

Drew University

**Re-Membering the Bible Other-Wise:
An Archipelological Hermeneutic of Bibliorality, Wisdom as Rhizome of Relation, &
Other Poetic, Archipelagic Assemblages**

A Dissertation Submitted to
The Faculty of the Graduate Division of Religion
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

A. Paige Rawson

Madison, New Jersey

July 2017

The reality of the archipelagos in the Caribbean or the Pacific provides a natural illustration of the thought of Relation¹...My proposition is that today the whole world is becoming an archipelago and becoming creolized.

—Édouard Glissant

“In a different way: the necessary decentering cannot be a philosophic or scientific act as such, since it is a question of dislocating, through access to another system linking speech and writing, the founding categories of language and the grammar of the *epistémè*. The natural tendency of theory—of what unites philosophy and science in the *epistémè*—will push rather toward filling in the breach than toward forcing the closure. It was normal that the breakthrough was more secure and more penetrating on the side of literature and poetic writing: normal also that it, like Nietzsche, at first destroyed and caused to vacillate the transcendental authority and dominant category of the *epistémè*: being.”

—Jacques Derrida

Contents

Abstract	<i>ii</i>	
Acknowledgments	<i>vi</i>	
“The Sea is History”	<i>viii</i>	
Introduction: Occupying the Cracks: The Bible as Bloom Space		1
1 The Rhizome and/as the Tree of Life		64
2 The Rhythms of Relation: Africana, Oraliture, & Affect		98
2a Decolonizing Epistemology: Africana, Orality & Literacy		101
2b Reading with Rhythm: Oralitutory Affective Assemblages		161
3 The Oralitutory Rhythms of the Rastafari		221
4 Re-Membering Samson: A Rastafari Reading of the Bible		292
Epilogue: Toward Epistemological Routes Other-Wise		365
Bibliography		375

Abstract

The Bible is arguably the single most influential book in the world. And *in the beginning* of this book (deployed as much for colonization as liberation) lies a narrative that is likely the most famous of all root myths of origin; which (Édouard Glissant has argued) betrays the fundamental framework endorsed and enforced by the West. Within the past 5 years Glissant's work has become integral to my own intellectual enterprises, my journey and development, and particularly my interpretation of the Bible; a corpus I have related to intimately for nearly all my life. While the excitement has at times waned, my interest in and speculation about the Bible and its hold upon us, as citizens of *the postcolony* and the *world becoming archipelago*, has only intensified. This project, as the pursuit of a PhD in biblical studies, is a product of that captivation, curiosity and consequent queries (particularly involving the Bible's co-optation by and collusion with Western European colonialism and capitalism). I am entirely invested in exploring how people have been and are still moved (both literally and figuratively) by the Bible and why. What it is about *this* text that warrants an entire field of academic study, more commentaries than any book ever written, and billions of devotees around the world? How could a single book, whose authors and editors (and their number) are entirely unknown, inspire and authorize both emancipation and enslavement, socialism and capitalism, empowerment and oppression? And just what is it about the Bible that "moves" some and not others? It indubitably draws, disgusts, and has legitimated innumerable iterations of a "them" and an "us." In order to effectively (and affectively) engage these interests and inquiries, which cross a number of disciplinary and discursive boundaries, however, pursuing conventional methods and established avenues within

biblical studies is utterly insufficient. Our archipelagic world necessitates new interpretive modalities, which can interrogate and violate orthodox routes, it is, therefore, with this intention at heart that I submit this dissertation in the archipelological other-wise.

Accompanied by Édouard Glissant and inspired by the Rastafari, then, I present my audaciously unorthodox interdisciplinary, intertextual, creolized engagement with the Bible and its interpretation. I foreground Africana and Afro-Caribbean philosophy and enlist orality, affect, assemblage and queer theories, and I do so to deconstruct, disrupt, and displace Western European (epistemic) convention and its authority. Responding to the needs of our contemporary global condition, our affective ambi(val)ence as planetary assemblage, I imagine yet an-other (than Root) route to interpret the Bible; a rhizomatic (theo)poetics of Relation re-membering other-wise. I read the Bible, with the Rastafari, as an oralitrary open canon, and I do so with rhythm (both looking for rhythm[s] within the text and reading the text rhythmically) through an archipelagic epistemology, an *archipelological* hermeneutic, which I call *bibliorality*; re-membering the Bible itself as (ambi[val]ent affective) assemblage and writing so as to honor its archipelagic onto-epistemology and our own. As I see it, in order to read and/or write with any relevance to or respect for the diversity of our world and that of the Bible, we must immerse ourselves in and actively engage what Glissant deemed the *chaos-monde*, the *tout-monde*, of Relation, the ordered chaos of the totality of the world and always in ways which engage and affect our very being, thinking, speaking, writing, and reading.

My dissertation resists resolution and invites the irruption of meaning in multiplicity and diversity; diasporic and archipelagic, it does not simply appeal to and enact the *différance* of interpretation but its creolization. It is rhizomatic and reads as

such; each chapter a node of entangled and poetic nodes. A playful and pointed (intertextual) conversation not merely as discursive dialogue but as dynamic interpenetration, ensuring that each body involved (human and non-human alike) is transformed with/in and by the encounter. In order to adequately, and, therefore, archipelogically, inaugurate such an engagement, I look to Africana and the Caribbean archipelago in my insurrectionist hermeneutic. I bring Édouard Glissant's disruptive creolized (Caribbean) discourse and/as his *poetics of Relation* (in resistance to Root identity) to bear upon the Bible, I reflect upon the African biblical hermeneutics of Dorothy Akoto-Abutiata, I engage the oraliturrhythmic modalities of the Caribbean (and particularly carnival, carnivalesque-grotesque and Ceole folktale), I bring orality and affect into poetic Relation, and I appeal to the Rastafari, that we might learn how to read an oraliturray text, such as the Bible, oraliturrhythmically. My ultimate exegetical intervention is the re-membling of Samson's story in Judges 13-16 as a heuristic for bibliorality as an archipelogical hermeneutic. Enlisting Edith Davidson's Bakhtinian analysis of Judges as carnivalesque-grotesque folktale, I engage germane discourses within the philosophical corpus of poststructuralist theory (specifically queer and affect theory), but ultimately foreground the literal, corporeal bodies of the Rastafari, who "cite up" the scripture.

Working from the resonances between Glissant's poetics of Relation vis-à-vis creolization and archipelogical (Africana and poststructuralist) critiques of identity, language, and history, I consider the relevance of Samson for the Rastafari, a diverse and discrete community of political agents for whom the Bible and Samson have particular cultural and political valence. Out of profound reverence for their respect for rhythm

in/and their oraliturhythmic biblical interpretation as well as their (theo)poetic (philosophical) Relational paradigm of I-an-Identity, I incorporate these affective elements into my own affective archipelological, oraliturhythmic re-membering of Samson (and Bible) through bibliorality. Re-membering biblical interpretation (in my exegetical encounters with Genesis, Proverbs, and especially Judges 13-16) through the rhizomatic thinking of an archipelological hermeneutic of bibliorality leads me to enact an intertextual and cross-cultural, creolized forced poetic dialogue between Glissant's work, *Africana*, poststructuralist theory, and the Rastafari that defies Western Root hegemony, epistemological or otherwise. Such an interpenetrative interpretive event holds profound possibilities not only for the way in which we understand the Bible and its interpretation, but for the ways in which we think about thinking, writing, reading, and being in this world becoming archipelago.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the avant-garde intellect, meticulous critique, unrelenting encouragement and sagacious support of my advisor-mentor-(m)other-wise, Althea Spencer-Miller. Thank you for *feeling* my rhythm, resonating, and enthusiastically exhorting me into this archipelagic mo(ve)ment. Profound gratitude to Kenneth Ngwa and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre for your vital contributions to my growth as an intellectual, academic, and activist. Thank you for *seeing* me and ushering me into the other-wise.

I wish to express appreciation to my professors and colleagues within the Graduate Division of Religion for your insightful questions, helpful critiques and guidance along the way. Particular thanks to James N. Hoke, Stephanie Day Powell, Amy Chase, and Elizabeth Freese for the loving affirmations, the long conversations, the laughs, and for taking some trying times and turning them into “happy hours.” In addition, I would like to thank Sarah Emanuel, Christy Cobb, and Karen Bray for being there in the clutch.

The dissertation developed out of one essay, written for two classes: Africana Studies and Religion, with Althea and Kenneth, and Judges, facilitated by the inimitable Danna Nolan Fewell. For each of your inexhaustible insights, I am grateful beyond words. Your confidence in my creativity, imagination, and unorthodox intellect emboldened me to dance to the (poly)oraliturhythm of a different drum and enact this exegetical assemblage.

Special thanks to Stephen Moore for flaming my poststructuralist fire, to Virginia Burrus for introducing me to khora and encouraging my pernicious (and wayward) pursuit of her, and to Catherine Keller for inspiring and encouraging my tehomic urges.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation for Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan and Mayra Rivera. Without whom I would not have embarked upon this journey or made my way Drew. You recognized and related what I had yet to apprehend over a decade ago.

Thank you to my loving family of origin. Each of you has contributed in rich and wonderful ways to this wonder-filled Wisdom journey that is my life. I am forever indebted to you for keeping me encouraged through your faith and motivated with your curiosity (and at times outright opposition), and for always making sure I remember from whence I came and that you love me no matter where I go. You were the first to teach me the relationship of roots to routes and have never ceased rooting for me.

To my rose, your steadfast support has helped to ensure this fire keeps burning; it wanes, it grows wild, love remains. Thank you for the fun and the friction, the dancing and discerning, the laughter and tears, for facing and overcoming fears. You have unquestionably contributed to this dissertation in your own soulfully unique way.

Finally, thank you especially to the ambi(val)ent affective assemblage, the great cloud of witnesses around the planet and throughout time with whom I have found myself

intimately, epistemologically entangled in a rhizomatic interwoven web of poetic Relation. You have touched my life and as a result I now revel in the other-wise.

The Sea is History

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that gray vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.

First, there was the heaving oil,
heavy as chaos;
then, like a light at the end of a tunnel,

the lantern of a caravel,
and that was Genesis.
Then there were the packed cries,
the shit, the moaning:

Exodus.
Bone soldered by coral to bone,
Mosaics
Mantled by the benediction of the shark's shadow,

that was the Ark of the Covenant.
Then came from the plucked wires
of sunlight on the sea floor

the plangent harp of the Babylonian bondage,
as the white cowries clustered like manacles
on the drowned women,

and those were the ivory bracelets
of the Song of Solomon,
but the ocean kept turning blank pages

looking for History.
Then came the men with eyes heavy as anchors
who sank without tombs,

brigands who barbecued cattle,
leaving their charred ribs like palm leaves on the shore,
then the foaming, rabid maw

of the tidal wave swallowing Port Royal,
and that was Jonah,
but where is your Renaissance?

Sir, it is locked in them sea sands
out there past the reef's moiling shelf,
where the men-o'-war floated down;

stop on these goggles, I'll guide you there myself.
It's all subtle and submarine,
through colonnades of coral,

past the gothic windows of sea fans
to where the crusty grouper, onyx-eyed,
blinks, weighted by its jewels, like a bald queen;

and these groined caves with barnacles
pitted like stone
are our cathedrals,

and the furnace before the hurricanes:
Gomorrah. Bones ground by windmills
into marl and cornmeal,

and that was Lamentations -
that was just Lamentations,
it was not History;

then came, like scum on the river's drying lip,
the brown reeds of villages
mantling and congealing into towns,

and at evening, the midges' choirs,
and above them, the spires
lancing the side of God

as His son set, and that was the New Testament.

Then came the white sisters clapping
to the waves' progress,
and that was Emancipation -

jubilation, O jubilation -
vanishing swiftly
as the sea's lace dries in the sun,

but that was not History,
that was only faith,
and then each rock broke into its own nation;

then came the synod of flies,
then came the secretarial heron,
then came the bullfrog bellowing for a vote,

fireflies with bright ideas
and bats like jetting ambassadors
and the mantis, like khaki police,

and the furred caterpillars of judges
examining each case closely,
and then in the dark ears of ferns

and in the salt chuckle of rocks
with their sea pools, there was the sound
like a rumour without any echo

of History, really beginning.

— Derek Walcott

Introduction
Occupying the Crack(s):
The Bible as Bloom Space, Rhizomatic Assemblages, Relational
(Theo)Poetics and the Archipelogics of Bibliorality

Samson embraced the two middle columns that the temple rested upon, one with his right arm and one with his left, and he leaned against them.¹

And the crack between the two is nothing. The crack is what one must occupy. The consistent miser analyzes the crack. And so he shuttles {faire la navette} between the two.²

We will not choose... We will not choose between the opening and the totality.³

The book has become the body of passion...⁴

Finally, we should perhaps not forget that we have a role to play in the complex reuniting of writing and speech; in so doing, make our contribution to the expression of a new [hu]man, liberated from the absolute demands of writing and in touch with a new audience of the spoken word.⁵

I began writing this dissertation over 4 years ago, while enrolled in my last semester of coursework at the Graduate Division of Religion at Drew University. In that season, I brought two seminars into conversation, one on Africana Thought and Religious Studies, co-facilitated by Althea Spencer-Miller and Kenneth Ngwa, and the other on the Book of Judges, led by Danna Nolan Fewell. What emerged was a Rastafarian reading of Samson, under the influence of Édouard Glissant. Prior to that semester, and my time at Drew, my primary interlocutors then were Foucault, Butler, Bhabha, Spivak, Kristeva,

¹ Judges 16:29.

² Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 207.

³ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 84; and idem, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 125.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 127.

⁵ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 108.

Derrida, and Deleuze. Having received my Master's degrees from Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, I was steeped in poststructuralist discourse, postcolonial and queer theory. I was well-acquainted with non-Western perspectives (particularly anti-colonial and context critical approaches) and, having lived, studied, and worked in Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean, I had listened to and learned from and in Relation with real live people. However, academic courses, though some may have disturbed, never seemed to dislodge Western European episteme; the West's Root remained firmly planted. Until *Africana*, that is. That doctoral seminar was like nothing I had experienced; more contra-institution than anything I had experienced within the institution. It altered the course of my intellectual trajectory and set me *en route* to the archipelagos (both figuratively and literally).

The deeper I delved into Glissant and *Africana*, the more I realized there are threads, themes, and concepts, rhythms which resonate betwixt and in-between *Africana* and Continental Philosophy that have yet to be mined, or even identified. This dissertation, then, is the outgrowth of these discoveries—the discursive dialogues, epistemological encounters, and inestimable interpretive events that have come to reshape my route and my roots—and the oralitrary materialization of my own epistemological re-membering other-wise. This project is my auto-ethnographic articulation, my creative expression, and my occupation of the in-between that desires and demands to be thought *archipelogically*.⁶ It is also, the product of my own

⁶ *Archipelagic* is a neologism I created, which signifies [and is, therefore, synonymous with] the oralitrary archipelagic thinking (and epistemologies) Glissant identifies as emerging within the Caribbean islands through Creolité. It thinks, writes, and

(theo)ethical commitment to doing justice in and for our world (becoming archipelago),⁷ to addressing injustice (and epistemological inequities especially) and to practicing and enacting justice in and through my thinking, writing, and teaching. It was my engagement with Caribbean intellectuals (and poets in particular), archipelagic thinking, and island living that (re)invigorated this process. I read and studied, intellectually engaging from within academia's ivory tower, and I became aware. When I danced and played, listened and prayed on Jamaican soil...I was transformed.

I felt the rhythm of the islands in my bones, I was moved, and I am still reverberating. I became personally, intimately, acquainted with the diasporic, fluid, connective, oralitrary (or what I have come to consider oraliturhythmic), and embodied Africana epistemology of the Antilles and it somehow felt like coming home. My body and mind seemed to “naturally” resonate with Jamaican folk and the onto-epistemological framework that has emerged in the in-between-ness of the Caribbean archipelago. From dancing vigorously with the drums of the Maroons in the mountains to chanting in unison with the Bobo Ashanti in the coastal foothills (at Bobo Hill).⁸ *Holy Emmanuel I Selassie I Jah Rastafari!* We would rise in the morning, enjoy a hearty

imaginatively expresses the creolized creativity of a poetics of Relation (i.e., the *archipelogos*). You will find this word and its derivatives employed throughout the dissertation to represent what I consider to be an epistemology other-wise (i.e., Other than Western European, continental, Root episteme), which I use interchangeably with rhizomatic thinking. I will further elucidate my employment of other-wise in the pages below.

⁷ See Édouard Glissant, “The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World,” 290 and idem, *Traité du Tout-Monde*, 194.

⁸ As Velma Pollard points out, the tem “chanting,” like so many other terms in Rasta speak, or Dread Talk, signifies more or other than its traditional meaning in the English vernacular. (In this way, Dread Talk is creolized.) Chanting, Pollard writes, “is allowed to simply mean ‘speak’.” Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of the Rastafari* (Kingston: Canoe Press UWI, 1995), 97.

breakfast of Ackee, cuttlefish, and porridge while sitting around the table in fellowship, and then spend the days in community learning from Jamaicans what it is to live in Jamaica, what it means to *be* Jamaican. It “made sense” to me and within me. It resonated. I was a foreigner yet I was welcomed in, and not as stranger-outsider-other but as kin(dred).

I am not unaware of the complexity of my identity and bodily subjectivity in *the postcolony* nor unaffected by the complicated “post”colonial (that is more accurately a neo-colonial) relationship of the southern Americas to their northern counterpart(s).⁹ It is

⁹ This is an allusion to Achille Mbembe’s provocative and critically insightful collection of essays, *On the Postcolony*, while Mbembe focuses upon the meaning of Africa and what it means to be African “in the discourse of our times” (i.e., Western European philosophical and political tradition), it is because he does so that his conclusions deserve consideration by Western European peoples. Jamaica is a postcolonial space and part of the multiethnic intercultural milieu that is the Caribbean. It is also a unique materialization of Africana onto-epistemologies. Therefore, what Mbembe asserts of Africa as postcolony in many ways applies to the Caribbean. He elucidates the complexity of life in the postcolony where “it is assumed that, although the African possesses a self-referring structure that makes him or her close to ‘being human,’ he or she belongs, up to a point, to a world we cannot penetrate. At bottom, he/she is familiar to us. We can give an account of him/her in the same way we can understand the psychic life of the beast. We can even, through a process of domestication and training, bring the African to where he or she can enjoy a fully human life. In this perspective, Africa is essentially, for us, an object of experimentation. There is no single explanation for such a state of affairs. We should first remind ourselves that, as a general rule, the experience of the Other, or the *problem of the ‘I’ of others and of human beings we perceive as foreign to us*, has almost always posed virtually insurmountable difficulties to the Western philosophical and political tradition. Whether dealing with Africa or with other non-European worlds, this tradition long denied the existence of any ‘self’ but its own. Each time it came to peoples different in race, language, and culture, the idea that we have concretely and typically, the same flesh...became problematic. The theoretical and practical recognition of the body and flesh of ‘the stranger’ as flesh and body just like mine, *the idea of a common human nature, a humanity shared with others*, long posed, and still poses, a problem for Western consciousness” (1-2). Likewise, it has posed problems for Africana and all non-European peoples, who, having been subjected to the colonial-capitalist machine were likewise vulnerable to the internalizing of its racist and xenophobic ideologies, norms, and *dispositif*. Within this frame, Western European systems and subjects are, therefore, implicitly viewed as superior. The system(s) of

a visceral and ever-present reality because I choose consciencism, whether I am in the Northern or Southern Hemisphere.¹⁰ If not for the presence and guidance of my mentor, Doctor Althea Spencer-Miller, the radical work she has been doing, both in the U.S. and Jamaica—as a biblical scholar, a queer Methodist minister, and a Jamaican citizen living in the United States—and our open, honest, and ongoing dialogue, I am confident my experience in Jamaica would have not led me to this mo(ve)ment. I am grateful. In Jamaica, I *saw* and *felt* firsthand the lurid and lasting effects (and affects) of my country

power within the postcolony rest upon “arrangements and customary rules—on a complex of internalized norms that, ultimately, defined the modalities of legitimate subjection and social control, whether in the framework of clientage relations, of kinship, or of wider alliances” and these norms stem from the *colonial rationality* of what Mbembe calls *commandement*, which previously ensured colonial sovereignty continue to complicate personal and collective (cultural) empowerment and expression (25, 128). Mbembe contends, “if subjection appears more intense than it might be, this is because the subjects of the commandment have internalized authoritarian epistemology to the point where they reproduce it themselves in all the minor circumstances of daily life” (128). See Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001).

