

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# On the Unfolding of Édouard Glissant's Archipelagic Thought

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This text argues for the central role of the archipelago in Édouard Glissant's theoretical work and, conversely, for the importance of Glissant's thought to contemporary theorizations of archipelagos. In his essays, Glissant asserted that the way of thinking born of the archipelago form was marked by unpredictability, multiplicity-in-oneness and ambiguity, which were all equally present in what Glissant termed "creolization". Tracing a rift in Glissant scholarship between those who read his work as abidingly political (Britton, Dash) and those who perceive a troubling shift towards "postmodern" apoliticality (Bongie, Hallward), this contribution sides with the former, focusing on Glissant's efforts to politicize the work of abstraction. It goes on to examine the positioning of Glissant's rhizomatic philosophy of Relation with regard to the Western philosophical tradition, as seen in his engagements with Deleuze and Hegel. Finally, it concludes by holding that Glissant's fundamental goal of using the archipelago form to call for an "insurrection of the imaginary faculties" inspires readers towards innovations in their way of conceiving of the world.

**Keywords:** archipelagic thought; creolization; philosophy; Relation; rhizome

What did Édouard Glissant have in mind when he charged his readers with the task, to all intents and purposes impossible, of thinking in the manner of a particular geographic formation, namely the archipelago? In this chapter I analyse Glissant's idea of archipelagic thought, using it as a lens through which to examine Glissant's theoretical work more broadly. Drawing inspiration from the other authors of this collection, in the following pages I aim to shed light on what Glissant can teach us about archipelagos, as well as what Glissant's vision of archipelagos might teach us about ourselves and our world. As I will demonstrate, the ideas that appear and reappear throughout the nearly sixty years in which Glissant published share much with Glissant's conception of the archipelago form and its meaning: they are at once one and many.

Thanks to a multifarious corpus spread out over the genres of the philosophical essay, poetry, novels, theatre, manifestos, and pamphlets, not to mention innumerable interviews that would later be repackaged in print, Glissant was not short of admirers. In but one noteworthy example of institutional recognition, Glissant's archives, housed at the National Library of France (BnF), were classified as a national treasure in 2014 by Fleur Pellerin, the French Minister of Culture and Communication. For Charles Forsdick, Glissant had, by the end of his life, "emerged, beyond the French-speaking world, as an internationally recognizable, some would say "Nobel-ready", intellectual" (Forsdick 2010: 124). Michael Dash (1948–2019), one of the first to translate Glissant's writings into English, had reworked the Martinican polymath's first novel *La Lézarde* (Glissant 1958) into *The Ripening* (Glissant, trans. Dash 1985). For Dash (2006), Glissant was *the* major writer and theorist from the French West Indies. Nick Nesbitt, in his book entitled *Caribbean Critique* holds that "Glissant's corpus is the single most developed and philosophically sophisticated body of work in the tradition of Caribbean Critique" (2013: 238). Nesbitt (2010: 103) went so far as to declare Glissant "the foremost postcolonial thinker in the Francophone world".

Glissant shared much with his friend and fellow Sorbonne student Gilles Deleuze. Indeed, for Rosi Braidotti (2006: 84), Glissant was a "Deleuzian philosopher" and for Peter Hallward (1998: 441–2) he was "the most thoroughly Deleuzian writer in the Francophone world". One of the more visible points of overlap between Glissant and Deleuze was their shared idea of the rhizome. Examples of rhizomes in nature include many grasses such as common garden grasses or bamboo. Rhizomes have no singular root or centre; they branch outwards infinitely and can said to be "one" only insofar as they are an interconnected multiplicity. Glissant took that botanical metaphor and shifted it onto the plane of identity, linking his keyword "Relation" with the rhizome and its interconnectedness. As he did so, Glissant contrasted what he called "Relation-identity" and "root-identity". Making appeals to the "roots" of a people has historically been a

dangerous move for Glissant, since a focus on roots implies a search for a past and a territory in which such roots would take hold. When a human group binds together the concepts of the past and territory, they proceed to claim that they are a homogeneous group whose roots lie in a particular place, which for Glissant (1990: 157–8) leads inevitably to territorialism. Root-identity thus makes exclusive claims to a particular territory and founds its belief in its own superiority on that claim. Glissant offered Nazism as a prime example of root-identity (*ibid.*).

