



**Edouard Glissant**

## Cultural journals and Europe

While translation is indispensable, simply building bridges between the dominant languages is not enough, writes Edouard Glissant. "There is a spiritual revolution to defend in the world against the identity of single roots. What actors are more destined to engage in this revolution than journals?"

Generally speaking, there are journals in Europe or about Europe but are there any European journals? What I mean is do these journals allow us to perceive what Europe has in common, through its conception of what Europe is not, that is to say through the rest of the world? Europe, at least its institutions; has a domestic policy, a more or less concerted policy of actions regarding topical issues, but do those people who constitute it think about or even feel what the is world and how to deal with it?

The answer to this question is in my opinion likely to modify both conceptions of structures and the way these journals work, whether traditional or online.

### **Multilingualism**

As a writer, I write in the presence of all the languages of the world, even if I only know one. Humanities today are developing a practical, divining sense of languages, and are using a far higher proportion of the capacities of the human brain. Multilingualism should not be boiled down to the development of the quantities of languages; it refers not only to a situation, but also to a new awareness, related to the way I frequent the poetry of the world. In this context, translation is indispensable, is increasingly a new genre among literary and artistic genres, and is also related to this new vocation: we cannot save a language by allowing others to perish, either inside Europe or beyond its borders. Should journals invent spheres and methods to promote new capacities in translation (for instance by publishing fundamental texts of other languages without translations) rather than simply building bridges between three or four dominant languages?

### **The Other**

The problems of immigration in Europe; as in most rich countries, does not depend upon piecemeal, partial and usually not impartial measures. There obviously must be general redistribution of the world's wealth so as to ensure that immigration does not run wild through wretched poverty and the privation of that part of the world which paradoxically produces the greatest wealth.

Building cultural, aesthetic, philosophical and technical relations among the journals of European countries must also lead to a mixture of ethnicities in

these countries without however leading to isolation, according to a maxim: I can exchange with the other without losing myself or prejudicing my nature.

Moreover, in a number of countries, having a journal is an inconceivable privilege. For eight years I directed the monthly international paper journal of UNESCO in 36 languages, with a French edition in Braille; in certain countries it was the only publication which could surmount censure and in others the only one to appear in the language of the country. Today, this journal is produced on the Web. We may wonder whether it responds to expectations of those who read it in those impoverished countries, in its new form as well as in the old. Where does the issue of knowledge lead us, despite infinite technological progress, if spheres of knowledge are not opened in the parts of the world where they do not exist? We cannot save a journal by allowing others to perish, even if we use every technological innovation or revolution under the sun. Modern knowledge moves from place to place, which accounts for its value and grandeur.

### **The age of journals**

Finally the memory of a body of journals is important so as to consider the way these instruments of more or less topical focus may develop. Particularly, I am thinking of the innumerable journals that have only produced one or two editions and disappeared for various reasons that can be enumerated. It seems to me that we should set up research on such production in all European languages, whether official or not. Such archives would be precious. All the more so since a number of these journals with only one or two editions have occupied a very important position in the sensitivity and knowledge of their field of activity, however ephemeral it is, and I could provide a number of examples. The life expectancy of a journal does not always accord with their appearance. A Dead Journal's Society would help understand the continuity of those journals that have survived. This is the tangible project that I offer your organisation by way of conclusion.

It relates to the poetry of the world I was speaking about, and can be conceived as a common root of the world together with other roots which would not be sectarian, or closed off, or wreaking havoc around them. Our identities are solid and at the same time are in a relationship. There is a spiritual revolution to defend in the world against the identity of single roots. Which actors are more destined to engage in this revolution than journals, irrespective of their character and the way they work? They link up, relay, and relate the state of the world, both in its particulars and in quantity.

*This text was the starting point for a discussion with Edouard Glissant that took place on 28 September 2008 at the 21st European Meeting of Cultural Journals in Paris.*

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