¹⁰ Consciencism is a Nkruman concept to which I will return briefly in the next chapter. In the meantime, I want explain my utility of the term through my conceptualization of creolization. I acknowledge that while I exalt Édouard Glissant’s iteration of creolization as a way toward new archipelological epistemologies, I do not do so uncritically. My understanding of consciencism, in this way, is my recognition of the implicit structure of power that influences global relations in our “post”colonial, neocolonial world. Therefore, my instantiation of creolization is not merely cultural appropriation but a critical remediation, so even as I laud creolization as the route by which we all might come to emancipate ourselves, I do so while honoring Kamau Brathwaite’s contextualization of creolization. In particular, that Creole society is “caught up in some kind of colonial arrangement with a metropolitan European power” (Brathwaite, xv). Therefore, creolization occurs in the context of severe and violent inequities of power, not to mention “brutal cultural dominance” (Hall, 193). Akin to Katherine McKittrick, as much as creolization provides us a route other-wise, it must also “bring into focus the violent process of becoming through/in modernity” (McKittrick, 187). See Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), xv, xvi; Stuart Hall, “Creolization, Diaspora and Hybridity,” in *Créolité and Creolization*, eds. Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, and Octavio Zaya (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2003), 186; and Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

of origin (the northern America) and its progenitor, the Western European colonial-capitalist machine, upon not only Jamaica but the entire archipelago. But/and I was also *seen* and *felt* as a fellow human, embraced and invited in from a spirit of authentic hospitality and solidarity.¹¹ I experienced, in my body, a relational and rhythmic resonance that should not and cannot be explained in entirely lucid nor solely logical terms, for it (as auto-ethnographic) is archipelological and it is opaque. Therefore, to represent my experience in terms of its relevance for and upon my scholarship necessitates a poetics, a rhizomatic poetics of Relation; and this dissertation is the working out of that epistemology as a hermeneutics in Relation to (reading) the Bible.

If I had any quandaries about Glissant's "clamor for the right to opacity for everyone," or the distinction he draws between the West's epistemological obsession with transparency (qua History and Literature) and the opacity of archipelagic thinking (and poetics), I understood when I walked in Jamaica. To the degree that I was able, it was then that I grasped Glissant's bold proclamation in "For Opacity," and thereafter committed myself to the task, in word and in deed. Early on in the essay, he proffers,

If we examine the process of 'understanding' people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought, we discover that its basis is this

¹¹ In "For Opacity," Glissant recommends, "consider the hypothesis of a Christian Europe, convinced of its legitimacy, rallied together in its reconstituted universality, having once again, therefore, transformed its forces into a 'universal' value—triangulated with the technological strength of the United States and the financial sovereignty of Japan—and you will have some notion of the silence and indifference that for the next fifty years (if it is possible thus to estimate) surround the problems, the dependencies and the chaotic sufferings of the countries of the south with nothingness. And also consider that the West itself has produced the variables to contradict its impressive trajectory every time. This is the way in which the West is not monolithic, and this is why it is surely necessary that it move toward entanglement. The real question is whether it will do so in a participatory manner or if its entanglement will be based on old impositions. And even if we should have no illusions about the realities, their facts already being to change simply by asking this question" (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 191).

requirement for transparency. In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps, judgments. I have to reduce...I admit you to existence, within my system. I create you afresh. —But perhaps we need to bring an end to the very notion of scale. Displace all reduction. Agree not merely to the right to difference but, carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within irreducible singularity. Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components. For the time being, perhaps, give up this old obsession with discovering what lies at the bottom of natures. There would be something great and noble about initiating such a movement, referring not to Humanity but to the exultant divergence of humanities. Thought of self and thought of other here become obsolete in their duality. Every Other is a citizen and no longer a barbarian. What is here is open, as much as this there. I would be incapable of projecting from one to the other. This-here is the weave, and it weaves no boundaries. The right to opacity would not establish autism; it would be the real foundation of Relation, in freedoms.¹²

In this dissertation, I exercise my right to opacity and I clamor for this right *for all*; a tall order, but one which is of absolute necessity in academia, the mother lode of critical analysis, exposure, elucidation, and (over)determination; a discursive dominion ruled by the tyranny of transparency. I believe so sincerely in the importance of this work that it not only steers and stirs my scholarship, it animates the very epistemology to which I ascribe as a student and scholar of the Bible; invigorating my interpretive intervention. By way of introduction, then, I would like to identify the apothegms I assume about the Bible, the interweaving fabrics that *coexist and converge* in this intertextual, transcultural, ambi(val)ent affective assemblage, in Relation to my epistemological and interpretive routes other-wise. The first will be lengthier and more involved than subsequent apothegms, for it contains a node within a node, wherein I explicate the

¹² Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 189-190.

fundamental organizing framework I seek to decenter and destabilize in this project through a brief excursus on the first chapters of Genesis.¹³

The Bible is a book (of books):

A sacred artifact, but a book nonetheless.¹⁴ It is possible that its sacrosanctity (as *the Book*) has led people to overlook its book-ness. Though it has presumably been debunked as history (and history as Fact), this is not the case nor the Truth for all, since it

¹³ While I consider Chapter 5 to be my central “exegetical” chapter, in which I reflect upon the Samson cycle in Judges 13-16, I look to Genesis in order to set up the primary (epistemological) dilemma I seek to address through this exegesis and the entirety of my dissertation. Accordingly, my interpretation of Judges 13-16 functions as an enactment or performance of the hermeneutic I propose in and through this project.

¹⁴ I begin by stating the obvious, a truism, which while entirely evident, much be announced nonetheless. The question of the book has plagued philosophy for decades and in chapter 2 I will elucidate this complex process within *Africana*. At present, I want to address impressions of the book within poststructuralist theory (since continental philosophy is relevant but intentionally supplementary within the scope of this project) and focalize Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s conceptualizing of the book. Of all the so-called poststructuralists, these two philosophers are by far the most interesting and influential for Glissant and, therefore, the most pertinent to this project. Two decades after Roland Barthes announced *the death of the author*, Julia Kristeva proclaimed that every text is radically intertextual, and Jacques Derrida exposed the infinite difference and deferral of meaning in language and/as signification, Deleuze and Guattari took on the West’s last great artifact: the book. They describe a book in this way: “A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements” (3). The book is a multiplicity, it is rhizomatic, assemblage par excellence, “and as such is unattributable” (4). It is simultaneously an organism and a body without organs, “which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity” (4). See especially Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3, 4. See also Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-148; Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 34-61; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Also see Édouard Glissant’s response to the postmodern destabilization of the text and the demythification of the author in *Caribbean Discourse* (148-49).

remains History just the same.¹⁵ There are interpretive communities who unequivocally consider the Bible to be a guidebook, a sort of “Life for Dummies,” and those who believe that “only dummies would view this as a guidebook for life.”¹⁶ Those holding the former perspective often treat the Bible as they would an encyclopedia or reference manual, while the latter attempt to evade it altogether. However, as citizens of the postcolonial world and the global market, since its deployment as a tool for colonization and cultural commodification, we have been inextricably linked, bound to the Bible for better and for worse.¹⁷ It is ambient; always already everywhere, whether or not we are

¹⁵ I employ Glissant’s utility of “History” (history with a capital H) in order to signify the singular, unified version of historical time as conceived in the Western European imaginary, which is a Eurocentric (linear) ordering of time and (particular) events, authoritarian and authorized as “factual,” totalizing, static, absolute, true, and, therefore, above or beyond interrogation. “One of the most disturbing consequences of colonization,” Glissant posits, “could well be this notion of a single History, and therefore of power, which has been imposed on others by the West” (*Caribbean Discourse*, 93). The West’s monopoly on History renders all non-Western histories nonhistory. Explaining that the “historical consciousness” of Caribbean peoples, like their conceptualization of time, “could not be deposited gradually and continuously, like a sediment as it were, as happened with...European peoples but came together in the context of shock, contraction painful negation and explosive forces. This dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all characterize what I call nonhistory” (*Caribbean Discourse*, 61-62). The painful negation to which Glissant refers is the dehumanization of colonization and slavery and the erasure of collective memory. I go into greater detail regarding History (in relation to Myth and Literature) below. Also see Earl McKenzie, “Glissant on Time and History,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (December 2002): 62-70.

¹⁶ The notion of the “interpretive community” was first introduced by Stanley Fish and has since become common parlance in biblical studies. See Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

¹⁷ The Bible has either directly or indirectly influenced almost every culture on this planet. There are, in fact, only 10 countries that were never technically “occupied or colonized” by European countries. They are Liberia, Ethiopia, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Nepal, Bhutan, Iran, and Afghanistan. (Tonga, Turkey and Mongolia are among the countries whose status in this regard is not as clear-cut.) See Keren Mikva, “10 Countries That Were Never Colonized,” *AFKInsider*, July 3, 2014, <http://afkinsider.com/62750/countries-that-were-never-colonized/> and the History Forum

aware of its omnipresence. In fact, as cosmic community, we are so unconsciously contracted, having been conditioned, through its colonization and our own, that we are incapable of recognizing our interpretation of Judeo-Christian values and the very text from which these ideas purportedly stem is always already filtered through and overdetermined by the very socio-political and economic systems and epistemological institutions of the Western European colonial imagination (which has undeniably affected and inf[]ected us all).

The bible is a book, but one that is rarely read cover to cover (as Western convention dictates). Due to its location, content, and its consequence for the West, Genesis is on the short list of the “most popular” biblical books (i.e., those people actually read), and the creation story is one of the best-known in all the corpus.¹⁸ Of course, the fact that Christians and non-Christians are generally familiar with the creation text, yet (even the former are) rarely aware that Genesis 1-2:4a and 2:4b-3:24 present two distinct cosmologies bespeaks the text’s cultural ubiquity (and relevance) as well as its opacity.¹⁹ If, then, people are only relatively acquainted with the details of creation in

at <http://historum.com/general-history/121217-10-countries-never-occupied-colonized-europe.html>

¹⁸ According to Jeffrey Kranz of the Overview Bible Project (who was working with statistics from BibleGateway.com), the “10 most popular books of the Bible” include both Genesis and Proverbs as well as Psalms, Matthew, John, Romans, Luke, I Corinthians, Isaiah, and Acts because they “resonate” more with readers. See Jeffrey Kranz, “10 most popular books of the Bible (and why), April 1, 2014, <http://overviewbible.com/popular-books-bible-infographic/> (Accessed June 8, 2016.) Also see Jonathan Peterson, “The 10 Most Popular Books of the Bible,” April 21, 2014 <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2014/04/the-10-most-popular-books-of-the-bible-and-why/> (In my years as a pastor and now as a professor, I cannot count the number of times I have heard the phrase, “I’ve tried to read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation but once I hit the ‘begats’ I give up.”)

¹⁹ According to Isaac Kikawada, Genesis 1-3 is itself poetry as evinced by the doublet, a common convention in the Ancient Near East. Kikawada posits, “poetry is built upon two

Genesis 1-3, what of the stories has been culturally retained? In the years I spent as a minister and now as a professor, I have found the quotidian elements of creation to include God speaking the world into existence, bringing order (from either chaos or nothing), and creation occurring in six days, where the seventh is reserved for (God's) rest. People then generally jump to Eve's creation from Adam's rib, which is swiftly followed by her listening to the snake and being "deceived," Adam following her lead, their eating from the tree, and, wham! The Fall.²⁰ The result, as a student of mine stated with fervid resentment, is that all humans *have to suffer the repercussions of their sin*.²¹

Interesting, exciting, and accessible (as ancient texts go), what if we began *in the beginning*, with this book named beginnings (in Hebrew), and read Genesis other-wise? What if we reimagined Genesis, not in terms of its identity, as a cosmology or an ontology (as a *what*) but in terms of epistemology, as *how*? In this way, we might approach the book (and the Book), contemplating Genesis as frame and considering how it functions. After all, the canon was originally and intentionally compiled in a particular order by the Fathers of the church, whose primary motivation was not necessarily historical (or chronological) accuracy but their own theology and (socio-political)

seemingly contradictory literary foundations; one of density or compactness, as the German word *Dichtung* well signifies, and the other of repetition. A poet repeats a word, phrase or motif to condense ideas into a small space" (169). See Isaac M. Kikawada, "The Double Creation of Mankind in Enki and Ninmah, Atrahasis I 1-351, and Genesis 1-2," in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, eds. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994): 169-174.

²⁰ See Sylvia Wynter's representation of this Grand Narrative and its deployment by "Latin-Christian Europe" in "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337. (Especially 275-277.)

²¹ Youth during conversation while I was youth pastor at First Baptist Church, Gulf Breeze, Florida, 2007 and expressed again by a student while teaching at Drew Theological School, Spring, 2015.

ideology.²² Glissant's ideas on founding myths, such as Genesis, are instructive here.

Their sole purpose, he observes,

[I]s to consecrate the presence of a community on a territory, by establishing this presence, this present, in a legitimate line of descent from a Genesis or an act of world creation. Consciously or not, the founding myth gives confidence in the seamless continuity of this inheritance and thereupon authorizes the community it addresses to consider its territory as being absolutely its own. As an extension of the principle of legitimacy, it may be that, in passing from myth to historical consciousness, the community decides that it is its given right to extend the limits of its territory. That was one of the founding principles of colonial expansion; colonialism thus appeared to be strongly tied to the idea of universality, that is, to the idea of the general legitimation of an absolute that had its first beginnings in a chosen particular. You can now see why it is important that the founding myth should be based on a Genesis, should demand two motors (inheritance and legitimacy, which guarantee the force of legitimation), and why it should suppose a single end, the universal legitimation of presence. Is this not the model of the working of what people call history with a big H, whatever may be the nature of the philosophy that underwrites it?²³

As biblical scholars have argued, because the self-proclaimed people of Israel were a diasporic, composite and fledgling people, the claim to land and, therefore, legitimacy was paramount.²⁴ Composite, or what Glissant identifies as creolized, peoples begin with storytelling, which he asserts, is “full of detours,” and one of those is undeniably “the

²² See Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002); Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Publishing Group, 2007); Colm Luibhéid, *The Council of Nicaea* (Galway University Press, 1982).

²³ Édouard Glissant, “The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World,” 289.

²⁴ Scholars have argued from the content and context of their texts (not to mention that the texts themselves are composites) that Ancient Israel is an assemblage, constructed and projected retrospectively. For more on this process, see Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel': A Study of Biblical Origins* (London & New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015); John L. Berquist, *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007); idem, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Wipf & Stock, 2003).

tendency to link oneself to a Genesis.”²⁵ He explains, “In atavistic societies, where creolization happened so long ago the memory of it is replaced by myths, the community arms itself with a set of stories confirming the legitimacy of their relation to the land they occupy.”²⁶ As Glissant proposes of all Geneses, the biblical book of Genesis was written in an effort to establish credibility on a cosmic scale; as the divine transformed over diasporic time-space from tribal deity (*Yahweh*) to universal Creator and Supreme Being (*Elohim*) and the Roman Empire endorsed and enforced this text, through its colonial current, further contributing to the evolution, expansion, and acceptance of the Bible as myth, History (and, likewise, Truth), and Literature.

Aside from its colonial tenor, Genesis also presents identity in a manner Glissant considers characteristic of atavistic rather than composite peoples; one, “which gives no room to the Other as a participant.”²⁷ Biblical scholars have attended to this exclusivist tone in the Hebrew Bible for decades, understanding texts on Israel’s exceptionalism and its sanctions on purity, likewise, to betray an otherwise. In other words, Israel was anything but exceptional and pure.²⁸ On the other hand, there has been little engagement with or analysis of what has arguably become one of, if not *the*, Bible’s central epistemological paradigm: order instituted at creation by (Yahweh) Elohim, according to binary (hierarchical) division.²⁹ This “order” at least appears to govern many biblical

²⁵ Glissant, “Unforeseeable,” 290.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See note 24.

²⁹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 73. Glissant understands the dichotomy to exist primarily in the West’s juxtaposition of nature and culture, which he locates in myth, and specifically “the notion of Genesis.” Myth, Glissant asserts, is also the earliest link between History and Literature (or, in its nascent stages, “a view of history and the urge to write”); “[m]yth disguises while conferring meaning, obscures and brings to light,

texts; precisely because it organizes Western European [influenced] cultures to the present day.³⁰ Traditional interpretations of Genesis 1-3 represent this framework as fundamental, “natural,” and inhering in the text and, therefore, the biblical and created world. Glissant’s ruminations, however, indicate otherwise, drawing us toward, even into, the other-wise—and there is always an interpretation other-wise.³¹ Though those of us “raised on” the Bible were inadvertently conditioned to read creation at Genesis within this bifurcated frame, anyone educated within the Western European educational system and its institutions (which are unequivocally governed by its Eurocentric episteme) have

mystifies as well as clarifies and intensifies that which emerges, fixed in time and space, between men and their world. It explores the known-unknown. Myth is the first state of a still-naïve historical consciousness, and the raw material for the project of a literature...myth anticipates history as much as it inevitably repeats the accidents that it has glorified; that means it is in turn a producer of history” (71). For a typical Western European interpretation of this binary division see Edmund Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1969), 12-15.

³⁰ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 71-2.

³¹ “Other-Wise” is familiar jargon in biblical studies since its official inception in the work of Gerald West. While West is credited with the term, it has been employed and endorsed by other scholars who work with contextualized biblical interpretation. “Other-Wise,” as West employs the term, is a way of approaching, reading and interpreting the biblical text so as to “recognize and provide a place for the other, who is not a biblical scholar” (4). Referring to the scholars contributing to the volume, West affirms their belief in biblical scholarship’s resources “to those for whom the Bible is a significant text in the many struggles of our time.” Other-wise is a symbiotic relationship, which also signifies our “various attempts to construct and participate in collaborative acts of reading for the purposes of particular projects of transformation and life” (5). While West’s own interpretive framing has been quite important in the field (particularly Hebrew Bible and/or Old Testament studies) and has at least obliquely influenced my own hermeneutic, my conceptualization of the term is both related to (biblical) interpretation by literal, particular interpretive (communal) bodies *and* the perpetual frustration of binary interpretations and representations of texts and literary, textual bodies. Other-Wise, or other-wise, as I employ the term, therefore, signifies the decentering of Eurocentric episteme *and* the surplus of meaning always already enacted by these innumerable interpretive events and the routes and (subterranean, submarine) roots of Wisdom to be found therein. See Gerald O. West, *Reading Otherwise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with their Local Communities* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

been socialized to see, read, and interpret according to what Glissant deemed continental thought, which is habituated to perceive, or judge, in hierarchical binaries.³² Therefore, when the Other is *allowed* to participate, it is only ever *under* and against History's winner (i.e., the West) as History's perpetual loser, failure, and freak; the West is the Dom, the Rest is "His" Sub, forever the vanquished and the *who* the West has always already won.³³ Or has *He*?