Glissant's own writings serve as an exemplar of thinking in terms of roots and understanding that all human beings exist as rhizomes in relation to everyone else in a shared and open space. If we do think thus, the consequences are dire, for, as Glissant (1996: 90) forewarned “No global operation of politics, economics or military intervention is capable of even beginning to glimpse the tiniest solution” to the sufferings of history “if the imaginary of Relation does not resound in the mentalities and sensibilities of today's humanities [and if they do not] conceive of themselves, humanities, and not Humanity, in another way: as a rhizome and not as a unique root”.<sup>1</sup>

Archipelagos are, of course, rhizomatic: they have no unique centre, whereas for both Glissant and Deleuze/Guattari, in the tree form all roots converge on and lead to one vertical structure. In the case of archipelagos, their peoples have such a plenitude of origins that their roots have no one home in the past; rather, they shoot outwards, towards other islands in the present. Just as each island in an archipelago gestures toward its counterparts, human cultures must learn to turn outwards towards other cultures and, indeed, simply towards others. That vision not of Humanity, but rather of humanities, as an interrelated network is no doubt a compelling one.

Nevertheless, as Glissant's output grew, the number of his dissenters grew too. Glissant's critics were divided with regard to the idea of whether there was an evolution or rather a radical rupture in the unfolding of his thought, particularly with regard to its political ramifications. In broad strokes, Glissant scholars came to divide themselves into two camps. One camp was represented by the admonishing critical voices who perceived a turning point in the 1990s in Glissant's thinking, as it allegedly abandoned its political force and embraced postmodern ambiguity. As Chris Bongie (2009: 339) notes,

An increasing number of academic readers of Glissant, have [...] understandably registered a certain unease, and even distress, when it comes to his later writings [...] A typical tendency of such critics has been to downplay or ignore the later work, and simply concentrate on “his writings of the 1970s and early 1980s”.

The other, opposing camp was made up of partisans of Glissant who believed that Glissant maintained his political beliefs but shifted their grounds to the plane of thought. In other words, for Glissant, the task of “changing imaginaries” was so consequential that it ought to be undertaken first and foremost. (Britton 2009). The central issue dividing these two schools of thought can be distilled into one bipartite question: was Glissant's theorizing of the archipelago in particular or his theoretical work in general an expression of a transformational politics? Or alternatively, was it a vehicle for deft obfuscation, linguistic artifice and utopianism? Whichever of them it was, Glissant's use of the figure of the archipelago and its correlate, “creolization”, played a central role in the arguments set forth by both camps. Before examining the aforementioned critical schism more closely, it is important to elucidate Glissant's understanding of archipelagos and their shaping of human mentalities. Subsequently, I briefly turn to the critical reception of those ideas. In doing so, my goal is to illuminate certain tensions in Glissant's lifelong engagement with the archipelago form, in addition to the way in which Glissant addressed and strove to accommodate those difficulties. Given that Glissant's essays are the primary, if not the sole, locus of his philosophical work, the main focus of this chapter is Glissant's essays. The essays, which were published between 1956 and 2010, constitute fourteen full-length books and six shorter texts.

### **The Entire World Is Becoming an Archipelago and Creolizing**

*le monde entier s'archipélise et se créolise*  
(*Traité du Tout-Monde*, Glissant 1997b: 194)

The *Traité du Tout-Monde's* (or *Treatise on the World-Whole*, as yet untranslated into English) oft-repeated aphorism to the effect that the entirety of our planet is turning into an archipelago and that the creolization best seen in the Caribbean and other post-plantation societies is spreading throughout the whole world, is a curious one. By saying that “The entire world is becoming an archipelago and creolizing”, he did not intend to argue that continents would fragment and take on the physical structure of the archipelago, nor that Caribbean “creoleness” would come to prevail the world over. Instead, archipelagos and creolization, with the latter consisting in the cultural phenomena that Glissant believed to be proper to archipelagos, manifest a set of characteristics that were triply important for Glissant. He perceived archipelagic thought and creolization as spreading throughout the world, saw their spread as historically inevitable, and believed that we ought, or rather *must*, accept and understand them (Glissant 1997b: 194). The characteristics in question that are most consistently referenced in Glissant's work are: an emphasis on particularity (coupled with a scorn for universality), a paradoxical combination of belonging to a particular place while sensing a relation to

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations were undertaken by the author.

the entire world, and a privileging of multiplicity over unicity. After 1990, Glissant aligned archipelagic thought with the privileging of attempts or suppositions over conclusions. Problematically, “post-1990” or “late” Glissant increasingly, and most notably in the pages of his final book, the *Philosophie de la Relation* (2009), came to identify ambiguity with archipelagic thought.

