EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

When circulating the first Call for Paper in view of publishing the inaugural issue of CIEC/IJCS, the editors emphatically added that potential contributions had to be multidisciplinary from bottom up. The articles received have indeed come from across the humanities. Going beyond the only field of Comparative Literature (old Comparative Literature to borrow from Spivak and others), the current issue closes the first volume of the journal, and it proves to be eclectic because it is inclusive of themes of identity and alterity (an otherized gaze on the Other), historical appraisals of female agency in spaces fundamentally hostile to the said gender, and women's own traditional historical narratives rendered through songs about socialization of young men and women, their sensibility and responses to things that happen around humans in general, and women in particular.

Alterity is well served here because our discipline builds on it as a point of departure. Speaking of alterity and/or difference, perhaps Denis Diderot's beautiful assessment best exemplifies what it should be considered to be in this day and agae. In fact, the French philosopher surmises that "La séité ou le soi, la quiddité ou le ce, 1'identité, la diversité ou l'altérité ne sont pas, à proprement parler, les qualités de l'être; mais ce sont ses propriétés, des concomitants nécessaires de l'existence actuelle" (Diderot 86). Identity and alterity are hard to conceive if they do not happen together; there should be a self in order to speak of an Other. That differentiation is made in order to distinguish between A and Z is not detrimental per se; however, when difference is ascribed a stereotypical and prejudicial load, it becomes poisonous and lethal. The gaze of constructivists (racialist ones) tends to sediment the identity of their immediate vis-à-vis (the Other in other words) in order to foreground a frame of reference whereby this Other will be henceforth defined, judged, inferiorized and objectified. In this regard, history largely bears testimony. For example, in the colonial encounter or during slavery days such a vis-à-vis was the (colonial) master and the servant or colonized. The former's superiority and the implied inferiority of the latter/other issue from the belief that the other is

forcedly of lower stock and therefore suitable for being a subject to dominant, i.e., an object. The fallacy behind this belief is easily detected because the Hegelian dialectics proves that not only the subjugated is the master of his/her master who becomes the dominated's subject in the end. This turns the hierarchies and paradigms around, thereby disrupting the "normal order of things." In the global era –where the local imbricates into the local and forms the "glocal" and where boundaries tend to crumble–, the other comes in various shapes and stripes.

The Other is not necessarily an Other; he/she is a sort of clone of the person who otherizes. This is how alterity and identity happen to merge and be the same and one thing. The other in the world dominant narrative is the Third World, the Other of the First World. It is also the paradigmatic exile and émigré from the peripheralized spaces of the world. It is, more importantly, the woman who, whether it be in the so-called developed or developing countries, have (had) the same status: an inferior being in search of legitimacy from the patriarchal order of society deploying itself through division according class, colonial structure, and religion.

The choice for such an assortment is due to the very nature of Comparative Cultural Studies, which cuts across various field of research and areas of academic interests: gender studies, history, and cultural anthropology, among others. The exile and émigré are peculiar because they inscribe in the master/slave dialectic seeking to untie the grid of false self-conscious and "fluid" identities the dominant holds face to the dominated. Edward Said writes, "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human and a native place, between the self and its true home (...)" (Said 173).

The first article in this issue closing volume 1, "Les limites de l'unité francophone dans *La Préférence nationale* de Fatou Diome," surveys the Other, the exile and émigré in the Francophone space which some have mistakenly considered as a homogenized and undifferentiated space. Diakite seeks to debunk the idea of unity in "Francophonie" – the space

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¹ "Glocalization" is a credo encouraging firms to think globally and to act locally; it is adapting the global (hegemonic and external) products and/or services to the locality or culture where it is sold. A Glocal village, in the sense used by Barry Wellman who believes that internet connectivity bring the larger world to every household around the world suffices that it has connection. See the "The Glocal Village: Internet and the Community", p 17.