In the opening paragraph of Genesis 1, we are introduced to the dichotomous paradigm that has seemingly shaped the ancient Mediterranean context in which the book was composed and continues to influence the countries of Western Europe, the Americas, and much of our post-/neo-colonial world. In considering this text more closely, we can perceive three dominant elements in the act of creation, repeated six times in Genesis 1, that have functioned in the identification and analysis of its *deep structure* of meaning. They are Elohim, speech, and division; and they are introduced in just that order. Elohim speaks division, this differentiation is creation, and creation is ultimate (divine) power. The Hebrew word *bara*, represents the verb "to create" or "to heal" and is almost always employed in relation to God and/at creation within the Hebrew Bible. Like the Hebrew

³² Ostensibly since Plato's "Theory of Forms" and the hierarchical division of form and matter, a binary frame which though critiqued by Aristotle in the particular was in many reified by him. See Gail Fine, *Plato on Knowledge and Forms: Selected Essays* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 2003); and idem, *On Ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1995).

³³ I capitalize "Him" much as Glissant capitalizes History and Literature and as Sylvia Wynter capitalizes "Man" to signify (symbolic) man in the Western European imaginary (and in line with traditional Judeo-Christian interpretations of Adam as ideal Man). See Sylvia Wynter's deconstruction of "Man" in "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337. Also see notes 44 and 46.

verb *barak*, which denotes both blessing and cursing,³⁴ *bara* simultaneously signifies its opposite: the act of cutting, as a stone would be carved or a tree chopped.³⁵ In other words, the variety of “creating” in which God is involved and invested is not *ex nihilo*, according to an Irenaean cosmology, but creation *ut interficiam*. (When Elohim appears, the earth may have been unformed, but there *was* substance.) As Catherine Keller points out in *Face of the Deep*, Elohim is, in fact, moving over (trembling, reverberating, resonating with) the *tehom* of Genesis 1:2, which mirrors (even channels) the chaotic errantry of Plato’s *χώρα*.³⁶ According to Keller, through God’s creative act, Genesis 1-2:4 evinces a fear of the chaotic; what Keller deems “tehomophobia.”³⁷ A fear, which led

³⁴ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, Johann Jakob Stamm, M.E.J. Richardson. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 159-160. (Henceforth HALOT) While *barak* is one of the most significant parallels, Hebrew verbs, substantives, and even prepositions, with a semantic range that includes conflicting concepts is not uncommon.

³⁵ HALOT, 154, 155.

³⁶ See Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 22-23, 26. “Christianity established as unquestionable the truth that everything is created not from some formless and bottomless something but from nothing: an omnipotent God could have created the world only *ex nihilo*. This dogma of origin has exercised immense productive force. It became common sense. Gradually it took modern and then secular form, generating every kind of western originality, every logos creating the new as if from nothing, cutting violently, ecstatically free of the abysses of the past. But Christian theology... created this *ex nihilo* at the cost of its own depth. It systematically and symbolically sought to erase the chaos of creation. Such a manoeuvre... was always doomed to a vicious circle: the nothingness invariably returns with the face of the feared chaos – to be nihilated all the more violently” (xvi). Keller is herself motioning toward the Western European constitution of and, therefore, claim to originality and origination, in an attempt to establish its primacy and power over (once and for) all. *Tehom* is, for Keller, not God but the depth of God, and she takes her place aside the *difference of God* (which she has birthed as *χώρα*), as “the Trinitarian ‘first person’” (231).

³⁷ It is my contention that the relentless efforts of biblical scholars and theologians to perform and police the seemingly abysmal chasm between God’s ordering Wisdom and the chaotic of *tehom* (as originary, in and from the beginning) only serves to expose that this binary too is phallicious. (“Phallicious” is a neologism I created to signify (and expose) the phallic impulse to cut in two (bisect) and thereby create a false binary

Christianity to “systematically and symbolically [seek] to erase the chaos of creation” and crucify its own chaotic and poetic profundity.³⁸

For at least these reasons, one might safely assume that the creating which takes place in Genesis 1 and 2, is (the ordering of chaos through) division, as indicated by the repetition of the verb *bara* and confirmed by the subsequent dualities constructed and catalogued each successive day of “creation.”³⁹ Though we will never know the exact origin of these oral narratives, we can fairly confidently confirm that these texts would have been penned in or around Israel’s post-exilic period (ca. 6th century B.C.E.), and that the triad around which the story appears to revolve—Elohim, Speech, and Differentiation—seems to constitute (divine) power through speech as the authority to occupy, name, and order through division. In other words, this text appears to confirm

between God and chaos. The various dispositif deployed to construct the boundary and prevent the chaotic from infiltrating and contaminating the divine betray their proximity. It bears noting here that I employ “abysmal chasm” instead of Keller’s “abyssal chasm” (166) intentionally, as the former—in addition to signifying an immense or infinite depth—has explicitly negative connotations as “extremely bad or appalling.”) In an unpublished essay, I have elsewhere argued that because God and *tehom* are as alike as they are different—at points even indistinguishable—our own Western (post)Enlightenment Judeo-Christian sensibilities have incited us to construct, reinforce, and patrol the border between them, lest God lose power and our world sink into chaotic disrepair. This binary has had catastrophic implications and horrifying effects on our biospheric ecology, however. Therefore, I conclude, it is imperative that we think of them other-wise, as other than opposites: as *other than* One and Other, that is, *simultaneously* as One *and* Other. I proffer, that it is in fact more fecund (indeed more generative) to think of (the) One as (the) interrelation of difference(s) as, or in terms of, ecstatic interdependence. (See Corrington 1994.) An idea Glissant represents through creolization and the Deleuzian chaosmos and rhizome, what might also be understood through the Rastafari notion and philosophy of I-an-I. In that essay, I ultimately argued that through the khoric paradox of biblical Wisdom, it is not only *possible* to read *elohim* and *tehom*, God and chaos, together...it is *of necessity* (ἀνάγκη). See Rawson 2014.

³⁸ Keller, *Face*, xvi.

³⁹ For an expansive exegesis on Genesis 1, the three primary elements of this text, and the translation of *bara* as “separating, dividing,” see Ellen van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1994).

Glissant's theory about the colonial frame and force of myths of origin. When approached through an anti-colonial, Africana, and/or an archipelagic epistemology, however, new questions and opportunities open up in the text, which challenge us to ask if such a bifurcated conceptual framework, rather than inhering in the text, might have instead been imposed upon it and whether it might be re-membered other-wise.

In his essay, "The Known, The Uncertain," Glissant identifies this framework in the Western mind's ideal to control nature, and one's own nature, by culture, rather than through their synthesis.⁴⁰ He explains,

Genesis, which is the fundamental explanation, and ordering, which is the ritualized narrative, anticipates what the West would ascribe to Literature (that it is almost divine creation: the Word made Flesh)—the notion of Genesis—and what would be the realm of historical consciousness (a selective evolution)—that of Ordering.⁴¹

Out of the culture/nature dichotomy, then, the West inculcates this "ordering-knowledge," as linear and progressive, via the deployment of (Genesis as) History and Literature, which appear to inherently "agree...to separate man from the world [and] subject nature to culture."⁴² (Myth functions as the linchpin, for Glissant, and Genesis, the nonpareil.) According to this binary epistemological frame, ways of "being-in-the-world" other-wise are obfuscated and entirely foreclosed; one is either *West* (i.e., cultured, civilized, literate) or one of *the Rest* (i.e., barbarian, uncivilized, oral) and,

⁴⁰ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 72. In *Caribbean Discourse*, Glissant contends that "primitive religious thought ordained a genesis and an ordering of the world" (73). One can detect the evolution of Glissant's own theorizing of Genesis, myth, and oral cultures from the 70s and 80s to the early twenty-first century.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* The repercussions of this development, attributable to the West's domination of history as History, is that the "official history" of Martinique, the entirety of the archipelago, and the "post-colonial" world, is the production of history as History (73).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 73.

therefore, illegitimate, because unintelligible, as human and unrecognizable as a life.⁴³

While Glissant understands “Genesis,” like “History” and “Literature,” to represent a

⁴³ See Nevzat Soguk and Geoffrey Whitehall. “Wanderings Grounds: Transversality, Identity, Territoriality, and Movement,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, No. 3 (1999), 680. Glissant expresses this difference in terms of transparency versus opacity. He asserts, “As Mediterranean myths tell us, thinking about the One is not thinking about the All...They suggest that the self’s opacity for the other is insurmountable, and consequently, no matter how opaque the other is for oneself (no myth every provides for the legitimacy of the other), it will always be a question of reducing this other to the transparency experienced by oneself. Either the other is assimilated, or else it is annihilated. That is the whole principle of generalization and its entire process. Myth, therefore, contains a hidden violence that catches in the links of filiation and absolutely challenges the existence of the other as an element of relation” (*Poetics of Relation*, 49, 50). In “Wandering Grounds,” Soguk and Whitehall appeal to Glissant’s notion of transversality in their analysis of migration at the turn of the century for the ways in which transversality “implicates and problematizes an International Relations discourse that R.B.J. Walker characterizes as inside/outside, what Michael Shapiro calls ‘modernity’s dominant spatial story,’ and what Michael Dillon calls the ‘ontopolitics’ of the state-system.” In other words, transversality disrupts “the dominant state-centric representation of the world,” which “blocks the narration of alternative identities that are already in practice, fresh in the making, or that might adumbrate radically different life horizons and, in Richard Ashley’s words, radically different ‘natural conditions of experience’ (680-681). In the same vein, Judith Butler asserts, “Not all acts of knowing are acts of recognition, although the inverse claim would not hold: a life has to be intelligible as a life, has to conform to certain conception of what life is, in order to become recognizable. So just as norms of recognizability prepare the way for recognition, so schemas of intelligibility condition and produce norms of recognizability” (6-7). (Butler is explicit in her distinction of the apprehension of something “as living” while not being “‘recognized’ as a life” [12].) Such interpretive acts, Butler contends, “implicitly [take] hold at moments of primary affective responsiveness. Interpretation does not emerge as the spontaneous act of a single mind, but as a consequence of a certain field of intelligibility that helps to form and frame our responsiveness to the impinging world (a world on which we depend, but which also impinges upon us, exacting responsiveness in complex, sometimes ambivalent, forms” (34). It is out of this line of reasoning that Butler’s notion of precariousness emerges. “The ‘being’ of the body to which...ontology refers is one that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically in order to maximize precariousness for some and minimize precariousness for others...to be a body is to be exposed to social crafting and form, and that is what makes the ontology of the body a social ontology. In other words, the body is exposed to socially and politically articulated forces as well as to claims of sociality—including language, work, and desire—that make possible the body’s persisting and flourishing” (2-3). Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London New York: Verso, 2009).

universal (Eurocentric) concept, I believe his assertions relate emphatically to the actual book of Genesis. For even when perceived as myth and fiction by (post)modern readers, Genesis is always already culturally imbedded and, therefore, imbued with affective force.⁴⁴ This oralitrary affective assemblage, which once may have functioned as ancient folklore, over time became Myth became Literature became History and was established as dominant conceptual framework via the ultimate signifying process of the Western European colonization machine;⁴⁵ whereby “Man,” “the chosen one, knows himself and knows the world, not because he is part of it, but because he establishes a sequence and measures it according to his own time scale, which is determined by his *affiliation*.”⁴⁶ In this way, then, the (Western European continent’s) Root (identity) colonized the Garden and creation. Yet, Glissant reminds us, there is always an-other route, a root other-wise (whereby the word is enflashed). And it cries out to us from, toward, and in-between the islands...

⁴⁴ Affective force, in this sense, then, is according to the Spinozan notion, who understands affect as “affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided, or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (70). While the “Man” (i.e., Western European as the divinely chosen ideal human) is empowered, this narrative effectively and affectively renders illegitimate all other bodies through their disempowerment, since their power to act is diminished through this (colonizing) process. (Spinoza also addresses this compulsion, which he understands to stem from humans understanding themselves to be “cause” [97]). See Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1996), especially Volume III.

⁴⁵ Glissant asserts, “The fact is that the ‘end’ of the myth of Genesis means the beginning of the use of genealogy to persuade oneself that exclusivity has been preserved” (*Caribbean Discourse*, 141). In essence, when power and (racial) authority has been procured, Genesis can be debunked as history because it is (History and so) no longer necessary to establish origin and (therefore) dominion.

⁴⁶ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 73. Also see Sylvia Wynter’s deconstruction of “Man” in “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337.

A phenomenon of transformation has occurred within the Caribbean archipelago, according to Glissant, which signals the end of (the pursuit of) myths of origin and simultaneously calls into question the interpretation of any peoples as other than composite, even those who claim racial, ethnic or cultural “purity”: creolization.⁴⁷ What has come to light in the evolution of this process within the Caribbean, Glissant observes, is that “peoples who are ‘manifestly’ composite have minimized the idea of Genesis.”⁴⁸

Composite peoples, that is, those who could not deny or mask their hybrid composition, nor sublimate it in the notion of a mythical pedigree, do not “need” the idea of Genesis, because they do not need the myth of pure lineage...The poetics of creolization is the same as a cross-cultural poetics: not linear and not prophetic, but woven from enduring patience and irreducible accretions...Creolization is the unceasing process of transformation.⁴⁹

Because our world is always already “becoming archipelago and becoming creolized,”⁵⁰ we are ever more interlinked and interdependent (“indeed, no people has been spared the

⁴⁷ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 140, 142. Creolization as a concept, Glissant contends, “is not primarily the glorification of the composite nature of a people: indeed, no people has been spared the cross-cultural process. The idea of creolization demonstrates that henceforth it is no longer valid to glorify ‘unique’ origins that race safeguards and prolongs. In Western tradition, genealogical descent guarantees racial exclusivity, just as Genesis legitimizes genealogy. To assert peoples are creolized, that creolization has value, is to deconstruct in this way the category of ‘creolized’ that is considered as halfway between two ‘pure’ extremes” (140).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 141, 142.

⁵⁰ Édouard Glissant, “The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World,” in *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*, ed. M. Elisabeth Mudimbe Boyi (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 290. Also see Glissant, *Traité du Tout-Monde*, 194. Much like Patrick Taylor’s assertion that the Bible is Caribbean (see below), Glissant’s observation, that the world is becoming archipelago, creolized, and Caribbean may be understood as metaphorical or metonymic (as Hall permits), but may also simply be read as a truism. Through air and space travel but also through the World Wide Web, we are connected as islands by a current that renders our ontological experience as archipelological. See note 61.

cross-cultural process”).⁵¹ Glissant’s *creolization* provides a Relational route through which to re-think the Root myth of Genesis, the Bible and its interpretation, and to engage our world in and through a rhizomatic (theo)poetics of Relation. I am not advocating for its ubiquitous application, so as to supplant or silence other epistemological avenues, but in order to contribute to the already flourishing effort at decolonizing epistemology: creolization is yet another modality, a vehicle and/or threshold that functions in and toward the facilitation of a more open, aware, and generous epistemological environment.

Creolization, or Créolité, is a movement and an idea, which signifies “the negation of creolization as a category, by giving priority to the notion of natural creolization, which the human imagination has always wished to deny or disguise (in Western tradition).”⁵² It is an epistemological paradigm, which derives from Creole and, likewise, represents a cross-cultural phenomenon rooted in the strategic subversion of Western European signifying systems, its epistemology, culture and socio-political hegemony.⁵³ Therefore, as an interpretive modality other-wise, we are compelled to read, or re-member, the Bible (as all Literature) seeking subterranean elements, which disrupt the conventional Western European binary frame.⁵⁴ An example of this within Caribbean

⁵¹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 140.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵³ See page 79ff. for further expansion on creolization.

⁵⁴ Continental philosophy has (unsurprisingly) laid claim to this project, credited Derrida with its inception and named its technical, analytical application “deconstruction.” It is neither original nor unique to poststructuralist theory, however, continental thought merely rendered this modality transparent. In opacity, it is indigenous to non-Western cultures, and especially Africana episteme. Such a subversive approach can be located in folktale (through the trickster figure in particular) and carnivalesque around the world and across time, as I contend in Chapter 2. Glissant’s project is to expose established structures of power, and the underlying Eurocentric epistemology, and explode them

oraliture would be Aimé Césaire's re-membering of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Une Tempête*, where the disruptive features were already present in Shakespeare's text; Césaire gave them voice.⁵⁵ In Genesis, I find them in the flow of the aqueous current, rolling and resonating from the chaotic beginning as *tehom* (irrupting, surging, gushing) into Eden (*va'ed*); this is a fluid movement and a tide that, like Caribbean history, is a subversive convergence, or "transversality," which must be illuminated in order that "the linear, hierarchical version of a single history" cannot continue to run its demolition course.⁵⁶

through new, avant-garde archipelagic modes of aesthetic expression. Likewise, Judith Butler explains that "what happens when a frame breaks with itself is that a taken-for-granted reality is called into question, exposing the orchestrating designs of the authority who sought to control the frame. This suggests that it is not only a question of finding new content, but also of working with received renditions of reality to show how they can and do break with themselves" (Butler, *Frames of War*, 12). The subterranean within Genesis is the break, the crack, in the Western European frame. (See note 56 for further explication of Glissant's theorizing of the subterranean.)

⁵⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969); and idem, *A Tempest: Based on Shakespeare's "The Tempest," Adaptation for Black Theatre*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1992).