For Glissant, the phenomenon of creolization came to signify the unpredictable. In a dexterous sleight of logic, Glissant (2005: 229) explains in *La Cohée du Lamentin* that “The world is creolizing, it is not becoming creole, it is becoming this inextricable and unpredictable (*imprédictible*) that each process of creolization carries within itself and that neither supports nor authorizes any model”. Hence, the creolization that is increasingly an attribute of the entire world signifies that the unpredictable will manifest itself everywhere. In other works, Glissant offered another exegesis of his sense of creolization, casting it as an anti-essentialist force. In *Traité du Tout-monde* (Glissant 1977b: 26), for example, he proclaimed: “I present to you as an offering this word creolization, in order to signify this unforeseeable (*imprévisible*) of unheard-of results, which keeps us from being persuaded of an essence or from being locked into exclusions (*raidi dans des exclusives*)”. Having become something of a metaphysical term in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the creolization that is born of archipelagos is also a destabilizing mechanism. Archipelagos, and the Caribbean archipelago in particular, have become aligned for Glissant with anti-essentialism, the unpredictable and the unforeseeable, even with the rejection of any “model” (read: any fixed and coherent schema) outright. Archipelagos were fundamentally unlike other places in Glissant’s worldview. They proved to be “good vantage points” where,

[...] if, standing up, each person on one of these islands, each person in his/her country, we look to the horizon, we see not just another country but the entire Caribbean, which changes our gaze and teaches it not to underestimate anything in this world, not even the smallest pieces of land (Glissant 2005: 85–6).

In assertions such as those in the above quotation, the prominence that Glissant accorded to particularity is on full display. That is, the smallest, the most minuscule, must be considered and not overlooked or subjugated to grand ideas or abstractions. In a rare exercise of definition, Glissant (2009: 45) referred to “*Archipelagic thought*, the thought of the attempt, of the intuitive temptation, which could be apposed to continental-thoughts, which would first be system-thoughts.” His use of “apposed” rather than “opposed” is quite calculated, as the former implies a relationship that would be neither hierarchical nor antagonistic. While both modes of thought may have an appropriate time and place, Glissant clearly privileged the attention to particularity paid by archipelagic thought. For him, continental thought and archipelagic thought were entirely unlike:

[C]ontinental thought [...] makes us think that we see the world as a bloc, taken wholesale, all-at-once, as a sort of imposing synthesis, just as we can see, through the window of an airplane, the configurations of landscapes or mountainous surfaces. With archipelagic thought, we know the rivers’ rocks, without a doubt even the smallest ones (Glissant 2009: 45).

However, at the same time, the prominence that archipelagic thought accords to particularity exists alongside an awareness of the entire Caribbean and, eventually, of the entire world. A “turning inward” toward the particularity of one’s place is at one and the same time a “turning outward” towards all other places. Thus, as Glissant (*ibid.*: 47; my emphasis) held,

The imaginary of my place is connected (*relié*) to the imaginable reality of the world’s places, and the inverse is also true. *The archipelago is this source reality*, by no means unique, whence these imaginaries are secreted: the schema of belonging and relation, at the same time.

It is essential to recall that Glissant’s use of the word *imaginaire* (here translated as “imaginary”) was idiosyncratic and thus poses considerable problems for translation into English. Both *imaginaire* and *imagination* are customarily translated as “imagination” in English but the distinction between the two terms in French is semantically rich. First, it ought to be pointed out that Glissant did not have in mind the Lacanian imaginary register when using the term *imaginaire*. John E. Drabinski (2010: 304) offers a terse definition of Glissant’s use of the term imaginary, framing it as “that precarious aesthetic sphere of knowing and being that structures a relation to the world”. Consequently, in Drabinski’s interpretation, the imaginary is an all-important confluence of knowing and being that lays the groundwork for a subject’s relationship to his/her world: thus, Drabinski lays bare the centrality of the term in Glissant’s overall intellectual project. Elsewhere, Drabinski recasts the role of the imaginary in Glissant’s thought as one of a *power* of sorts: the imaginary also constitutes “the *ability* to imagine, conceive and know the world otherwise” (Drabinski 2013: 152; my emphasis). Therefore, the imaginary is also a figure of potential; it is what makes a transformation in thought possible, and subsequently a transformation in life viable. In one example—albeit *the* paramount example—the imaginary created by and in archipelagos allows us to think of two oft-opposed terms, belonging and Relation, simultaneously. In this sense, the insularity of the island is also a paradoxical globality: the island where I live, that particular place, is crucial to me, but so is the totality of all other places in the world, at one and the same time. Glissant (1969: 72) defines