lumping together those who share the French language by way of power relationally known mostly as colonizer and colonized. Focused on Diome's collection of short stories, *La Préférence nationale*—the sugarcoat given to racism in some French academic jargon—, Diakite provides a tour-like reading of Diome's first book on the supposed unity among people speaking French only to open the readers on the underlying racism governing relationships between former colonizer and former colonized in France. Forced into exile and/or emigration, Africans find themselves planted in the heart of France where they have to prove their humanity through mastering the master's language-culture (even more than the master) in order to better fit. The protagonist, despite her "good faith," is reminded of her color and the stigma of inferiority attached to it. This urge to belong and the rejection opposed to the exile are to be construed as being contrapuntal², to borrow from Edward Said. Yet, rejection of the exile and émigré does not frustrate the latter's efforts to belong, thereby showing a category of émigrés and covert racists laboring to prove the superiority of the host language-culture in Europe.

Samira Etouil's study, "Les configurations de l'autre et de l'ailleurs dans L'Amérique latine sous une perspective maghrébine," analyzes the gaze of an African traveler –an otherized subject of Moroccan postcolony³–, not to scrutinize judgmentally the Other, but to militate in the latter's favor. Beggar's book, L'Amérique latine sous une perspective maghrébine (2005), casting anthropological looks at the other because such looks established in the past symbolic boundaries informed by preconceived ideas and prejudice-mindedness. The author of the book studied by Etouil seeks to confound his otherized experience with that of the Latin American

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² My appropriation is made in the sense of the chaotic meeting of conflicting wants and desires, which is not necessarily what Said means originally. Edward Said writes that" For the exile, habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. (....) Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal (...)" (Said186).

³ I am drawing from Achille Mbembe's meaning of postcolony in the book of the same name. He writes, "the notion of postcolony identifies specifically a given historical trajectory – that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonization and violence which the colonial relationship involves. n" (Mbembe 102).

other. The other's space (l'ailleurs) becomes one with the traveler's space when he undertakes his gazing; he seeks to coexist (in the existential way) with and accept difference, thereby busting the walls that artificially stand between humans.

In his "Etude des chants de Kurubi de Kong: Contexte d'énonciation et enjeux sociétaux," Amidou Sanogo visits the area of oral history among the Mande-dioula people of northern Cote d'Ivoire where there once was a powerful kingdom called Kpong (Kong). The song that Amidou Sanogo analyzes is "Kurubi dɔ̃kili" (kurubi song) which was/is sung exclusively by women as opposed to various functional songs deployed by men – warrior songs. Though "kurubi" looks closer to the Arabic word "kutub" –plural form of kitab (book), Sanogo explains that it rather has akan origins; it is a sociocultural event that the Mande-diula borrowed from the Ano people whom they proselytized when the Kong kingdom was at its peak. Kurubi, Sanogo writes, has religion underpinning because it is performed during the 14th and 27th days of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Sanogo seeks to answer the main question as to what are the societal and contextual values of these songs. The import of this text is that it situates this performance in the sphere of female agency in areas deemed by outsiders to be an oppressive setting for women. Women speak for and by themselves in Islamic spirituality thereby uncovering women's agency and/or voice.

The last contribution is Walter Gam Nkwi's "Ghii'ki Kfaang: Women, Modernity and Modernization in Colonial Kom, Cameroon, c.1920s-1961" This work examines how women in the colonial period (in colonial Kom) were subjects and at the same period agents of modernization and modernity. In fact, as has been the case very much everywhere around the world, women have been covered with a veil to make them invisible and their notable actions unappreciated and unaccounted. In colonial Kom, as Walters Nkwi writes, "Women were mostly relevant as domestic servants or served in other lowly paid professions. In colonial regimes that were constructed on racist ideologies women were in contact with the colonial system because of sex, and domestic work as well and would further imitate the ways of their mistresses and masters." This case study is a true exercise of accounting for women's invisibility thereby unearthing their agency. This is the meaning of "nghiiki kfaang": women of newness or modern

women. Despite the colonialness of their life and setting, these women managed to contribute to a reinvention of their life and that of those around them.

On aggregate, these contributions address the issue of difference and its attending term: identity by way of their several deployments in history, culture and literature. We only hope that reading these contributions will provide a variegated African understanding of not only what it means to be looked at *something and someone* different, but also how the otherized develops a narrative of his/her own identity and difference.

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