⁵⁶ While the two creation stories of Genesis are stylistically, semantically, and symbolically unrelated, aside from the existence of a deity, the deity's activity of creating, and certain resultant created elements, there is another unifying element: water. In Genesis 1 (verse 2) the aqueous substance is *tehom* (the feminine moniker given the waters [*ha'mayim*]) and in Genesis 2:4 it is the spring, which rises up from the *adamah* (a feminine form; *adam* being the masculine). Like Genesis, Caribbean history, according to Glissant, has a "subterranean convergence," which he names "transversality." (And another allusion to the rhizome.) Following Kamau Brathwaite, Glissant understands Caribbean history to have a "submarine" unity that might only be grasped as and when the people of the archipelago's disparate islands come to see their histories not as identical but as shared according to common experiences and events. Glissant names this unity or model of regional history, "submarine roots," explaining, these roots are "floating free, not fixed in one position in some primordial spot, but extending in all directions in our world through its networks and branches" (*Caribbean Discourse*, 66, 67). (Glissant is likewise working from Derek Walcott's notion of the sea as history.) Glissant, Brathwaite, and Walcott are among the Caribbean intellectuals who, through their work, have sought to reclaim (and re-member) these aqueous networks, appropriated by Western European aquatic fleets, and Caribbean history in light of this

I open my dissertation exposing this paradigm within Genesis 1-3, not in order to provide an in-depth exegesis of the pericope (though I will return to the second creation account in the Chapter One), but in order to set the stage for my project. Genesis 1-3 is the root myth of origin to which Glissant alludes in *Caribbean Discourse* (and *Poetics of Relation*), which instantiates the fundamental framework endorsed and enforced by the West, and the current project (inspired by Glissant and the Rastafari) is a poetic act of Relation in resistance and resistance in Relation to the Root. I am curious about the hold the Bible has upon us and how we hold the Bible (a text deployed to colonize bodies since the reign of Constantine).⁵⁷ How are we *moved* by the Bible and why? What is it about this text that is worthy of an entire field of academic study, more commentaries than any book ever written, and billions of devotees around the world? How could a single book, whose authors and editors (and their number) are entirely unknown, inspire and authorize both emancipation and enslavement, empowerment and oppression? And just what is it about the Bible that "moves" some and not others? It indubitably draws, disgusts, and has legitimated the construction of a "them" and an "us." And then, there are those unfortunate souls who, like myself, experience an ambivalent affective resonance. On that note, I return to my (archipelological) apothegms.

project. Another of Brathwaite's poetic and philosophical interventions is his concept (represented through the neologism) "tidalectics," which is implicitly rhythmic. For his treatment of the term see Kamau Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean*. (Mona: Savacou Publications, 1974), 64. Also see Elizabeth DeLoughrey's incisive exploration of Brathwaite's concept in conversation with Glissant's poetics in her essay "Island Writing, Creole Cultures," in *Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, ed. Ato Quayson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 802-832.

⁵⁷ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 72-73, 97-98.

The Bible is ambi(val)ently affective:

A queer woman raised Southern Baptist in the U.S.A., I have personally been spurned, scorned, scarred, saved and set free by the words in and message(s) of the Bible. After years of wrestling, I, like Jacob with the angel, find myself touched, affected, and yet still ineluctably bound to the Bible in an entanglement of cruel optimism.⁵⁸ The ambivalence inhering in the Bible, its interpretation and deployment, as well as my affective resonance with this sacred text, begs the question, which exposes my cathexis and progressively haunts me, “Is [the Bible] a promise or a threat?”⁵⁹ It is from this precarious positionality, then, acknowledging the complexity of the Bible’s *in-between-ness*, and my own, that I write about reading the Bible while and as occupying the cracks, the openings, the fissures, the gaps, and the space between, wherein meaning is made. Somatic and spiritual, sympathetic and structural, spoken and inscribed, political and personal, I propose that *that special something* about the Bible—that which matters to us and has the capacity to moves us—is found in (its) *in-between-ness*.⁶⁰ As freighted as its

⁵⁸ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Duke University Press, 2011). Cruel optimism is, in the words of Lauren Berlant, “the condition of maintaining an attachment to a significantly problematic object” (24). A relationship that is complicated, complex, tricky, involved, knotty, tangled, indissoluble, inseparable, indivisible, and anything but simple. (I hate it, I love it, and I seem to always want more of it.) Also see the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel at Peniel in Genesis 32.

⁵⁹ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Duke University Press, 2010), 10. Seigworth and Gregg attend to the ambivalence resident within affect, asserting that “in the affective bloom of a processual materialism, one of the most pressing questions faced by affect theory becomes ‘Is that a promise or a threat?’ No surprise, any answer quite often encompasses both at the same time (hence Berlant’s cruel optimism’).”

⁶⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 49. Affect for Deleuze (and for Guattari), like Spinoza, refers to any sort of shift, transformation, or alteration in bodily capacity. Every *body*, human or non-human, is an assemblage, a composite, entirely susceptible to other bodies, and affect is the process

past and as painful as its imperial appropriation, the Bible is unequivocally a meeting place, a text in-between all sorts of bodies, pushing and pulling, it is itself a body without organs.⁶¹ The Bible is an ambi(val)ent affective assemblage,

[A]s excess, as autonomous, as impersonal, as the ineffable, as the ongoingness of process, as pedagogico-aesthetic, as virtual, as shareable (mimetic), as sticky, as collective, as contingency, as threshold or conversion point, as immanence of potential (futuraity), as the open, as a vibrant incoherence that circulates about zones of cliché and convention, as a gathering place of accumulative dispositions.⁶²

*The Bible is bloom space.*⁶³

It is “a space where the transaction between bodies and worlds sparks,”⁶⁴ and is (a)

and materiality of bodies being made in and through these relations, which result in our capacity to act.

⁶¹ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Expounding upon the cruelty of Berlantian optimism, Schaefer observes, “Bodies can be mapped in terms of this queer system of ever-present pushes and pulls. Compulsions propel us in multiple dimensions through this complex, living topography of power” (Loc. 2281). Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Duke University Press, 2015).

⁶² Seigworth and Gregg, 9. Seigworth and Gregg ruminate on “what transpires in the affective bloom-space of an ever-processual materiality [in] what Raymond Williams defined as the necessary critical task of always ‘moving beyond one after another ‘materialism’” (1980, 122).” They explain, “the affective qualities of this adjacent but incorporeal bloom-space are figured in a variety of ways...as excess, as autonomous, as impersonal, as the ineffable, as the ongoingness of process, as pedagogico-aesthetic, as virtual, as shareable (mimetic), as sticky, as collective, as contingency, as threshold or conversion point, as immanence of potential (futuraity), as the open, as a vibrant incoherence that circulates about zones of cliché and convention, as a gathering place of accumulative dispositions.” For more on assemblage, see note 96.

⁶³ Kathleen Stewart, “Worlding Refrains,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Duke University Press, 2010), 339-353. In “Worlding Refrains,” Kathleen Stewart writes that “all the world is a bloom space now” and proceeds to define bloom space as “a promissory note. An allure and a threat that shows up in ordinary sensibilities of not knowing what compels, not being able to sit still, being exhausted, being left behind or being ahead of the curve, being in history, being in a predicament, being ready for something—anything—to happen, or orienting yourself to the sole goal of making sure that nothing (more) will happen. A bloom space can whisper from a half-lived sensibility that nevertheless marks whether or not you’re in it. It demands collective attunement and a more adequate description of how things make

worlding.⁶⁵ As bloom space, the Bible has both figuratively and literally moved bodies: to weep, to wonder, to work for justice, to wield power over others and/or to deny ego-compulsion. Mundane engagements with the Bible, while most often conscious, are typically non-conceptual and pre-propositional, as quotidian readers tend to *feel* rather than analyze the Bible structurally or exegete it formally. This holds particular valence when one considers the affective attraction toward or the pull of the Bible as God's *Word* because it is God's *words*. Such interpretive communities understand the Bible to be more than an amalgam of theologies (God-talk or words about God) from particular ancient communities and/or a literary medium through which God has and might continue to reveal Godself to humanity. For these believers, the Bible is a spiritual emollient, literally God's mouth speaking to them, their community, and at times the entire world; directly, personally, and intimately.⁶⁶ This perception of and relationship to

sense, fall apart, become something else, and leave their marks, scoring refrains on bodies of all kinds—atmospheres, landscapes, expectations, institutions, states of acclimation or endurance or pleasure or being stuck or moving on...Anything can be a bloom space" (340, 341).

⁶⁴ Schaefer, Loc. 2251.

⁶⁵ Stewart, "Worlding Refrains," 342. Stewart writes, "a bloom space is pulled into being by the tracks of refrains that etch out a way of living in the face of everything. These refrains stretch across everything, linking things, sensing them out—a worlding. Every refrain has its gradients, valences, moods, sensations, tempos, elements, and life spans." The notion of refrain with which she is working is a Guattarian conceptualization upon which Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie expound in their essay "An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers: Félix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain" (also included in *The Affect Theory Reader*). For Bertelsen and Murphie, as for Guattari before them, the refrain, as a repetition, was constitutive. "Refrains structure the affective into 'existential Territories,' (Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Sydney: Power, 1995, 15)." If (they continue quoting Brian Massumi in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, xv), "affects are intensities, then refrains are affects 'cycled back'" (139).

⁶⁶ This acutely personal view of and relationship with the Bible is, incidentally, one important reason that others are repelled, even disgusted, by the Bible. And one reason why Dale Martin proclaims in *Sex and the Single Savior*, that "texts don't 'speak'... Texts

the Bible evinces the ways in which the Bible, as all sacred texts, holds affective intensities or resonances; people are symbolically moved, but they are also physically moved.⁶⁷ As Michael Prior, and so many others have observed, the Bible, particularly through the trope of the divine promise to Israel, “has been used to justify the conquest of land” and peoples through Western European colonialism for thousands of years.⁶⁸ The actual transporting of bodies, through enslavement and forced migration, has been one of the most disturbing ways in which the Bible has moved bodies, and especially bodies from Africa to the Caribbean.⁶⁹

don't mean. People mean with texts.” See Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1. (Original emphasis.) Of course, Derrida had already addressed this question in 1967 with *Of Grammatology*, a perspective that resonated in his Structuralist contemporaries Barthes, Lacan and Foucault.

⁶⁷ Intensities and resonances are signifiers for the forces of affects upon bodies. A way of representing the *in-between*, or that which is occurring in the encounter, of bodies. The pull and push of affects, which influence our actions in the world. The Bible is a “textual” body that affects corporeal, human bodies intensely. Seigworth and Gregg explain, “within these mixed capacities of the in-between, as undulations in expansions and contractions of affectability arrive almost simultaneously or in close-enough alteration, something emerges, overflows, exceeds: a form of relation as rhythm, a fold, a timing, a habit, a contour, or a shape comes to mark the passages of intensities (whether dimming or accentuating) in body-to-body/world-body mutual imbrication. It is in this relationality...that persists, in adjacency and duration, alongside the affects and bodies that gather up in motley, always more-than-human collectivity” (Seigworth and Gregg, 13).

⁶⁸ Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, Ltd., 1997), 11.

⁶⁹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 5-9. In “The Open Boat,” which I expound upon in Chapter 3, Glissant confronts the traumatic conditions of the Transatlantic Slave Trade with profound poetic-affective force. In fact, the resonances between his essay and Bertelson and Murphie’s exposition on “The Red Ship” are uncanny. Also see Lone Bertelson and Andrew Murphie, “An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers: Félix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, 138-60.

“The Bible is a Caribbean text.”⁷⁰

Patrick Manning’s proclamation speaks directly to the way in which Caribbean people have so embraced the Bible as their own that they know it “better than North Americans!”⁷¹ Manning highlights, not only, the way in which Christian folk in the Antilles have embraced, assimilated, and appropriated the Bible, but a larger cultural dynamic between Western Europe/North America and the Caribbean. Caribbean peoples have come, through Christianity, to adopt the Bible as their own. And while his statement may conflict with Western European thought, as an archipelagic thinker, Manning highlights the primary concern of Caribbean readers of the Bible.⁷² That is, not the

⁷⁰ Taylor, “Sheba’s Song: The Bible, The Kebra Negast, and the Rastafarians,” in *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity, and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean*, ed., Patrick Taylor, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 74. Patrick Taylor states unequivocally, “The Bible is a Caribbean text; in general, people in the Anglophone Caribbean know their Bible better than North Americans!”

⁷¹ Taylor, 74.

⁷² Glissant juxtaposes Western philosophy and ideology’s “aim for a generalizing universality,” over and against the inherent multiplicity and cross-cultural poetics of Caribbeanness or *Antillanité* geographically (138). The islands are symbolic and heuristic, the embodiment of openness; the Caribbean archipelago is a way to think in resistance to the European continent’s confining insularity (139). In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant attaches the idea of Root identity to the latter and (a poetics of) Relation to the former. While the archipelago as epistemology was already present in Glissant’s early work, through *Antillanité*, it is most palpable in *Traité du tout-monde*, where Glissant asserts, “all archipelagic thinking is a trembling thought, a non-presumptuous thought, but also a thinking that opens out, that shares itself out” (231); “*toute pensée archipélique est pensée du tremblement, de la non-présomption, mais aussi de l’ouverture et du partage*”). Chris Bongie adumbrates Glissant’s conceptualization of the archipelago as “exemplary sites for understanding the complex new relations that ambivalently and chaotically join together all the hitherto unconnected parts of the world.” The Caribbean archipelago, he reasons, must, therefore “be considered in its archipelagic totality, as a region that can only be adequately understood through comparative, cross-cultural analysis focusing less on its discrete parts than on the way these parts exist in relation with and to one another” (89). In other words, as rhizome. H. Adlai Murdoch, for his part, explains Glissant’s juxtaposition of continental thought and archipelagic thinking, which “places Western patterns of History, along with their corollaries of singular thought, singular origin, and North-South hierarchies of superiority and inferiority under erasure,

historical “fact” of its Root or original context, its *innate* or *inherent* Caribbeanness (though as much as it is a Caribbean text, it is not), but their Relation(ship) to it and its meaning for them.⁷³ To take Manning’s statement seriously, then, requires us to not only think contextually about Caribbean encounters with the Bible, but to eschew continental thought for archipelagic thinking; what I understand to be an *archipelagic*, which relinquishes Root (or origin) for Relation.⁷⁴ It is to think about, and to re-member, the

implying a complete revision of tradition systems of thought, those inherited from the European hegemon and which he terms ‘continental’.” Glissant proffers archipelagic thinking, then, as “an alternative system of reflection.” Through his appeal to the archipelago as a framework, the Caribbean experience and the principle of creolization ground “unexpected patterns of thought and encounter” and “internalized dislocations and discontinuities revise and rewrite traditional notions of boundaries and communities, helping to realign established historical perspectives and mediating the emergence of compound, nontraditional forms of identity” (106). See Édouard Glissant, *Traité du Tout-Monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); Chris Bongie, “Reading the Archipelago,” *New West Indies Guide* 73, no. 1 & 2 (1999): 89-95; H. Adlai Murdoch, “Creole, *Criollismo*, and *Créolité*,” in *Critical Terms in Caribbean and Latin American Thought: Historical and Institutional Trajectories*, eds. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, Marisa Belausteguigoitia (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁷³ Taylor stands in the tradition of William Watty, Noel Erskine, Pat Sheerathan, and Marjorie Lewis, among others. In their claim and conceptualization of the Bible *as* Caribbean, these theologians and biblical scholars mean adoption, acculturation, entrenchment, and are not necessarily overtly contemplating the Bible’s origins as establishing a contesting claim. To claim the Bible as Caribbean is, in this way, a truism.

⁷⁴ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 137-42. Glissant employs the French noun *pensée*, from the verb *penser*, in reference to both continental and archipelagic thought (epistemology). The semantic range of the verb includes to think, imagine, suppose, reflect, say, conceive, realize, guess, wonder, figure, reckon, fancy, and ruminate. *Pensée* is typically translated idea, concept, thought, or thinking and Michael Dash employs the former in *Caribbean Discourse* in order to most accurately convey what he imagined to be Glissant’s intent and to retain uniformity. While I want to emphasize the range of its semantic signification, I primarily employ the gerund (“thinking”) when referencing archipelological epistemologies, so as to denote action, activity, and movement, as I use the substantive (“thought”) when referring to continental philosophy and episteme in order to foreground the Western European predilection for stasis and stability.

Bible in terms of connection and resonance rather than origin and dominance; to interpret the Bible (in the) in-between, to read the Bible in diaspora.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ I understand the term re-membling as a fusion of Toni Morrison's "rememory" and Gerald West's re-membling, inspired by and instantiated in the biblical interpretation of Isaiah Shembe (an important figure in African/a biblical hermeneutics as one of the first African interpreters in southern Africa). One might say that the notion of rememory haunts all of Morrison's novels, however, it explicitly surfaces in *Beloved* in Sethe's dialogue with her daughter Denver. Sethe explains, "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened" (35-6). Through Sethe, Morrison not only expresses "rememory," but the embodied essence of history, the way in which trauma resides in a time-space that refuses Western representations, and particularly memory in the collective, transtemporal cultural body. Ashraf Rushdy expounds, "The term 'rememory,' signifying a new magical anamnesis available to one not involved in the originary act...is new in Morrison's writing (new, indeed to the language). But the idea of rememory, the concept of mental recollection, both anamnesis and construction, that is never only personal but always interpersonal, has been an important theme in all her novels" (Rushdy, 304). Gerald West utilizes "re-membling "in an attempt to capture the creative agency of indigenous Africans as they have transacted with the Bible. Ordinary Africans...whether literate or not, have 'reading' resources of their own. Some read, but all hear, remember, and retell the Bible. What they hear, remember, and retell is...A remaking or 're-membling' of the Bible" (West, 160). Re-membling is an implicitly communal event, wherein the Bible as text need not be physically present in order to be present. It is an absent-presence in that sense. Biblical interpretation, testimony, and story-telling, then, are intimately intertwined in this process. For a more thorough exposition on West's notion of re-membling (a resource and form of resistance for people's whose knowledge and interpretation of the Bible is inherently oral) see Gerald O. West, "Reading Shembe 'Re-Membling' the Bible: Isaiah Shembe's Instructions on Adultery," in *Neotestamentica* 40, no.1 (2006), 157-184. Also see Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Random House, 1987, 2004). For an incisive exposition on Rememory across Morrison's oeuvre see Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, "'Rememory': Primal Scenes and Constructions of Toni Morrison's Novels," *Contemporary Literature* XXXI, no. 3 (1990): 300-23. Avery Gordon appeals to Morrison in her reflections on being "haunted" and "following ghosts" in her scholarship. She explains, "To be haunted and to write from that location, to take on the condition of what you study, is not a methodology or a consciousness you can simply adapt as a set of rules or an identity; it produces its own insights and blindnesses. Following the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in

The Bible is diasporic:

It is a Caribbean text because it is a diasporic text, a diasporic text because it is a Caribbean text, and a diasporic text because it is a diasporic text. Comprised primarily of texts written and compiled by migrant peoples, from the first line in the book of Genesis—where God resonates with and vibrates over the face of the deep—the Bible is an assemblage of stories depicting (an) existence perpetually on the move. Because the Bible was composed by diasporic peoples, like diasporic peoples, this ancient anthology is “defined by being in-between two places, by a transitive zone of indeterminacy...of non-belonging and double-belonging.”⁷⁶ Its narratives, or folktales, reflect this tone. The Creole folktale, Glissant observes, in the same way reduces landscape to “symbolic space,” which “becomes a pattern of succeeding spaces through which one journeys.”⁷⁷ The Samson cycle in Judges 13-16 (and Genesis) is exemplary in this way, as it is a diasporic text that reflects the very poetic (rhizomatic and Relational) properties, and the episteme, required to think archipelogically.

where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look. It is sometimes about writing ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a counter-memory, for the future” (22). Re-membering is the being haunted, it is following, and it is reassembling—or even re-assembling—(hi)story “toward a counter-memory.” For Morrison, social memory is haunting. See Gordon’s creative socio-anthropological analysis and application of Morrison’s rememory as the absent-present in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁷⁶ Daniel Colucciello Barber, “Assembling No: Remarks on Diaspora and Intransitivity,” *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism* 46, no. 1 (2017): 155-165.

⁷⁷ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 127.

The Bible is oraliture:

That the Bible is oral literature is a truism, which none would dispute since much of the canon was orally recited and related, culturally inscribed prior to transcription.⁷⁸ Its folklore, narratives, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic visions and epistles are exploding with affective imagery and bear the traces of the oral cultures in which they were penned.