this understanding as the “rooted necessity of relation to the world”. At the centre of Glissant's understanding of the imaginary that is born out of archipelagos is that fundamental perception of the “rooted necessity of relation” to every other place in the world. In that imaginary, particular places and all of the world's places taken together as one whole relay back to each other endlessly, in a sort of circularity that is simultaneously open and insular.

Yet another permutation of the two harmonies characterizing Glissant's vision of the archipelago—that is, of the one and the many, or the particular and the whole—appears in the novel *Tout-Monde* (Glissant 1993). In the novel, readers are introduced to what Glissant deems to be a peculiarly Caribbean, gendered being. In *Tout-Monde*, Mathieu Béluse, a character who is ubiquitous in Glissant's fictional work, lauds the *pacotilleuses*, itinerant saleswomen who peddle anything and everything as they move from island to island in the Caribbean archipelago: “They go from island to island, like the Arawaks or the Caribs of long-long ago, but obviously they're more mobile” (Glissant 1993: 544) and “they weave the Caribbean the Americas, they load up the planes with this mess of boxes” (ibid.: 545). The *pacotilleuses* are also embodiments of proliferation, “carting around enormous heaps of merchandise that you can list: rattan chairs, cow skins, necklaces that are supposedly Indian” (ibid.: 544). The sheer variety of the objects they transport constitutes yet another example of the pre-eminence of multiplicity and diversity in archipelagos.

A look at the role of gender in Glissant's schema indicates the importance of feminine subjects with respect to key ideas in the Glissantian worldview. Readers of Glissant (ibid.: 545) may note the weight of the words he chooses as the omnipresent character Mathieu praises the *pacotilleuses*: “They connect life to life [...] They are Relation”. As disparate and different, and as numerous and multifarious as the women may be, they nonetheless serve a unifying function within the Caribbean archipelago: they are everywhere at once, and at once here and there; they are a multiplicity of individuals who can be described with one word. The character Mathieu concludes his introduction to the *pacotilleuses* by framing them as multiple carriers of multiple objects within what is an all-important idea in Glissant's thought: “Relation”. Just as the single word “archipelago” is used to indicate an abundance of islands, the numerous *pacotilleuses* relate all of the Caribbean islands and their diverse peoples to one another. While such arguments are prominent in Glissant's later works, they have been present in all of his texts. An early manifestation of them appeared in his first essay, *Soleil de la Conscience*, in which he sensed a connection between particularity and multiplicity, even between particularity and totality: as a young student who had recently arrived in Paris, Glissant (1956: 13–14) mused that “there will be no culture without all cultures”. That awareness would later prove to be rooted in the archipelago form.

Moreover, the “late” Glissant (if his readers are indeed to allow for the existence an “early” versus a “late” Glissant) added a cluster of new attributes to his conception of the archipelago in the texts published after *Poétique de la Relation* (Glissant 1990). In his last book-length essay, *Philosophie de la Relation* (Glissant 2009), the title of which clearly recalls that of the earlier *Poetics of Relation* (Glissant 1997a), he declared that archipelagic thought can also be connected to tries, or to attempts, which he writes as *essais* (a French word that incidentally provides the root of the English “essay”) (Glissant 2009: 45). Such an assertion might disappoint readers who approach Glissant's archipelagic thought in search of solid, final arguments to be firmly grasped, appropriated and conclusively understood. Yet more troubling in this regard is Glissant's embrace of the ambiguous. In no uncertain terms, Glissant proclaimed that “archipelagic thinking” is “the thinking of the ambiguous” (Glissant 1997b: 31; Glissant 1996: 89). Thus, a simple syllogism ensues: if the whole world is becoming an archipelago, and if thinking in the manner of an archipelago implies an embrace of ambiguity, then our physical world, our understanding of the world, and the thinking undertaken by the human subjects inhabiting it, are all increasingly marked by ambiguity.

