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ÉDOUARD GLISSANT AND CYBERNETICS: RACIAL TECHNOLOGIES, IMAGINARIES AND PRACTICES OF BEING

SUBJECT

How we relate – to each other, any thing, living, dead, material or not, the world – is determined by media and technology. Their history of ideas has always been intimately intertwined with thinking race and colonialism. With all-encompassing digital media, a critique of the contemporary demands a critique of technology, which depends on pushing the boundaries of what counts as technology in the first place, and, subsequently, finding the lineages and linkages between media, technology, and race.

RESEARCH INTEREST

I am tracing the technogenetic substances of the life work of Martinican theorist and poet Édouard Glissant to be able to understand the disruptive histories of race and technology that inform the conditions of contemporary life. I am doing that by reading his work aligned to cybernetic texts, arguments and imaginaries. This project is historical as much as it is current, it is conceptual as much as it is empirical, and it oscillates between disciplines.

APPROACH

My reading takes me to three very different settings and objectives, namely:

- information travelling during the Haitian revolution [communication and control]
- a project Glissant describes in “Poetics of Relation” where a Japanese Computer Company invested in the study of African oral languages to develop a computer language [weaving/coding, creole]
- i.e. from the question of poetics and epistemology and developing a glossary for today’s computational world to a reconfiguration of how to make sense of relating in precisely this world [what and how is the incomputable?]



Odete Semedo
in the film
Quantum Creole,
Filipa César, 2020