Édouard Glissant, as a number of Africana intellectuals, represents the orality of the literary through the moniker *oraliture*, where *the written becomes oral* only to expose the literary as inherently oral.⁷⁹ It is also the chirographic that demands to be vocalized.⁸⁰ Glissant understood his oeuvre to be an expression of the “tortured relationship between writing and orality,” evinced in the work of writers of the “Other America,” which “take[s] shape

⁷⁸ Paul’s epistles and John’s Revelation at Patmos may be the only exceptions, but even these texts would have likely been read aloud to the respective ekklesia or audience.

⁷⁹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 147. Glissant joins scholars such as Helen Mugambi, Solomon Iyasere, and Selwyn Cudjoe to name a few. See Helen Mugambi, “Intersections: Gender, Orality, Text, and Female Space in Contemporary Kiganda Radio Songs.” *Research in African Literatures* 25, no. 3. (Fall 1994): 47-70; Solomon Iyasere, “Oral Tradition in the Criticism of African Literature.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13, no. 1 (1975): 107-119; Selwyn Cudjoe, *Resistance and Caribbean Literature* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980). In *The Imaginary Caribbean and the Caribbean Imaginary*, Michèle Praeger elucidates Glissant’s terminology, a term invented by the Haitians to replace literature, and identifies her preference for literature of orality, “in order to distinguish this type of literature from oral literature in the ethnological sense of the term, including African epics; tales told by griots (African storytellers); sayings; proverbs; riddles, songs;” and otherwise religious texts. See Michèle Praeger, *The Imaginary Caribbean and Caribbean Imaginary* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004), 96-97.

⁸⁰ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 139. Glissant alternatively saw oraliture as a text that has been written, which “would have to be uttered first and that would benefit from oral techniques...[where] a scream becomes written without ceasing to be a scream or even a howl.” I am indebted to Glissant for many reasons, but this is one particularly dear to me for, it was not until I began contemplating oraliture in my own oraliturhythmic and embodied process as a writer that I realized my writing is always already oral. I am always either speaking aloud or “in my head” as I write and re-read my writing. I do so in order to feel what I am writing, to experience its affect, its rhythm and resonance.

at the edge of writing and speech.”⁸¹ It would appear that the Bible has this in common with the Caribbean too, for it exists in this liminal space, *at the edge*, which is also in between writing and speech. In fact, the Bible’s own occupation in between the oral and the written has led biblical scholars from Segovia and West to Spencer-Miller, Havea, and Vakauta to advocate for reading the Bible from and with perspectives, heuristics, hermeneutical lenses, and/or cultures that (epistemologically) privilege orality; orality must supplement our study of this sacred text.⁸² The Rastafari are, in fact, prototypical in this way, for their oralitrary interpretation, or “citing up,” of the Bible is a bold example of the Bible’s re-membering, reappropriation and (re)definition, as *a Caribbean text*.⁸³ I

⁸¹ Ibid., 147. Glissant relates, “My language attempts to take shape at the edge of writing and speech; to indicate this transition—which is certainly quite difficult in any approach to literature. I am not talking about either the written or the oral in the sense that one observes a novelist reproducing everyday speech, using a style at the ‘zero degree of writing.’ I am referring to a synthesis, synthesis of written syntax and spoken rhythms, of ‘acquired’ writing and oral ‘reflex,’ of solitude of writing and the solidarity of the collective voice—a synthesis that I find interesting to attempt.”

⁸² These biblical scholars represent a trend toward auto-ethnographic biblical interpretation, which began in the 1970’s and 80’s as contextualized hermeneutics, and not only privileges the interpretations of oral cultures but conceptualizes orality not as a field of study but as an interpretive modality, as a hermeneutic. See Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed Vernyl Davidson, eds., *Islands, Islanders, and the Bible: Ruminations* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015); and Nasili Vaka’uta, “Border Crossing/Body Whoring: Rereading Rahab of Jericho with Native Women,” in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Readings from Oceania*. Semeia Series 75. eds. Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine M. Wainwright (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 143-156.

⁸³ See Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Lewin Williams, “The Black Biblical Hermeneutics of Rastafari,” in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, eds. Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 326-348. Murrell and Williams submit, “like many among the poor Jamaican masses, some Rastas are barely literate. Yet they bring intriguing creativity to bear upon the Scriptures simply because of who they are and the position from which they interact with the stories and situations represented in the Bible” (327). “Citing up” is “an Africa-centered and ‘free-style’ reading of biblical materials,” which does not demand uniform agreement “on matters of biblical interpretation” (328). With the exception of ‘citing-up’ the Bible, which places “less emphasis on syntax, context, and literary genre of the text and more on the speaker, the setting, and the scene”—what

contend that as much as they may have patriarchal proclivities, which perpetuate misogyny, gynophobia and phallo(go)centrism, their oralitrary modality has the capacity to inspire and even facilitate the avant-garde approach to which Édouard Glissant calls us in *Caribbean Discourse* and through which he challenges us in *Poetics of Relation*; one with the courage, clarity, compassion and capacity to interrogate “the conventions of analytical thought,” respond to the demands of our contemporary contexts, and push us further in our creative and interpretive endeavors.⁸⁴ “Rastafari’s hermeneutics creates something new.”⁸⁵ And though Glissant’s charge is not directed at the Bible or its interpretation, it in no way excludes but seems to even motion toward it. In both *Discourse* and *Poetics*, he lays bare the injurious effects of the Root myth of Genesis, for the Bible is unequivocally a Western apparatus that has promulgated the Eurocentric gospel of Sameness and its obsession with origin.⁸⁶

The Bible is rhythmic:

Rhythm, like the Bible, is “not the property of one group,” as a result, within the Caribbean and the countries “linked to it by the sea and history,” rhythm has become “one of the most effective means of transgressing social and racial divides.”⁸⁷ Rhythm “has been a primary force in creating [the] creolized societies” of the Caribbean and was,

Glissant might call landscape—Rastas have no consistent methodology. Citing up is itself a direct affront to Western European intellectualism’s claims to authority or legitimacy vis-à-vis historical critical methodologies.

⁸⁴ Glissant, 65.

⁸⁵ Murrell and Williams, 327.

⁸⁶ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 97-99, 138-142.

⁸⁷ Martin Munro, “‘Fightin’ the Future’: Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean,” in *American Creoles: The Francophone Caribbean and the American South*, eds. Martin Munro and Celia Britton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 113.

and still is, fundamental to the constitution of the biblical text.⁸⁸ As an oralitury form, the Bible is structurally rhythmic; a space where “written syntax and spoken rhythms, of ‘acquired’ writing and oral ‘reflex,’ of the solitude of writing and the solidarity of the collective voice” meet and coalesce, while always maintaining their difference.⁸⁹ And, as oraliture, the event of reading the Bible can actually resemble listening to and/or performing music.⁹⁰ In each, we encounter narrative, cultural context, a particular history, and a distinct structure or *rhythm*, characterized by distinguishing formal features that make *this* text the Bible and not some other work of literature and make *this* tune Reggae and not some other musical genre. Poet and Hebrew Bible translator Henri Meschonnic saw rhythm (in discourse) as occupying the gap between the written and the oral, disrupting their dichotomy. Rhythm, he reasons,

allows for an anthropological definition of orality: it replaces the binary dichotomy of writing versus orality as is seen in Occidental dualism, which is an opposition between logical and prelogical, rational and irrational, civilized and archaic, with a distinction between writing, speech, and orality...From there one has to recognize and characterize a multiplicity of the modes of orality, which have nothing to do with their being recorded in writing.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid., 114.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 147. See note 81.

⁹⁰ See Julie Ann Huntington, *Transcultural Rhythms: An Exploration of Rhythm, Music and the Drum in a Selection of Francophone Novels from West Africa and the Caribbean* (Dissertation. Vanderbilt University, 2005), 198. Huntington asserts “in view of questions of identity, the experience of rhythm and music in the novel, which we may also refer to as the reading experience, imitates that of a rhythmic or musical listening experience. In this respect, rather than effectuating a mode of performing a static or preexisting identity construct, rhythmic and musical phenomena effectively activate an ongoing process of identification, one that operates inside and outside the space of the text.”

⁹¹ Henri Meschonnic, *Politique du rythme, politique du sujet* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1995), 249. For Meschonnic, rhythm is a semantic principle. He did not begin from the individual word, but from speech as a collective, as ensemble, as assemblage. Poetry, then, was a trans-subjective process (of transformation) rather than a particular (literary) form. Also see Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme, anthropologie historique du langage* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1982).

The Rastafari, archipelagic architects of reggae, represent a Caribbean mode of orality who relate to the Bible rhythmically as oraliture and as open canon. Their biblical interpretation, “citing up,” is invigorated by a resistance to Western continental thought (including the conventions, canons, customs, and codes of Babylon) and a profound reverence for and resonance with the both literal and symbolic rhythms of life.⁹² Rhythm, for the Rasta, is expressed in, and an expression of, the intimate interconnection and interdependence between Jah, I-an-I, and all of creation embodied in the(ir) reasoning of the biblical “text.”⁹³ In this way, Rastafari biblical hermeneutics necessitates an apprehension of orality as musicality. As is the case in *oraliture*, for the Rastafari, orality erupts in a melody of meaning amidst the persistent—and at times perilous—rhythms and resonances of livity, literature, and language.⁹⁴ Through their creative self-expression in

⁹² Murrell and Williams, 328. Murrell and Williams explain, “Interpretation, to a large extent is left to the individual, and the Bible is understood as ‘a history and a prophecy’ rather than ‘a religious text.’ Essentially, Rastas operate a canon within the biblical canon: ‘the Bible contains the Word of God, but Scripture shows that half of this has not been written save in your hearts.’ The Scripture is like an open canon, in which Rastas’ new insights are as inspired as the written text...Rastafarians use the Bible to address their specific historical, economic, political, and social situation while seeking ways to express and interpret the epoch-making rise of [King Haile Selassie of Ethiopia] as a salvific event for black people. Rastas move freely between the figurative and literal senses of the Bible and search for texts that they believe speak to specific contemporary events and issues. They ‘see clear parallels between ancient biblical and modern times’ and place both past and current events ‘within the biblical context’.” Also see Joseph Owens, *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica* (Kingston: Sangster’s book Stores, 1976), 31-34.

⁹³ Also see Anthony B. Pinn, Stephen C. Finely and Torin Alexander, eds. *African American Religious Cultures I* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 346.

⁹⁴ Livity is Rasta speak for “wholeness, well-being, and joy,” it signifies the Rastafarian lifestyle, which includes practices, beliefs, and traditions, and is also a moniker used to represent the entirety of the Rasta community. As Imani Tafari-Ama highlights (citing Boboshanti C. A. Newland), for the Bobo shanti, this includes a strict adherence to certain Levitical laws and gender norms. One that I personally encountered which has been met with considerable criticism is “the ancient Judaic principle governing the

(a musical medium that is but one manifestation of their) biblical interpretation and/as the aesthetic expression of “the imposition of lived rhythms,” the Rastafari interpret and so incorporate (through resonance and resistance) a “reality,” or text as it were, that previously appeared to restrain them, offering an-other way, a route and re-mem-bering other-wise.⁹⁵

The Bible is relational:

Not only for the ways it appeals to the human spirit, affect, and emotion as people relate so deeply and so personally to the text, but for its own internal and external textual entanglements as well as the themes of its narratives, epistles, apocalyptic manifestos, its poetry and its prose. It is both inter- and intratextual, and always already in ways far beyond our grasp. The writers and readers of the Bible were and are always doing so in relationship to a knowable *and* an unknowable catalogue of texts and/as bodies. From Genesis to Micah, Matthew to Revelation, the Bible is in relation and it is about relation: the relationship of God to creation, creation to chaos, chaos to cosmos, celestial bodies to the earth, earth to creatures, creatures one to another, people in relation to the divine in relation to other people. The Bible depicts the relationships of good and evil, wrong and right, dark and light, truth and lies, loyalty and betrayal, vengeance and forgiveness, in ways that disrupt their distinct dichotomization. For, as much as these concepts are

separation of man from woman (or, more accurately, woman from the rest of the congregation) at the time of their menstrual flow. The Bobo shanti have evolved a twenty-one day observance of separation, a tripling of the custom noted in the Bible’...Bobo shanti princesses and empresses in the age range between puberty and menopause are required to remain ‘in house’ during the separation period, along with young children and other ‘polluted’” (Tafari-Ama, “Rastawoman as Rebel,” 92). See also Adrian McFarlane, “The Epistemological Significance of ‘I-an-I’,” *Chanting Down Babylon*, 117.

⁹⁵ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 108-109. Also see notes 584 and 637.

discretely delineated in the Bible, they are quite often blurred, betraying intimate connection with their presumed antipode; their subterranean convergence. The Bible expresses infinitely and means multiply because it is always already in rhizomatic relation opening new opportunities for its interpretation.

The Bible is rhizome:

Rooted in (diverse) Relation rather than (dominant) Root, the Bible is rhizome because it is alliance and assemblage.⁹⁶ An intertextual amalgam ever extending outward and opening up to infinite intertexts, the Bible is always already defined as much by the space in-between the written as it is by what has been recorded; these gaps are the lacunae of interpretation.⁹⁷ The Root colonizes, it invades, envelopes, and enforces acquiescence in order to occupy bodies as territory. While the Bible has been deployed for the purposes of colonization, it need not be interpreted toward that end; it can always be re-membered other-wise. The rhizome, which “connects any point to any other

⁹⁶ The term translated by Brian Massumi *assemblage*—*agencement* in French—was initially introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and, as the term infers, signifies an assembling. At its most basic level, an assemblage is “a collection of things, a combination of items” (Puar, 57). It is, however, their explication with reference to flows and the frustration of divisions that is of particular import to my thesis. In their chapter entitled, “Rhizome,” they expand, “There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders” (Deleuze and Guattari, 23). Therefore, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “all we know are assemblages” (Deleuze and Guattari, 22). This chapter is also but one space in which the philosophers theorize *event*. For more on assemblage see Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Affect, Movement, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Jasbir Puar, “I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess: Becoming Intersectional in Assemblage Theory,” *philoSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49-66; and Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

⁹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25. Of course, as Stuart Hall cautions us, “we should be careful of infinitely extending” and even of romanticizing diaspora, this hybridity and mixing has come at a cost, for migration has quite often been forced and entirely unplanned (Hall, “Creolization, Diaspora and Hybridity,” 193).

point...not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature,” provides the means through which to think meaning making in the middle (milieu), as an interpenetrative interpretive event which occurs in-between bodies or nodes and allows for interminable growth.⁹⁸

The rhizome, too, is a root but never the Root, for it is defined by diverse Relation rather than totalitarian Rule. A rhizome, Glissant observes, is “a network spreading...with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently.”⁹⁹

As the existence of biblical studies (not to mention the multiplicity of biblical translations and ecclesial denominations) evinces, there has never been nor will there ever be one, single, authorized meaning, method, or modality of interpretation. While some of the Bible’s myriad authors, redactors, and interpreters across time and cultures have sought to resolve the issue of origin, we cannot absolutely access its provenance; there simply is no single Root (identity or interpretation).¹⁰⁰ The Bible is a cross-cultural composite that “originated” in multiple places through multifaceted means. It is a rhizome, appropriated and repurposed as Western European Root (Literature). Therefore, our approach to this aggregate intertext and its interpretation should reflect our recognition of this process and prioritize the multiplicity and diversity of its rhizomatic, or archipelagic, force. An assemblage such as this necessitates rhizomatic thinking, an archipelagic (always already oral) epistemology that motions us toward meaning making

⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

⁹⁹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11. Though Christian history is rife with exegetical endeavors, to identify one cohesive theological thread or Christological theme permeating this peculiar volume (which spans at least two and a half millennia) reeks of (Root) myopia, narcissism, subjective bias and flagrant disregard for cultural context.

¹⁰⁰ The tree of Jesse found in Isaiah 11:1 is a primary representation of the effort to establish origin, filiation, and, therefore, authority, which was then picked up by the writer of Matthew and functioned as root text to the salvific family tree, which legitimized Jesus as Messiah. (See Matthew 1.)

and biblical interpretation in radically diverse polyvalency, polyvocality, and polyrhythms. When re-member this way, the Bible confronts and compels us beyond Root into Relation. It challenges and invites us to engage the manifold peoples and cultures of the world in authenticity, curiosity, and (self)awareness, and to be transformed in the process. And this dissertation is an instantiation of and invitation to engage a hermeneutic that enables and empower us to interpret the Bible as such.

Bibliorality: An (Oraliturhythmic) Archipelological Hermeneutic

Accompanied by Édouard Glissant and inspired by the Rastafari, in the pages that follow, I engage Africana and Afro-Caribbean philosophy, enlisting queer, affect and assemblage theories as supplements (according to their resonances), in order to analyze and intentionally decenter Western European (epistemic) convention. Responding to the needs of our contemporary global condition, our affective ambience, I imagine yet another (than Root) way to interpret the Bible; a rhizomatic (poetics of) Relation route other-wise.¹⁰¹ I read the Bible, with the Rastafari, as an oralitrary open canon, which I read with rhythm (both looking for rhythm(s) in the text and reading the text rhythmically) through an archipelagic epistemology, an *archipelological* hermeneutic, which I call *bibliorality*;¹⁰² re-membering the Bible as (ambient affective) assemblage.

¹⁰¹ While my own employment of these homonyms is independent of and differs from Elizabeth DeLoughrey, her work in *Routes and Roots* is provocative and relevant. See Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

¹⁰² The term *bibliorality* (like *archipelological*) is a neologism I developed, which I further elucidate and explore below. It also bears noting that I re-member the Bible not as a representative of the Rastafari movement, a representation of a ubiquitous or even a common Rastafarian interpretation, nor as a reading characteristic of a particular

And I write so as to honor its archipelagic onto-epistemology and our own. We operate within a cross-cultural or creolized assemblage that has been designated “Earth.”

Therefore, as I see it, in order to read and/or write with any relevance to or respect for the diversity of our world and that of the Bible, we must immerse ourselves in and actively engage what Glissant deemed the *chaos-monde*, the *tout-monde*, the all-world of relation, the ordered chaos of the totality of the world and always in ways which engage and affect our very being, thinking, reading, speaking and writing.

In this dissertation, I enlist archipelogics as biblical hermeneutic, which I deem *bibliorality* and advance as a heuristic for interpretation. Inspired by Glissantian *oraliture* and Creolité, the word bibliorality combines the Greek word for book, *biblion*, and orality. *Biblion* is the primary Western European (Greek and English) referent for the literary and in the so-called “proper” this noun inevitably became the signifier for *the* principle sacred text of Judeo-Christianity (i.e., the Western world), it is also holy writ for the Rastafari.¹⁰³ The term *orality* did not surface until the 17th century. A derivation of the Latin cognate for mouth, *orality* bears a wide semantic range that stems from what is spoken by mouth. Through the fusion of these concepts, I seek to represent a hermeneutic and a heuristic, a way of (conceiving) reading the Bible so as to foreground the always already live-action (and an oraliturhythmic) enterprise that is reading and interpreting, or

Rastafarian community, but as a re-presentation, a re-membering, of Samson, which I present in Chapter 5.