### Who's Afraid of Archipelagic Thought?

Chris Bongie (2009: 339) serves as a quintessential example of a sceptical reader of the more recent supplements to Glissant's notion of the archipelagic. He demonstrates that he believes himself to be in good company:

An increasing number of academic readers of Glissant have, in line with Hallward, understandably registered a certain unease, and even distress, when it comes to his later writings, which, in their espousal of the ‘fecund exaltation of the sense of uncertainty’ (2005: 219) [...] clearly align themselves with a non-adversarial ‘post-political vision’ that has no grounds for ‘challenging existing power relations’ (Mouffe 2005, 51). Those who wish to continue representing the writings of Glissant as ‘a postcolonial intervention, an insurgent discourse with an alternative sense of nationhood and spatial connection’ (Hitchcock, 2003: 43), and to speak of him as being a ‘revolutionary writer [...] in situ’ (59), certainly have their work cut out for them.

In the quotation above, Bongie alludes to the two central problems arising from Glissant's embrace of uncertainty, ambiguity and inconclusiveness. First, in short, such attributes, while “fecund”, risk eliminating the possibility of a robust political stance. How, after all, could one be confident and clear in one's political actions and objectives if uncertainty and ambiguity increasingly mark the very nature of reality? Second, Glissant's key idea of opacity presents a similar difficulty. He repeatedly held that “I proclaim for all the right to opacity” (cf., Glissant 1997b: 29), militating for the ethical imperative of non-knowledge of the other. By “opacity”, he was referring to the phenomenon wherein the other cannot, and must not, ever become totally transparent to the self. In this way, a lack of knowledge becomes an ethical obligation. Yet, if we are to trumpet our non-understanding of other individuals and other cultures, what space would this enthusiasm for opacity leave for political solidarity? Put more simply, if we are to seek not to understand

one another, then when and how *do* we understand each other enough to allow us to work together, or even to desire to do so? Glissant did not provide a conclusive answer to that question, for reasons that I examine more closely below.

Other questions raised by Glissant's archipelagic thought are more perplexing. In his essay titled *Traité du Tout-Monde*, Glissant (1997b: 194) held that the times when one culture might have been deemed superior to others have long since passed. In modernity, as Glissant contended with characteristic optimism, all cultures exist in Relation, without hierarchies, without privileging any one over any others (*ibid.*). While the declaration is inarguably compelling, it casts a shadow over the centrality that Glissant accorded to Caribbean cultures and the Caribbean archipelago. As we have already seen, for Glissant, the "entire world is creolizing and becoming an archipelago", and the Caribbean archipelago is the true home and origin of this phenomenon. How, then, are we to account for his privileging of the Caribbean archipelago over all other topographical formations (and perhaps even over all other archipelagos)? Can this single, particular place truly represent an archetype of modernity and a herald of the entire world's future? Moreover, lest we forget, the place to which Glissant accords such primacy is not just any particular place; it happens to be Glissant's own home and point of origin.

What is more, those who are uncomfortable with environmental determinism may find themselves uneasy with Glissant's fixation on archipelagos. The seemingly simple idea that a particular environment can influence various aspects of human culture opens onto a world of complexity. Might geography encourage or even oblige us to think in certain ways? Alternatively, does it rather prohibit our thinking in other ways? Does geography shape the questions we are able to ask in a particular time and place? Might it make certain ideas or certain behaviours altogether impossible, while making others inevitable?

Moreover, while the entire world may be becoming creole, the creole is nonetheless manifested more fully in some places: hence the dialogue between the character Mathieu and a group of Italian friends in *Tout-Monde* (Glissant 1993: 58). When challenged with the argument that all languages can be said to be creole, in that they are never pure but rather are always shifting admixtures of other languages and sites for the creation of new words, Glissant's (*ibid.*) character Mathieu responds that "creole languages are even more creole than the others". Whether this protagonist, who reappears throughout Glissant's work, is speaking for Glissant, or exactly how seriously that quip ought to be taken, remain a matter for discussion. But it is evident in such claims that the creole is at once Caribbean and worldwide, all the while remaining primarily Caribbean. Similarly, archipelagos may describe the entirety of the world, but the Caribbean archipelago nevertheless remains *the* archipelago of reference for Glissant. Glissant established a delicate balance with such assertions. On the one hand, he sought to avoid according a centrality (*pour ne pas dire* a superiority) to his own particular culture, while on the other hand, he held that the entire world was coming to resemble that culture. If the latter claim is correct, if the entire world is creolizing and becoming an archipelago; then, the particularity of the Caribbean archipelago would be to some degree diluted, becoming a unique microcosm of the whole amidst a world of particular places.

