heal. As the narrator of *Pawana* poetically affirms,

Maintenant, ce n'était plus le lieu secret, sans nom, tel qu'il existait depuis le commencement du monde [...] La mer devient vide à nouveau, sans un signe, sans un souffle. Comment peut-on oublier, pour que le monde recommence? Now, it was no longer the secret place, nameless, such as it had existed since the beginning of the world [...] The sea has become empty again, without a sign, without a breath. How can we forget so that the world can start over again (84-88, my trans.).

Using the poignant metaphor of sterility, Le Clézio denounces the materialistic obsession that defines our consumer society. By compelling the reader to reflect upon the ramifications of an economic system that exploits natural resources with no concern for

the integrity and sustainability of existence itself, the author offers a concrete example of how literature can eliminate artificial, ideological barriers and create a more empathetic global village that can remove its myopic lens and see beyond dollar signs.

Although Le Clézio's entire prolific literary career concretizes intercultural values, perhaps the best example of a specific text that could be implemented in the Foreign Languages classroom at any level is *L'Enfant de sous le pont* (The Child from under the bridge). This narrative has been largely ignored by the academic community since it is quite difficult to procure. However, it is an atypical children's story that addresses serious social issues that are omnipresent in the modern world. As Lezzi and other researchers affirm, it is vital that intercultural education begins at a very early age. Moreover, the simple syntactical and lexical nature of the work renders it accessible to students learning French as a second language even at the intermediate level. L2 learners studying French can understand sentences, such as "Ceci est une histoire vraie" with little scaffolding (6). Incorporating texts like *L'Enfant de sous le pont* in the classroom is also a concrete manner to transition from the CLT to the ICC paradigm, the model that is now considered crucial to the present and future relevance of the entire discipline of Foreign Languages.

L'Enfant de sous le pont is a rather short narrative that recounts the fortuitous encounter of a homeless individual with an abandoned newborn. Upon returning to his makeshift home, where he guards his most prized possessions such as his shopping cart and his cardboard box shelter, the protagonist Ali discovers that an infant child has been left in his spot under the bridge. The enigmatic homeless man will raise and protect the young girl that he names Amina for approximately one year before giving her to an

affluent and caring family. Although it might seem improbable that someone without a fixed residence could provide for a newborn, Ali is quite resourceful as he obtains everything that Amina needs to become a healthy child. It is only after he has exhausted his limited resources, mostly discarded items that he sells or barter, that Ali makes the selfless decision to find a more stable situation for Amina that will afford her the place in society that he never had. By means of implicit references, the reader discovers that Ali is probably homeless through absolutely no fault of his own. Even though our consumer culture often places blame on those it considers to be ‘unproductive’ elements, Ali is truly the victim because of his *Harki*⁷ origins that offer him few opportunities to contribute to mainstream French society.

Through the process of simulation, the young or adult reader of *L’Enfant de sous le pont* begins to conceptualize the complex, global phenomenon of homelessness differently. Ali does not correspond to any of the pejorative stereotypes of the homeless community. Although our consumer society often identifies idleness as the root cause of this complicated issue, Ali is a victim of social injustice. This somber reality forces the reader to reflect upon not only the struggles of its homeless citizens, but it also fosters sincere feelings of empathy for all marginalized individuals who suffer because of governmental policies and dogmatic ideologies. If the global village has any chance of becoming a more humane and egalitarian place, then the *Happy Few* must begin to question how their privileges might adversely affect other people. Furthermore,

⁷ The Harkis are Algerians who fought for the French during the Franco-Algerian war. After France’s defeat, they were unable to return to Algeria for fear of retaliation, discrimination, and genocide. However, a humiliated France was far from welcoming, as the French government even used former World War II concentration camps to hide the Harkis from public view. In these deplorable conditions, the Harki population was denied basic human rights that accepted members of French society would possess. For more information, read *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War* by Jo McCormack.

dominant Western cultures must start to engage in auto-reflection in order to learn from their past mistakes. For example, unless France fully acknowledges that their treatment of the Harki population was a crime against humanity, then their society might one day make a similar mistake with another ethnic group. Likewise, the United States needs to ensure that catastrophic events, such as the Amerindian genocide, slavery, and Jim Crow laws are emphasized in its academic curriculum. Instead of perpetuating the cultural myth that any given country is the greatest civilization on earth, more governments must implement a veritable interdisciplinary and intercultural educational system that lauds the contributions of all cultures, both large and small.

In conclusion, it is imperative to revisit the evaporated dream of a more humane, democratic, and welcoming global village. Although the nightmare scenario feared by early pioneers researching the effects of globalization has come to fruition, it is never too late to take advantage of the original promise of this humanistic vision for a better world. Similar to two sides of the same coin, every challenge also represents an opportunity. In the United States, many educational organizations and boards have realized that the current curriculum is failing to prepare our students on multiple levels. Not only are American pupils underachieving in areas like science and math, but they are also painfully ignorant of the rest of the world. This insularity must be overcome, if the United States wishes to become respected leaders of the global village that valorize and recognize the accomplishments of different peoples. A refocus on a true liberal arts curriculum, which includes the study of Foreign Languages, cultures, and literatures, can lead the way. The pedagogical flaws of our current educational system have been exposed and the alarm has been sounded. If the summons to action is ignored and Chief

Seattle's compelling plea once again falls upon deaf ears, then perhaps the global village will one day destroy itself from the inside as human beings and all of the other material creatures who inhabit this common space will forever disappear.

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