¹⁰³ Murrell and Williams, “The Black Biblical Hermeneutics of the Rastafari,” 327. For the Twelve Tribes of Israel, “the Bible is everything.” Appealing to Frank van Dijk’s research, Murrell and Williams present the spectrum of Rastafarian interpretive approaches, from strict fundamentalism to a more liberal hermeneutic. “There is...no unified Rastafarian hermeneutic” (327). See Frank Jan van Dink, “The Twelve Tribes of Israel: Rasta and the Middle Class,” *New West Indian Guide* 62, 1-2 (1998): 3. Also see Monique Bedasse, “Rasta Evolution: The Theology of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.” *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 5 (May 2010): 960-973.

re-membering, the Bible. I employ bibliorality to represent the coalescing of these two concepts in poetic Relation, expression and interpretation, but at times slide into using this term in the substantive as a synonym for oraliture, or that which is oraliturhythmic.¹⁰⁴

Rhythm in many ways represents the affective force, which moves (between) bodies. It is the waters moving between the islands (bodies of land) in the Caribbean Sea, the music that moves human bodies in dance, the exchange of textual bodies in the interpretative intercourse that is any and all dialogue. Rhythm, as affect, is defined by and created in and by the space in between bodies. (It is a connecting space, as energy, life, and livity flows from body to body.) Affect is achieved through the relationship of *rhythms and pauses* rather than in reference to concepts or objects—where the sense of absence, hesitation, holding back or even halting, creates the affective experience, and particularly affective resonance.¹⁰⁵ It is, then, in the fissures, the space between the bodies, as concepts, beats, memories, identities, islands, that connection, rhythm, and

¹⁰⁴ Oraliturhythm is a neologism I created to represent the interrelation of oraliture and rhythm, as well as the archipelagic modalities that embody and express this poetic Relation. I would also, eventually, like to employ the term *liborality*, another neologism I created in order to not only signifies similarly but connotes and intentionally infers its aural homophone, *liberality*. By merging *orality* with the Latin word that signifies *book* and *freedom* simultaneously, *liber*, I emphasize the fact that freedom inheres in the sort of interpretation I advocate and enact in this dissertation; re-membering the Bible in ways that are aware of but unfettered by the strictures of proper method, form, or interpretive analytics, which have historically defined/bound biblical interpretation.

¹⁰⁵ Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 122. In her anthology on Deleuze, Claire Colebrook describes the affect of fear in this way, employing the poetry of Emily Dickinson to illustrate her claim. Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 22. See Rebecca Coleman, “Affect,” in *Gender: Sources, Perspectives, and Methodologies*. Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks, ed. Renée C. Hoogland (Michigan: Macmillan Reference USA, 2016), 21; idem, “Be(come) Yourself Only Better’: Self-Transformation and the Materialisation of Images,” in *Deleuze and the Body*, eds. Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 144-164. Also see Coleman, *Transfiguring Images: Screens, Affect, Futures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

affect as a poetics of Relation emerge(s). Meaning is created in the in-between. The crack, then, is what we must occupy, what we must engage and affect, and by which we are engaged and affected.

This dissertation is, then, such an event. It is itself a rhizome of Relational poetics, an assemblage characterized by the very archipelagic thinking, which, Glissant contends, characterizes Caribbean discourse as a global phenomenon. As a poetic endeavor, then, it is intentionally and explicitly a project of opacity rather than transparency. I identify themes and threads but repeatedly resist the urge to (entirely or obsessively) explicate concepts and connections so as to make meaning or intent abundantly or absolutely clear; not only is that an impossibility, but eliminating uncertainty or “room for error” impedes the opportunity for interpretation other-wise and occludes the illimitable possibilities of poetics as an archipelagic epistemological aesthetic.¹⁰⁶ It is in direct defiance of Western European epistemological authoritarian impulses that determine the doctorate and dissertation as rooted in an origin (a particular field, idea, or body of knowledge) and directed by a linear logic toward a definitive telos. Instead of Root, I privilege opacity and pursue an-other *route* entirely: Relation. Therefore, rather than reading this (as a) work through continental episteme, where the introduction clearly articulates an unambiguous thesis and concisely adumbrates the organization of each of the subsequent chapters which, in building upon one another, will drive the reader to a decisive denouement in its conclusion, I invite you into the other-wise and to read in Relation. I ask you to approach this dissertation through the bibliorality of an archipelological

¹⁰⁶ Poetic force, Glissant understands to be “radiant.” Poetics “replac[es] the absorbing concept of unity; it is the opacity of the diverse animating the imagined transparency of Relation. The imaginary does not bear with it the coercive requirements of idea. It prefigures reality, without determining it a priori” (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 192).

hermeneutic, which might enable you to understand the dissertation itself as Rhizome rather than Root and empower you in(to) Relation.

As rhizome, then, the introduction is a node of entry on an already thriving rhizome, each chapter is another node in process, and the conclusion is no conclusion at all, but another burgeoning bud. In honor of the rhythms established between these rhizomatic bodies (without organs), I consider the sections within the chapter-nodes to be movements, evincing the rhythms between textual, conceptual, and real live bodies. Alternatively, one might imagine the dissertation itself to be an archipelago, where each chapter is an island and the process of reading is a journey by boat from one island to the next. Much as the Caribbean, where each island is simultaneously a country¹⁰⁷—with its own distinctive culture, flavor, dialects, identities and complexities—*and* a collective, so too each chapter should be engaged as independent yet radically interconnected or in*ter*dependent.¹⁰⁸ Glissant points out that unlike the European continent, where countries are insular (because insulated by the Mediterranean Sea), the Caribbean archipelago is open, aqueous, diverse, and unequivocally relational; a “broken chain of islands,” that is also, in the words of Michael Dash, “particularly vulnerable to [the] domination and control” of colonial forces and continental thought’s bifurcated ontologies.¹⁰⁹ Before I proceed to outline the chapters, or nodes, of the dissertation, a note

¹⁰⁷ While the notion of discrete and delineated “countries” is itself a Western European construct, employed for the purposes of colonizing and delimiting territories. I utilize the term nonetheless, acknowledging its freighted signification and highlighting the ways in which its semantic range has been stretched and subverted by non-Western peoples.

¹⁰⁸ Which, as the prefix and abbreviation denote, implies three—that is, always more than a dyad—and land, though not as territory to be possessed (root), but as landscape to be occupied for the thriving and development of life in relation (identity).

¹⁰⁹ J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1998), 23-6. Dash is specifically

on disrupting this domination (from within the academy) through anti-colonial and decolonizing non-Western epistemologies.

Upsetting continental proclivities and exhibiting archipelagic sensibilities, Jacques Derrida famously asserted that meaning is not contained in the signifier (or thing) itself, but in its relationship, its networks, to (its) various others.¹¹⁰ This aphorism, which has become a hallmark of poststructuralism, in many ways encapsulates the paradigm that imbues Glissantian poetics of Relation with rhizomatic force, rather than rooting itself in Western European (continental) philosophy.¹¹¹ The West's extensive and

referencing the way in which the Caribbean, or “other America,” was constructed by the Western gaze (through literature) according to binary categorization (specifically through the tropes of wildness and the noble savage) so as to “render it less threatening and traumatic” (26). The effects of this project upon the Caribbean, Dash permits, were the impetus for the work of Glissant, and other Caribbean writers, in his proposal of “a Caribbean-based modernism that is profoundly connected with resistance and a suspicion of any transcendent systems of centralization or totalization” (16). I understand Samson to represent the collision of these tropes and the frustration of this binary, which is Créolité or Creolization.

¹¹⁰ Derrida, *Glas*, 144-5. As has been argued by the Bible and Culture Collective and so many since, if meaning does not exist in the signifier itself, but in its relationship (networks) to its various others and if *différance* is the very relationship of text and/to meaning, then, *différance* is (a synonym/cypher for) interpretation. For the very act of interpretation is unmistakably (intertextual) interpenetration. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida submits, “A signifier is from the very beginning the possibility of its own repetition, of its own image or resemblance. It is the condition of its ideality, what identifies a signifier, and makes it function as such, relating it to a signified which, for the same reasons, could never be a ‘unique and singular reality.’ From the moment that the sign appears, that is to say from the very beginning, there is no chance of encountering anywhere the purity of ‘reality,’ ‘unicity,’ ‘singularity.’” If there is ever any “before the sign,” there is always already meaning before the sign. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 91.

¹¹¹ In *Of Grammatology*, in fact, it as if Derrida is foreshadowing Glissant's project, as he offers, “In a different way: the necessary decentering cannot be a philosophic or scientific act as such, since it is a question of dislocating, through access to another system linking speech and writing, the founding categories of language and the grammar of the *epistémè*. The natural tendency of theory—of what unites philosophy and science in the *epistémè*—will push rather toward filling in the breach than toward forcing the closure. It was normal

exhaustive effort to attain and maintain an aura of originality through its reliance upon othering, policing of boundaries, and retrospective determination of provenance, exposes Western European episteme as implicitly derivative. It appears that Nietzsche may have been the first continental philosopher to expose this inimical attribute and its apparatus.¹¹² Following the German existentialist, what Bhabha and Spivak avowed of culture and race and Foucault and Butler argued of sexuality and gender—the establishing of Western European (masculinist, heteronormative) hierarchical binary logic as originary and, therefore, normative—is always a retrospective project, contingent upon the ubiquitously enforced establishment of *its various others*. The meaning and value of the West and, therefore, Western European epistemology, then, is attributive, instituted only through its disqualification of other forms of knowing-being; as Hamid Dabashi argues in *Can Non-Europeans Think?*

Dabashi considers himself, along with Walter Dignolo and Aditya Nigam, “part of a generation of postcolonial thinkers who grew up compelled to learn the language and culture of [their] colonial interlocutors.”¹¹³ The definitive distinction Dabashi exposes and challenges in his monograph is the luxury and privilege of these colonial thinkers to shirk reciprocation, to entirely evade engagement with (non-Western European) intellects such as himself; he reflects, “They had become provincial in their assumptions of

that the breakthrough was more secure and more penetrating on the side of literature and poetic writing: normal also that it, like Nietzsche, at first destroyed and caused to vacillate the transcendental authority and dominant category of the *epistémè*: being.”

¹¹² See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, First Essay, Sections 13-17 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1887). Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 92.

¹¹³ Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015), Loc. 625.

universality. We had become universal under the colonial duress that had sought to provincialize us.”¹¹⁴ Elucidating the problem and its resolution, Dabashi writes,

Why should Europeans not be able to read, even when we write in the language they understand? They cannot read because they (as ‘Europeans,’ caught in the snare of an exhausted but self-nostalgic metaphor) are assimilating what they read back into that snare and into what they already know—and are thus incapable of projecting it forward into something they may not know and yet might be able to learn... For them “Philosophy” is a mental gymnastics performed with the received particulars of European philosophy in its postmodern or poststructuralist registers—exciting and productive to the degree that they can be. But unless and until those defining moments are structurally linked, thematically moved and conceptually compromised, and thus epistemically violated, they will have very little or nothing to say about the world that is unfolding in front of us.¹¹⁵

In his Forward to *Can Non-Europeans Think?* entitled “Yes, We Can,” Walter Mignolo responds to and explicates the interrogative that drives Dabashi’s project, which exposes the epistemic racism “hidden beneath the naturalization of certain ways of thinking and producing knowledge that are given the name Eurocentrism;” that is, the “world seen, described and mapped from European perspectives and interests.”¹¹⁶

Mignolo proceeds,

Racism consists in devaluing the humanity of certain people by dismissing it or playing it down (even when not intentional) at the same time as highlighting and playing up European philosophy, assuming it to be universal. It may be global, because it piggybacks on imperial expansion, but it is certainly not universal. Racism is a classification, and

¹¹⁴ Ibid. The book is itself an expansion on his earlier essay of the same title, which incited an extensive embroilment between himself Slavoj Žižek and Walter Mignolo. Originally published by Al Jazeera on January 15, 2013. The essay provoked a heated invective from Žižek due to Dabashi’s critique of Žižek’s appeal to the “many important and active philosopher’s today,” which were solely Western European.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/01/2013114142638797542.html>

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Loc. 646.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Loc. 100, 84.

classification is an epistemic maneuver rather than an ontological entity that carries with it the essence of the classification.¹¹⁷

What Mignolo, Dabashi, Singaporean intellect Kishore Mahbubani, and Nigerian philosopher Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze highlight in their work as the epistemic racism of Eurocentrism within the academy, I represent in this dissertation through the neologism *empiracism*.¹¹⁸ A term I created to denote the facilitation of the Western European empire's global colonizing mission qua racism. The collusion of these words, as the apparatus themselves, infers the distinctive brand of empiricism that has invigorated their inimical alliance and reified systemic racism within and beyond academia. In other words, on account of the Eurocentric epistemic autocracy in which we all *live and move and have our being*; it is ambient, for empiracism pervades all levels of the human experience, resulting in the invalidation and often the absolute annihilation of any and all ways of knowing, sensing, thinking, experiencing, and interpreting the world which are other-wise, that is not the Same as the West's, since there is only room for one dominant voice (and Root) in this epistemological framework.¹¹⁹ The most recent of Mignolo's

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Loc. 100.

¹¹⁸ See Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press) 2012; Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think? Understanding the Divide Between East and West* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 1998); Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 103-140; and Tsenay Serequeberhan, "The Critique of Eurocentrism and the Practice of African Philosophy," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, 141-161.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Acts 17:28. Ironically, such a paradigm prevents life rather than supporting and enhancing it. The traditional Western European epistemological paradigm has prevented the flourishing of African religious traditions, for instance, through colonization. Therefore, such religious traditions, which "take into consideration not only one's intellect, but also one's emotions, the mental and the visceral;" which "is not a Sunday-go-to-church religion, but one that participates with all of nature—both the living and the

decolonizing interventions, *Learning to Unlearn* is, in fact, exemplary in this way, as he proposes an epistemological shift from “studying the other” to “the thinking other,” and I would add thinking *with* the other (i.e., alongside, in solidarity *with* and being transformed *by*), which emphasizes the other as epistemological subject and ontological equal.

Mignolo urges his reader to understand the machinations of epistemic racism. He observes,

[Epistemic racism] is built on classifications and hierarchies carried out by actors installed in institutions they have themselves created or inherited the right to classify and rank. That is, actors and institutions that legitimize the zero-point of epistemology as the word of God (Christian theology) or the word of Reason (secular philosophy and science). He who does the classifying classifies himself among the classified (the enunciated), but he is the only one who classifies among all those being classified. This is a powerful trick that, like any magic trick, the audience does not see as such but as something that just happens.¹²⁰

Expounding on this process, Mignolo inadvertently alludes to the grandest and most-influential root myth in Western European history (as History): the creation story in Genesis; bringing us back to “the beginning.”¹²¹ In Genesis 2:20-23, Adam is granted the divine authority and privilege of naming all created beings, including his partner, Eve.

dead;” theological, religious, anthropological, and cultural epistemologies, which are comprehensive rather than merely cognitive, integrating how one “lives, moves, and has one’s being.” See Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 27.
¹²⁰ Dabashi, Loc. 163. I would be remiss if I did not at least mention Jasbir Puar’s most recent intervention on othering as assemblage, wherein she exposes the Israeli state’s reliance upon “liberal frameworks of disability to obscure and enable the mass debilitation of Palestinian bodies.” Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

¹²¹ Of course, I am not only implying an inadvertent allusion to Genesis 1 but to the intertextual resonances of Mignolo’s statement with John 1:1. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” What has been translated “word” in practically every English translation since King James is the Greek word *logos*, which also signifies “reason.”

Adam is *himself among the classified (the enunciated), but he is the only one who classifies among all those being classified*. Adam, a created being like all the rest, in this one passage—ostensibly the West’s most powerful and pernicious “magic trick”—is deified, singular and authoritative, in His power to name; and the categories and classifications He chose haunt us as History to this very day.¹²² This is the story of the institution and installation of a totalitarian Root regime, but not the whole story; for any story and especially History is never whole.

Though the Western European canon is “closed,” its exclusivity (and facticity) is undeniably illusive, rendering it an intensely saturated place and an entirely open bloom space. History, Derrida reminds us, is “*the history of departures from totality*—a history of gaps that move.”¹²³ Glissant, for his part, conceptualizes histories as the refusal of History as the totality of despotic absolutism. History is folktale masquerading as fact (through its mythologizing). It is definitionally story, a particular representation of events that have been interpreted, organized, and narrativized in an effort to attribute meaning and significance through their association. History is never happenstance as its strategic

¹²² It is, then, “in Him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28). I capitalize “his” to signify Adam’s implied authority in this determination at creation in Genesis, which is in line with Western European episteme, gender norms, and traditional Judeo-Christian interpretations of Adam, associatively attributing his autocratic agency to all (White) men. See note 33.

¹²³ Sean Gaston, *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* (New York: Continuum, 2006), viii. In *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* (2006), Sean Gaston is preoccupied with Derrida’s musings on the gap. The gap is precisely where, Gaston argues, one must start when reading and mourning (the loss of) Derrida, impossible thought it may be. (Gaston’s work is a collection of journal entries wherein “start with the gaps” is repeated over and over again [3, 4, 7, etc.]) The gaps, which infinitely move and may never be bridged nor filled. In this work, Gaston reflects upon Derrida’s endless musings on the gaps that plague and define history, gaps that incessantly haunt his rumination(s). For Derrida, Gaston writes, “history (is) *the history of departures from totality*—a history of gaps that move.” The writer asserts, “in tracing the *écarts* in Derrida’s work, there is also an improbable ‘history’ of gaps, of digressions on the gap.”

(linear and bifurcated) structuring orders our lives, according to the West's domination, production, and promulgation of History as a genre, a *Weltanschauung*, and an episteme. Therefore, as "history" has shown us, the more the organization of those micro- and macro-level events reflects a coherent, linear, modern metanarrative and configuration of and as "reality," the more likely the interpretation will be validated (because packaged) as History and reproduced, promoted, and policed as such. For just as an answer is a conclusion and a (fore)closure, as much a split or separation as a suture, History (like the Bible and rhythm) is as defined by what is omitted as what is included. History is interpretation and interpretation is *différance* and *différance* is the perpetual reminder that even the closure is a crack and the crack is what we must occupy.¹²⁴

This dissertation is my occupation, my "epistemic violation" vis-à-vis remembering other-wise. It is an affront to philosophy, History and the Bible as discourses defined and foreclosed through the hegemony of Western European episteme. It conceives of each as haunted by holes, cracks and fissures, the lacuna where meaning might be created through and as Wisdom other-wise, and it is in this bloom space, in the

¹²⁴ The unending process of gaping and filling, cracking and sealing, only to rupture again—this always already either-and-or-and-more-and-more-and-still-more—is (textual) interpretation. For the very act of interpretation is unmistakably (intertextual) interpenetration. (See note 110.) Textual interpretation is a constant shuffling, a *shuttling between the two* and always more—and particularly when your so-called primary text is the Bible. Biblical interpretation is a ceaseless act of choosing what incessantly evades certainty and a question, which refuses an absolute answer, and that which may never, can never, be resolved once and for all. (Which is why the field has evaded extinction—and if/when it is rendered obsolete, it will not be for lack of interpretive possibilities!) And while the question exposes a space, a gap, each answer is itself merely a *crack* (at it), an attempt. A crevice, a fissure, a fracture, a gap...a choice. After all, Yvonne Sherwood reminds us one of the most popular definitions of deconstruction—for which Derrida is best-known—bespeaks the immediacy and universality of choice: "every structure is constituted by necessary exclusions." See Yvonne Sherwood, "Derrida and the Bible," <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=332> (Accessed October 15, 2016).

in-between, that my first “chapter” and each subsequent node materializes. Following the groundwork laid above, Chapter One is an appeal to Glissant’s analysis, critique, and revision of History à la the root myths of the West as I approach creation as presented in Genesis. From the rhizomatic wisdom of Glissant’s relational poetics, I am led to a deeper engagement of his theorizing of Root and Relation identity as I intertextually engage (and exegete) the Tree of Life in Genesis 1-3 and/as Wisdom in Proverbs. Looking to the Africana biblical hermeneutics of Dorothy Akoto-Abutiata as she evokes the Baobab Tree and interprets the Ewe Proverbs in light of the biblical Proverbs, I proffer a rhizomatic reading of the Tree of Life (as Baobab Tree) in light of an archipelagic Africana rooted (in distinction from Root) rhizomatic poetics of Relation. Ultimately Wisdom as the (Baobab) Tree of Life is the very creative vessel of archipelagic epistemologies that enables and enacts creative (communal, self) empowerment, expression, and assertion.