Nonetheless, Glissant's supporters have advanced persuasive counterarguments in his defence, particularly with regard to his political leanings. Celia Britton provides a key example of this latter group. In her article titled "Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Édouard Glissant", Britton (2009) allows for the fact that Glissant changed his thinking with regard to the political sphere. In moving away from his early agitation for Martinican independence and what Britton identifies as a marked pessimism, Glissant would, in Britton's reading, have shifted his activism to the intellectual plane. Later in Glissant's life, his work was notable for "a view of the world—influenced by chaos theory and the "nomadology" of Deleuze and Guattari—as a dynamic totality of interacting communities, all aware of each other and constantly changing" (Britton 2009: 1). However, that dynamic worldwide relation is much more than a felicitous harmony. As Britton illustrates, Glissant's political goals came to insist first for a change in humankind's ways of thinking. For Britton (*ibid.*: 10), "All these later [read: post-1990] texts reiterate his belief that all political progress depends, beyond intervention in local situations, on the long-term development of this transformative consciousness of totality—depends, in other words, on 'changing mentalities'". In other words, we must first change our minds if we are to change our world. As Britton has shown, Glissant's work points us towards ways in which we might bring about that shift in our mentalities.

### Concluding through Supposition

One would be hard pressed to conclude which part of an island chain might constitute its beginning or its end—if it can be said to be possessed of either. Glissant's work reflects that paradoxical spatiality. As Glissant (2009: 109; *my emphasis*) puts it in his final book-length essay, the imaginary that best corresponds to ultimate reality is one derived from the archipelago. That imaginary *concludes nothing*, instead, it "*supposes* in an archipelago" and therefore archipelagic thought would be inconclusive, supposing tentatively, rather than asserting anything finally. The archipelago is neither closed nor contained; it is an opening. It has neither beginning nor end in time or in space, or even in our conception of it.

Just as Glissant refused universality in favour of particularity—a particularity that is nonetheless an indispensable part of a larger unity—Glissant rejected what he called "system thought". Hegel is a prime example of the latter, as the German philosopher (and "continental" philosopher *par excellence* in Glissant's eyes) sought to build an all-encompassing system, one that Glissant saw as a monstrous unity swallowing up everything in his path. For that reason, "Hegel can be wrong", as Glissant often repeated in his writings (e.g., Glissant 2006: 152).

For Glissant, system thought was proper to continents and stood in sharp contrast to archipelagic thought. Like the Hegelian system, greater continents have consumed smaller places to their utmost. In this respect, Glissant had in mind examples as diverse as the historical period of Western colonial expansion, the imposition of Western cultures or modes of thought on the rest of the world (*nos ancêtres les Gaulois*—our ancestors the Gauls, as French colonial educators were known to have their African and Caribbean subjects recite), 21<sup>st</sup>-century neo-colonialism, the contemporary dominance of North American English, and ever-encroaching global capitalism. However, for Glissant, that time would soon pass. Already at the turn of the millennium, such ways of thinking and being were “no longer adequate” (Glissant 1997b: 31). Glissant (*ibid.*) affirms that “[...] archipelagic thought [...] is just right for the allure of our worlds.”

If after reading Glissant, any reader would attempt to “conclude nothing” or “suppose in an archipelago”, what might (s)he finally understand of the complex and multifarious islands of paradox that constitute Glissant's archipelagic non-system? For Glissant, it falls to us, his readers, to work out exactly what we will *do* with the intellectual advancements his decades-spanning oeuvre has achieved. Our task, as Glissant delineated it, is to think otherwise—bearing in mind that in *La Cohée du Lamentin* he insisted upon the necessity of an “enormous insurrection of the imaginary faculties” (Glissant 2005: 24–25) if a truly transformational politics is ever to take shape. In other words, we must change the way we think in the wake of our encounters with archipelagic thought; our imaginaries must become something different. Archipelagic thought is not a solution or an answer, but a source of creation and creativity. The nature of that creative production remains uncertain and unpredictable. What sort of ideas or entities the Glissantian theorization of the archipelago might one day engender remains to be seen.

### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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