Chapter Two is presented in two nodes, which are not bifurcated but entirely intertwined and rhizomatically related. In the first movement, I provide an exposition and expansion on Glissant’s representation of the relationship of the oral and the literary as and in oraliture. Beginning with a brief overview of oraliture as creolized verbal carnality (of the archipelagos), I attend to the relationship of orality and literature within Africana, as oralitrary and archipelagic onto-epistemology, highlighting the inherent struggle of Africana intellects, and particularly Afro-Caribbean (Creolité) thinkers, who operate within the *mélange* Dabashi elucidates while actively resisting Western European epistemological hegemony and honoring oralitrary modalities in and through their scholarship. I briefly treat continental representations of the relationship, efforts toward

decolonizing epistemology, and the critical contributions of biblical scholars examining and exegeting the Bible in light of (its) orality. I also take on the work of both Walter Ong and Eric Havelock as agents of the empiricism of the Western Root, whose influence upon the discursive field of orality within and beyond biblical and classical studies necessitates critical consideration (and counter measures). In the second node, I explore the creolized oral and oralitrary performative modes of carnival, folktale, and even (the re-membering of) carnivalesque-grotesque within the Caribbean as particular embodiments of an archipelagic epistemology, which enacts creative communal expression and constitutes (cultural) identity (returning to the genre in my re-membering of Samson in Chapter Four). I then turn to theories on rhythm and affect in order to push the conversation toward what Glissant envisioned and himself embodied; what I consider the archipelogics of bibliorality. Because oraliture is inherently rhythmic and inarguably affective, I pursue the relationship of rhythm and affect not only in writing but in reading and, therefore, re-membering the Bible.¹²⁵ It is, in fact, in the rhythms enfleshed and exceeding the boundaries of textual and corporeal bodies that I find resonance, in the in-between-ness of rhythm and Relation that is (reading) the Bible.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Concerned primarily with the influence of this rhizomatic relation upon (biblical) interpretation, I more intentionally identify my own Glissant inflected hermeneutic as bibliorality.

¹²⁶ Rather than rehearsing the traditional dichotomous mapping of affect, I will simply appeal to resonance as a common thread in its multiple (and multiplying) discourses. (Resonance, then, as it appears across discourses and disciplines, in art [music], science [physics], and philosophy—and in each of its affective trajectories.) It is, in fact, within the very concept of resonance—not only as signifier or trace of the vibrations, or forces, always in motion in our world but as representative of the ways in which we (do not) “vibe” with certain (textual/non-textual, corporeal/incorporeal) bodies. The Rastafari are notorious for their resonance with and (re)appropriation or re-membering of the Hebrew Bible. The movement however, holds even greater relevance when considered in conversation with other anti-colonial and poststructuralist discourses. The movement and

My ruminations on rhythm, affect, Africana, creative expression, archipelogics, and oraliturrhythmic biblical interpretation in the Caribbean lead me to none other than the Rastafari, the inimitable oraliturrhythmic relational reasoners of the Hebrew Bible whose very existence is defined over and against the modern capitalistic imperialism of the West (as Root) or “Babylon.” In Chapter Three, then, I expound upon three of their distinguishing attributes, each being integral to my interpretation, or re-membering, of Samson in Chapter Four. The three central threads, woven in interrelation throughout the chapter are the irie vibes of Rastafarian rhythms, the Rastafari biblical hermeneutic of “citing up,” and *I-an-I*—as a philosophy and identity of/in Relation; as a place and process. The Rastafari are a concrete example of a distinctively Caribbean, and I will argue creolized, socio-political movement that developed from, in the words of Jalani Niaah, “a congregation of poor scattered and marooned Africans to a fraternity of teachers, preachers, and scholars, engaged in transnational liberation/Redemption work.”¹²⁷ Ever emerging other-wise in the interpenetration of lived experience, communal storytelling, black African identity, respect for creation, and religious fervor, the Rastafari claim their divinity in defiance of Western Root identity.¹²⁸

their (biblical) hermeneutics are, then, the focus of the fourth chapter, as I consider the interpretive performance and possibilities of this Afro-diasporic community—whose rhythmic reading and reasoning of the Bible becomes an intersectional assemblage of Bible, orality, Africana, and affect. I interpret the Rastafari movement to be a contemporary embodiment of an evental, revolutionary politics—at the intersection of interpretation and interdependence.

¹²⁷ Jalani Niaah, “Poverty (Lab) Oratory: Rastafari and Cultural Studies,” *Cultural Studies*, 17, no. 6 (Nov 2003), 823-842.

¹²⁸ Though one might argue that the Rastafari claim Africa as root, my argument hinges upon the nuance Glissant offers in his re-membering of the rhizome, which retains “the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root” (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11).

Once I identify the ways in which the Rastafari do and do not instantiate the sort of archipelagic or creolized synthesis for which Glissant is advocating and/in his understandings of carnival and folktale in the Caribbean, I engage a specific biblical folktale enacting the in-between of Glissant's approach and these three Rastafarian concepts. Chapter Four, then, is a oraliturrhythmic, Relational and rhizomatic reading of the Samson folktale found in the book of Judges, chapters 13-16. I reinterpret, or re-member, the biblical tale through a reconfiguration of the intertexts engaged as ambi(val)ent affective assemblage. In other words, instead of the interlocutors traditionally tapped for such a project, I configure a queer(ly) creolized counter-canon, which centers Africana, Afro-Caribbean philosophy, and archipelological thinkers and texts and extends to include Western European voices and perspectives but only as supplement.¹²⁹ I decenter (by subverting) the Western Root (tree) structure of intelligibility, by privileging the archipelagos (or archipelogos) and reading with rhythm rhizomatically. Disordering traditional, authorized methodologies and orchestrating a dialogue between (intentionally) isolated domains of recognition and/in biblical interpretation—I bring them into Relation.¹³⁰ The conversation I stage is, then, *a forced*

¹²⁹ I am re-membering (by disrupting) the traditional (Western European) perspective within the Academy that continental epistemologies, philosophy, and intellectuals and their work be centered and the voices and perspectives of non-Western “others” is engaged only secondarily as *supplement* (and compliment) to the Western Root. I am also borrowing the notion of a queer counter-canon from Elizabeth Freeman, who offers erotohistoriography as such. See Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). See note 272.

¹³⁰ My use of force (*forcer*) is a direct inference to Édouard Glissant's notion of *forced poetics*, which he distinguishes from natural poetics in *Caribbean Discourse*. Glissant writes, “A consistent concern underlying my project has been to resist the naïve optimism that glamorizes ‘natural’ poetics, structured or woven in a uniform or self-assured context. The world is ravaged, entire peoples die of famine or are exterminated, unprecedented techniques are perfected to ensure domination or death. These are part of

poetics of Relation in that it instantiates an epistemology and hermeneutic other-wise: the archipelogics of bibliorality.

In order to adequately, and, therefore, archipelogically, inaugurate such an engagement, I return to carnivalesque-grotesque and creole folktale, enlisting Edith Davidson's Bakhtinian analysis of Judges as carnivalesque-grotesque folktale, I bring Édouard Glissant's disruptive creolized (Caribbean) discourse and/as his *poetics of Relation* to bear upon the oralitrary (textual) body of Samson, and likewise engage germane discourses (specifically queer and affect theory) within the philosophical corpus of poststructuralist theory, but ultimately foreground the literal, corporeal bodies of the Rastafari movement.¹³¹ Working from the resonances between Glissant's *poetics of Relation* vis-à-vis creolization and poststructuralist critiques of identity, language, and history, I consider the relevance of Samson for the Rastafari—a diverse and discrete community of political agents for whom the Bible and Samson have particular cultural and political valence—and incorporate their respect for rhythm in their oraliturhythmic biblical interpretation and theopoetic philosophical paradigm (I-an-I) into my own affective archipelogical rhythmic re-membering of the folktale (and Bible) through bibliorality.

an everyday reality that a cross-cultural poetics must take into consideration... [A cross-cultural poetics] is built on the voices of all peoples, what I have called their inscrutability, which is nothing, after all, but an expression of their freedom. The transparency encouraged by misleading imitativeness must be shed at once" (256). Also see Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 63, No. 4, Édouard Glissant Issue (Autumn, 1989), 637-648.

¹³¹ The work of both Glissant and Bakhtin reflects a vested interest in the political implications of carnivalesque-grotesque and folktale within their respective cultural contexts.

In my exegesis, I read with rhythm both figuratively and literally, affectively and exegetically, sympathetically and structurally, by focalizing upon the Hebrew signifier for rhythm, the word *pa'am*, I utilize this word as a guidepost, a sort of refrain, which drives the text and offers the reader c(l)ues as to how to read and where to place emphasis and find meaning within this oralitrary text; contributing to the(ir) overall experience of the story. The Rastafari open us into this interpretive oraliturhythmic engagement and as we re-member the Bible with them. Reading the Bible with rhythm as an open canon, we come to encounter interpretation as always already other-wise: an unreckonable event with truly remarkable revolutionary Relational resonances between the bodies within and beyond the text. Re-membering Samson through the forced poetic Relation of Glissant's creolization, Africana, orality, affect, and the archipelogics of bibliorality alongside the Rastafari holds profound possibilities not only for the way in which we understand Samson and the Rastafari, but for the implications such a re-membering might have upon our understanding of biblical interpretation and the Bible, as (an ambi[val]ent, affective, and archipelogical) assemblage, as well as the future of biblical studies writ large.¹³²

In the final node of my dissertation, the "Epilogue: Toward Epistemological Routes Other-Wise," I offer an invitation more than a conclusion. It is a brief reflection intended to open up and extend our interpretive encounter. As I shared, prior to doctoral

¹³² Glissant's concession is instructive for the event of biblical interpretation as the encounter of ancient oral cultures and contemporary literate communities, contemporary oral cultures and ancient scribal communities: "We all share the same experience in the confrontation of written and oral cultures. The task becomes impossible in the abrupt nature of this confrontation. We are coming to grips with the impossible" (*Caribbean Discourse*, 152). Not only, however, must we come to grips with the reality of this impossibility, we must interpret this *impossibility* in terms of plausibility and as our only *possibility* for the responsible (response-able) interpretation of texts. Prioritizing a characteristically "oral" Caribbean culture such as the Rastafari, then, holds us accountable to this task as to our shared world.

studies, though I actively sought out non-Western, non-male cis-gendered voices, my intellectual lineage was grievously patriarchal and white-washed. Doggedly drawing from non-Western cultural canons, in this project I allow Western European voices to enter and engage with great caution and intention, and only then in supporting, supplementary roles. I do so in an effort to read and re-member the Bible in an entirely *other* way, which inflects my interpretation of Genesis and Proverbs and, finally, materializes in my re-membering Samson other-wise. Due to my particular intellectual interests and an insatiable penchant for counter-discursive (subterranean) currents, I privilege archipelagic anti-colonial or decolonizing philosophers, poets, and activists.¹³³ Édouard Glissant inarguably functions as a sort of archipelagic axis for my assemblaging of this particular ambi[val]ent, affective, poetic-archipelological assemblage, but is himself only one of the diverse and sundry assemblage-nodes emerging from the onto-epistemological Relational rhizome that is our world becoming archipelago.

While critical theory, in its broadest sense, locates its intellectual Root in Western European “continental” philosophy, thereby neglecting (actively denying and/or forgetting?) any identification with its diasporic Non-Western (especially African) contemporaries and precursors. Myriad Non-European scholars such as Paget Henry,

¹³³ While postcolonial studies exploded within the academy and has contributed to the more recent shift toward and emphasis upon decolonizing theoretical discourses, decoloniality itself predates postcoloniality and is characterized by its radical commitment to non-Eurocentrism—a project that is integral to the field that is broadly understood to be Africana studies. My own work might be considered what R.S. Wafula and Joseph Dugan have deemed “knowledge activism” because it “disrupts the colonial system of knowledge production that sanitizes narrative according to a universalized set of values and standards, set by a few, to benefit some and costing many whose voices are never heard.” My work contributes to the effort of knowledge activists to challenge and change “the way knowledge is cultivated, produced, and distributed.” See W.F. Wafula and Joseph F. Dugan, *Knowledge Activism Beyond Theory: A Worldwide Call to Action* (Alameda, CA: Borderless Press, 2016).

Reiland Rabaka, Sylvia Wynter, Walter Mignolo, and most recently Hamid Dabashi have addressed this negligence, (intentional) omission, and/or amnesia and are seeking redress and restitution through their scholarship. Combating Eurocentrism toward its eradication, both within and outside the walls of academia, however, requires the consciencism and the active participation of Western European (i.e., white) scholars and must occur at every level and in every field, and particularly in biblical studies. Therefore, if there is any hope of disrupting and upending the empiricism that pervades and powers the Academy, it will be through the strategic and repeated defiance of the hierarchical binary logic of Western European epistemologies and choosing an intellectual lineage otherwise (and an Other-Wisdom). That is, re-membering our individual and collective history through creolization rather than filiation. What this entails is scholars, such as myself, intentionally identifying non-Western voices, privileging Afro-Caribbean philosophical interventions, studying Africana as a critical theoretical discourse and, thereby, tracing an alternative lineage. This dissertation is a heuristic, in which I endeavor to do just that. My theoretical intervention regarding biblical reception and interpretation, and/in the re-membering of Samson, occupies multifarious cracks within biblical studies, thereby instantiating an alternative approach—a re-membering other-wise—to the compartmentalization and cordoning off which currently dominates the Academy and the (academic) study of the Bible.

While my project is rife with folds, I ultimately argue three things. First, for a movement toward the archipelological hermeneutic of *bibliorality*, which emphasizes the

necessary interdependence of oral and literary interpretation of (biblical) texts.¹³⁴ Second, for a re-membering of various texts, including texts in Genesis, Proverbs, and the story of Samson in Judges that evinces biblical interpretation, and the Bible itself, as affective assemblage: a bloom space instantiating the perpetual emergence and convergence of innumerable interpretative events, which expose and reveal the interminable indeterminacy of meaning and the disruption of any and all efforts to authorize (via claims to/of) “origin.”¹³⁵ And, finally, that the very way in which we become together within this new interpretive bloom space is through archipelagic thinking, as rhizome in distinction from Root.¹³⁶ Actively and intentionally engaging, even integrating, various theoretical, philosophical, political, theological and religious discourses, simultaneously and infinitely converging and diverging, coalescing and divorcing, culminating and diffusing, concretizing and dissolving, commencing and desisting, in and as a poetics of Relation.¹³⁷ Like Glissant, I do not see poetic expression or interpretation as either an oral

¹³⁴ A notion undeniably inspired by Glissant’s *oraliture* and exhortation that the poet reunite writing and speech.

¹³⁵ Here the creolized errantry of *Caribbean Discourse* as disruption of modern European philosophical discourse and the privileging of English and empirical-colonial epistemologies converge with the poststructuralist deconstruction of language and *Poetics of Relation* as such creolized errantry (available to all without discretion), that is the poetic [as always already political] frustration of hierarchy and binary epistemologies.

¹³⁶ See Glissant, *Traité du Tout-Monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); Chris Bongie, “Reading the Archipelago,” *New West Indian Guide* Vol. 73, No. 1 & 2 (1999): 89-95; Richard L. W. Clarke, “Root Versus Rhizome: An ‘Epistemological Break’ in Francophone Caribbean Thought,” *Journal of West Indian Literature*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (April 2000): 12-41.

¹³⁷ The rhizomatic thought, which animates a poetics of Relation (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11), can alternatively be considered archipelagic thinking and “play.” According to Derrida, play is “the disruption of presence” and it is precisely in play that he detects the capacity to deconstruct the “necessary” correspondence between signifier and signified, exposing their arbitrary relations and infinite deferral or *différance*. In the introduction to *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Toril Moi explains that for Derrida, “there is no final element, no fundamental unit, no transcendental signified that is meaningful in itself

or a literary endeavor, for the one always already infuses the other with life, meaning, rhythm, and affect. To overlook or ignore this idea is to risk misinterpretation or worse reliving the past without remembering or re-membering history. My dissertation, then, does not merely appeal to and enact the *différance* of interpretation but its creolization, for it is a playful and pointed (intertextual) conversation wherein each party is transformed with/in and by the encounter (even and especially the very scriptural space in which this rendezvous is set); we are all re-membered other-wise.

Caveat emptor. If the interpreter is interested in accessing “original meaning,” “authorial intent,” and/or an “authorized interpretation” (Rastafari or otherwise), this is not the reading for you. On the other hand, it may be the perfect addition to your Summer reading list.¹³⁸ I do not presume to map biblical scholarship on Genesis, Proverbs, or Judges nor do I methodically exegete any of the passages I treat.¹³⁹ And though I will

and thus escapes the ceaseless interplay of linguistic deferral and difference. The free play of signifiers will never yield a final, unified meaning that in turn might ground and explain all the others” (Moi, 9). It is the outright rejection of “the metaphysical essentialism underlying patriarchal ideology, which hails God, the Father or the phallus as its transcendental signified.” See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xvii; also see Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London: Routledge, 1985).

¹³⁸ In the vein of Dabashi and Mignolo, I am in every way possible, and on purpose, proffering an entirely *illegitimate* interpretation of Genesis, Proverbs, and to an even greater degree Judges 13-16. That is, if judged according to the methods and standards of Western European episteme and the Academy, for I am intentionally setting out to challenge the perimeters and parameters of Western literary and epistemic canons.

Illegitimacy, in this way, is not absolute. It is indicative, probative, exposing, resistant, and displacing; and an illegitimacy that determines (the limits of) its own legitimacy.

¹³⁹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 129. I understand biblical folktale to operate similar to Glissant’s conceptualization of Creole folktale as “the symbolic strategy through which” the interpretive community composing this narrative (ostensibly the Yehudim) were able (like Martinicans, Jamaicans, Trinidadians, Barbadians, etc.) to develop “a forced poetics (which we will also call a counter-poetics) in which were manifested both an inability to liberate oneself totally and an insistence on attempting to do so” (128). In my project, I relate to the way in which Glissant figured his own analysis of Creole folktale, in relation

offer conjectures regarding the tropes and themes within the Bible and their correlation to a variety of intertexts, I am not looking to analyze, evaluate, or reconstruct the original oral contexts in which the Bible or Samson's folktale were created. This dissertation is a work of interpretation as creolization. It is a project of exploration, elucidation, decolonization, mediation, disruption, excavation, revelation, imagination, transgression, and poetic (cor)Relation. (Because we are all the archipelagic oraliturhythmations.) This dissertation, like Samson shackled and bound between the columns of the Philistine temple at Dagon, occupies the in-between in order to betray the (hierarchical) binary buttresses and collapse the columns of contradistinction upon which the edifice of Western European Academia (and its unconscionable empiricism) was erected and established.

to landscape, when he writes, "I do not propose to examine the Creole folktale as a signifying system, nor to isolate its component structures...My intention is more modest in its attempt to link it to its context." Samson's tale functions as exemplary of the way in which biblical folktale, like Creole folktale, is striking due to (in the words of Glissant) the "emphatic emptiness of the landscape," which is "reduced to symbolic space and becomes a pattern of succeeding spaces through which one journeys; the forest and its darkness, the savannah and its daylight, the hill and its fatigue...it is important to realize that if the place is indicated, *it is never described*" (129, 130). Glissant attributes this omission in Creole folktale to the fact that the landscape "is not meant to be inhabited. [It is a] place you pass through, it is not yet a country...the land is never possessed" (130). In many ways, Glissant's point here resonates with Israel's endless longing and search for the promised land it can never possess. (Even to this day.)

Chapter One
The Rhizome and/as the Tree of Life:
The Relational Poetics of Wisdom and Decolonizing Biblical Studies

Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can grasp it.

—Akan and Ewe Proverb

[Wisdom] is tree of life to those who grasp her and to whoever takes hold of her.

—Proverbs 3:18

The root is not important. Movement is.

—Édouard Glissant

In the introduction to her monograph *Proverbs and The African Tree of Life*, Dorothy Akoto-Abutiante identifies the Baobab tree as an African manifestation of the biblical Tree of Life.¹ Like Akoto-Abutiante, I understand such a correlation to hold great significance for Africana and specifically Afro-Caribbean diasporic interpretations of the Bible, for Africana and biblical studies. I also consider such intertextual, intercultural, multilingual (symbolic) relationships to have profound implications for critical theory and to provide the alluvial soil from which we might imagine new hermeneutical horizons and intertextual exegetical entanglements. Both the Baobab and the Tree of Life are metaphors for Wisdom as well as its diffusion. Wisdom is comprehensive and beyond comprehension, accessible and intelligible, yet elusive in its opacity. Wisdom as the (Baobab) Tree of Life puts Wisdom in the hands of the people; within our collective

¹ While I am working with Akoto-Abutiante, Willem Saayman edited an important volume entitled *Embracing the Baobab Tree: The African Proverb in the 21st Century*, which, like Akoto-Abutiante's monograph, appeals to the Baobab tree as cypher for African proverbs. See Willem Saayman, ed. *Embracing the Baobab Tree of life: The African Proverb in the 21st Century* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1997). It is also worth noting that Cedric E. Cooper published a monograph on the resonance of the Baobab tree and the will to survive and thrive in the Caribbean (specifically Tobago). For his fascinating and faith-filled exposé see Cedric E. Cooper, *Echoes of the Baobab Tree: Some Things should not Be Kept Secret* (Missouri City, TX: Publishing International, 2014).

grasp yet beyond sole proprietorship. For though Wisdom is a Tree, it is not Rooted in one region but in Relation and, therefore, beyond the constraints of demarcation or territorialization. In this chapter, I proffer an archipelological biblical hermeneutics of bibliorality through and as a (theo)poetics of Relation. Reading the Bible and its interpretation as archipelological assemblage and evoking the relational poetics of Édouard Glissant to disrupt and resist traditional Western European episteme and its derivative exegetical analysis, I interpret Wisdom in Genesis and Proverbs² bibliorally as the rhizomatic Tree of Life according to a poetics of Relation rather than Eurocentric Root identity. For, as Glissant ruminates,

The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it...[T]he rhizome [is] an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind...the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.³

Relation identity is to the archipelago and rhizome as Root identity is to territory and the Western European root-tree system.⁴ As rhizome, then, I reason that Wisdom as (Baobab) Tree of Life cannot be colonized, but may be grasped in and as the totality of the world in Relation (*tout-monde*).⁵

In the first movement, I consider Wisdom's representation as Tree of Life in Genesis, in distinction from Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad/Evil (*etz ha'da'at*

² Specifically, Genesis 2-3 and Proverbs 1, 3, 4, 8, and 9.

³ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11.

⁴ Again, it is for this reason that I employ archipelago and rhizome, archipelogics and rhizomatic epistemologies interchangeably.

⁵ Not by an individual or as territory because Wisdom is assemblage and a collective process and practice, Wisdom implicitly and explicitly requires the participation of the *tout-monde*, all-world.

to v'rah), and then look to Doctor Akoto-Abutiate, who, in her reading of the African and biblical Proverbs as Tree of Life, utilizes this shared sacred symbol in order to proffer an important African and Afro-Caribbean diasporic interpretive intervention and a corrective to Western European hermeneutical hegemony. I briefly attend to the relationship of the Baobab Tree and the Tree of Life (represented in Professor Akoto-Abutiate's monograph), because I am primarily interested in the way the tree serves as a trope for Wisdom within African proverbs. Then, in the second movement, I engage Glissant's oeuvre (*Caribbean Discourse* and *Poetics of Relation*) as exegetical intertext, en route to a radical re-interpretation of Proverbs on the Tree of Life, challenging and expanding (contemporary) understandings and interpretations of Wisdom as Tree of Life. In the final movement, then, I read Wisdom as the Tree of Life according to a rhizomatic poetics of Relation not only in *distinction from* but in *resistance to* a Root Identity (represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad/Evil). Ultimately, I contend that while Wisdom, as Tree of Life, cannot be possessed or mastered (by an individual), Wisdom may be grasped in totality as the *tout-monde* of Relation; a proverbial proposition made manifest in the archipelological interpretive assemblage I enact in this essay through bibliorality and one which is always already embodied in those bodies intentionally entangled in Wisdom's Relation. Wisdom as represented in Genesis and Proverbs functions as a rhizomatic route toward and vehicle of archipelagic epistemologies, of archipelogics.

The Baobab Tree of Life

While Akoto-Abutiate does not engage Glissantian poetics (or Genesis) in her interpretation of the Tree of Life and Proverbs, the Ghanaian biblical scholar's exegetical

interventions are unequivocally a subversion of the West's hermeneutic hegemony.⁶ Akoto-Abutiate is an important interlocutor in this way and her appeal to the African Baobab Tree as a materialization of the biblical Tree of Life is fecund. She is not interpreting biblical or African Proverbs *on* the Tree of Life, but engages the Tree as a common cultural motif and central metaphor for her *hermeneutic of grafting*; an interpretive lens whereby she reads the Proverbs and the Ewe peoples intertextually in a way that exemplifies an African oralitrary epistemology. Intertext within biblical studies has traditionally referred to print-saved literature. Akoto-Abutiate, as an archipelagic thinker, thinks across-mediums, where intertextuality encompasses (oralitrary) print and lived cultural experience. While the texts illuminate one another, Akoto-Abutiate explicitly privileges the African context, epistemologies, traditions and folk proverbs as Root; approaching the biblical Proverbs as midrash on the Ghanaian wisdom sayings in what she describes as a “blending” which results in “a new hybridized fruit.”⁷ The biblical axioms, collectively conceptualized as Tree of Life, are thereby *grafted* onto the African Ewe proverbs, “translat[ing] meaning from the world of the Bible to the world of the African Ghanaian Ewe peoples.”⁸ More than translation,

⁶ Dorothy Akoto-Abutiate, *Proverbs and the African Tree of Life: Grafting Biblical Proverbs onto the Ghanaian Ewe Folk Proverbs* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). Akoto-Abutiate is but one African biblical scholar that draws upon the power of symbol in the necessary work of intercultural and intertextual biblical exegesis, specifically tropes that are common in the Bible and the diverse cultures of the African peoples. Thomas G. Christensen, for his part, has also written extensively on the appeal to these shared symbols and specifically the Tree of Life. See Christensen, *An African Tree of Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990).

⁷ Akoto-Abutiate, 13, 132.

⁸ Akoto-Abutiate, 18-20. Unlike Delanyo Adadevoh on the one hand and Noah K. Dzobo on the other, Akoto-Abutiate considers her work to be “strik[ing] a balance between both human development and spirituality by deploying pre-existing images in the life of the African peoples and blending them with the spiritual message of the Bible (Proverbs) to

however, Akoto-Abutiate's hermeneutic appeals to Africa as Root to facilitate greater understanding of and engagement with the Bible in Africa and diasporic African communities, serving to empower African peoples as they interpret the Proverbs in an act (and acts) of resistance, reparation, and re-membering.⁹

Though the Ewe ascribe to the widely held African belief in a mythical Tree of Life from which all beings originated, Akoto-Abutiate is primarily interested in the trope's ethical function.¹⁰ More than a metaphor, the scholar understands the Tree as a "unique moral system" expressed in Ewe proverbs.¹¹ Proverbs are a hallmark of oral argumentation and epistemology. While the Tree of Life represents a particular (Ewe) ethical code, like Wisdom, it is available to all.¹² In this way, the Baobab tree is, like the coconut tree in the islands, designated "the tree of life" for its material sustenance and physical appearance, and functions as a numinous symbol and real life representation of Wisdom, whose material existence strengthens its metaphorical force.¹³ Citing a

promote a better understanding and acceptance of the latter." See Adadevoh, *Approaches to Christianization in Africa: Hermeneutics in Ewe Christianity* (ILF Publishers, 2009); and Dzobo, "The Beginning of Life on God's Farm," paper presented at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (May 1995).

⁹ Akoto-Abutiate, 13.

¹⁰ Akoto-Abutiate, 176. Since her aim is more pedagogical and even evangelical, Akoto-Abutiate does not address the African Tree of Life as oral antecedent to the biblical Tree of Life, which I believe could be an interesting and productive project. The scholar writes, "Teaching, learning, and understanding are more effective when they start from the known or the familiar system of knowledge to the unknown. Thus, it is important to make use of what is already a normal part of the 'receiving' culture in any attempt to present the Bible to that second culture." Akoto-Abutiate's goal is pedagogical and, even, evangelical, wanting to make "teaching and learning the message of the Bible" more accessible to African peoples (5).

¹¹ Akoto-Abutiate, 176. Akoto-Abutiate considers the Ewe and biblical Proverbs to resonate implicitly with one another.

¹² See Proverbs 8:4.

¹³ The Akan and Ewe Proverbs are but one example of an oralitrary culture that recognizes a literal "Tree of Life" that signifies in these ways.

meditation on the Baobab tree, Akoto-Abutiate writes, its branches “stretch upward into the sky and when they lose their leaves and become bare, they look like roots;” which is why the Baobab is designated “the upside down tree.”¹⁴ The diameter of the trunk, 7-11 meters,¹⁵ makes it physically impossible to embrace it in its entirety; inspiring the Ewe proverb, “Wisdom is like the Baobab tree; no individual can grasp it.”¹⁶

Proverbs are, in the words of A.T. Dalfavo, “expressions of culture,” traditionally understood to support conventional values and order, and Akoto-Abutiate’s explication of the Ewe Proverbs attests to this inclination. The biblical proverbs related to the Tree of Life, however, do not necessarily follow this criterion.¹⁷ Due to Akoto Abutiate’s interest in the translation and application of Proverbs *as* Tree of Life, she bypasses all biblical and Ewe references to the Tree of Life, including Genesis.¹⁸ Oddly, there are only two references to Wisdom and no deeper excavation of either source on Wisdom *as* Tree of Life; an unfortunate oversight when both the Ewe and Hebrew Proverbs demonstrate the exigency of seeking after Wisdom as Baobab and Tree of Life respectively. Akoto-Abutiate’s reflections are remarkable, however, for their enactment of a hermeneutic that

¹⁴ Akoto-Abutiate 3. See John Kirszenberg, ‘Meditation and Spiritual Growth: The Tree of Knowledge’ in <http://meditationandspiritualgrowth.com>. Powered by WordPress 2010 & 2011, 13. Accessed January 9, 2017.

¹⁵ 23-36 feet.

¹⁶ Noah K. Dzobo, *African Proverb, A Guide to Conduct: The Moral Value of Ewe Proverbs* (Cape Coast, Ghana: University of Cape Coast, 1973), 45. Alternatively translated, “embrace it with both arms.”

¹⁷ The former is a widely-held assumption, not only in the Hebrew and Ewe proverbs, Akoto-Abutiate’s reflections on the “Order of Relationships” (59ff.) is exemplary in this regard. As A.T. Dalfavo observes, “[proverbs] are expressions of culture and thus they reflect reality because they stem from it and lead back to it. They are the very features that help to identify a specific culture...a genuine first-order philosophy...safeguarding African philosophy from undue exogenous influence” (43). See A.T. Dalfavo “African Proverbs and African Philosophy” in *Embracing the Baobab Tree*, 197.

¹⁸ The scholar almost entirely focuses her exegetical attention on Proverbs 25:1-29:27.

in many ways reflects the *donner-avec* of Glissantian poetics, where meaning is made in the event of each novel encounter,¹⁹ and her hermeneutic unambiguously challenges Western European, or Eurocentric, episteme, yet, in a way, its reliance upon Root identity replicates continental thought.²⁰ Africana interventions such as Akoto-Abutiatié's are vital and necessary for rethinking the relationship of the Bible, Africa and Africana, for their explicit resistance to the empiricism of Eurocentric biblical interpretations, to the de-centering of "Western modes of thought and expression"²¹ and, therefore, the decolonizing of biblical studies. Working from Akoto-Abutiatié's integral association of Wisdom and the Baobab Tree, I believe deeper engagement with Glissant's rhizomatic poetics of Relation *in relation* to Wisdom, the Baobab Tree and/as the Tree of Life will only strengthen the force of this decolonizing effort.

Relation, as rhizome, *maintains the idea of rootedness* even as it *challenges that of a totalitarian root*.²² In an effort to read rhizomatically, I honor Akoto-Abutiatié's arborescent hermeneutic of grafting²³ and seek to build upon this project by proposing a

¹⁹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 142. That is, *gives-on-and-with*.

²⁰ Akoto-Abutiatié, 23. The blending of the proverbs through grafting must always be "rooted in its African cultural contextual soil."

²¹ Akoto-Abutiatié, 22. Akoto-Abutiatié displaces Western methodologies in favor of what she considers a "dialogical approach." As a metaphor, however, grafting goes deeper than the dialogical. It involves the interpenetration of creolization in a way that a dialogical approach simply cannot. I believe, therefore, that rhizome is better fit to represent this entanglement and the interdependence it entails.

²² Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11.

²³ Akoto-Abutiatié might consider my intertextual intervention and interpretive approach to be an offshoot, grafted into her own. What Akoto-Abutiatié began, I am expanding, probing the depths of imbrication that she may not have seen. Creolization, then, is archipelological and as such enables us to think the rhizome in a way that grafting does not (and cannot because limited to the Root-tree).

creolized, Afro-Caribbean, or archipelagic, intertextual biblical interpretation.²⁴ Like the islands of the Caribbean archipelago, texts as bodies touch and coalesce, their respective rhythms and flavors blend and blur, mottle and obscure, contaminating purity and creating something entirely other-wise: an assemblage ever in process, ever anew. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, two of Glissant's most generative interlocutors, describe a book in this way.²⁵ *A book is a multiplicity*, an assemblage, a rhizome, it is an archipelago of infinite intertextual islands, and the Bible is exemplary in this way; which is the value of interpretations that evince its diverse multiplicity.²⁶ And why Glissant's appropriation, that is creolization, of the rhizome is so relevant not only as we read Wisdom, but as we interpret the Bible, and particularly the Tree of Life in Genesis.

Wisdom, Rhizome, and the Tree of Life

As a transcultural symbol of prosperity, creation, creativity, and Wisdom, ancient oral traditions entailing the Tree of Life extend from Africa to Asia, but its earliest textual representations are ostensibly found in Genesis and Proverbs.²⁷

²⁴ Being that Glissant advocates for a rootedness without totalitarian Root, to appoint one "text" as "trunk" of an intertextual tree and graft another in is highly problematic (*hello, Romans 11:17!*).

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4. Deleuze and Guattari reflect, "In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata, and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produces phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind and as such, is unattributable." See note 14 in the Introduction.

²⁶ As scholars of the text, therefore, it is incumbent upon us not to seek one, universal, absolute, univocal, authorized interpretation, attributed or attributable to a particular (original) author, but to instead strategically multiply meaning. (Interpreters of the biblical text already often unwittingly demonstrate this truism.)

²⁷ It is also referenced in the apocryphal books of 2 Esdras and 4 Maccabees, as well as the book of Revelation. In this essay, however, I will limit my biblical analysis to its

In Genesis, the Tree of Life emerges in the second creation account, in the middle of Eden.²⁸ There is debate over whether the Tree of Life is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad (as Evil),²⁹ and while I previously considered them one,³⁰ in reading Genesis 2-3 alongside Glissant, I now distinguish them. The former represents the rhizomatic Relation identity of Wisdom, which facilitates the diverse archipelagic entanglements of Life and the latter restricts us to the (unique, totalitarian) Root that divides and determines according to the hierarchical dualisms of continental thought (insular, auto-referential, static).³¹ I maintain that such an understanding is evinced in the events that unfold after Eve and Adam ingest the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good/Bad.³² The

representations in the TANAKH, specifically in Genesis and Proverbs. Of course, Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah have their roots in these texts as well. I will not, however, be including these discourses in the current analysis. I will briefly consider the *etz chayim* of Genesis before delving more deeply into the Proverbs.

²⁸ Genesis 2:9-3:24.

²⁹ See Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 2-3* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007).

³⁰ See Rawson, “A Socioeconomic Hermeneutic of Chayim: The Theo-Ethical Implications of Reading (with) Wisdom” in *Common Goods: Economy, Ecology and Political Theology*, eds. Melanie Johnson DeBaufre, Catherine Keller, and Elias Ortega Aponte (New York: Fordham, 2015), 407-426.

³¹ There is, in fact, philological evidence of this very discrepancy in verse 6, which refers to the woman’s apprehension of the tree, just before they eat. The statement conveys the woman’s desire to eat of the tree for, among other things, its capacity to “make one wise.” The Hebrew verb used here (*shkl*) is not the same root as the word for “wisdom” (used in Proverbs 3 in reference to the Tree of Life), which is *chokmah*. Therefore, the text indicates that Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad/Evil is not explicitly associated with Wisdom, but instead signifies knowledge as that which discriminates between good and bad (as evil). Therefore, these two distinct concepts are represented by two distinctive trees in Eden.

³² See Genesis 3:6. The importance and relevance of differentiating these trees cannot be overstated, not only for the (re)interpretation of the (Hebrew) Bible but in order to expose Western cultural and epistemological imperialism and its claim upon biblical hermeneutics. Exegetically attending to the symbolic difference of these Trees opens up an alternative anti-colonial analytical lens through which we might re-interpret or re-

repercussions are dire, the characters become self-conscious³³ and Yahweh Elohim exacts punishment via the binary gender system.³⁴

As Ken Stone has convincingly argued in his Butlerian reading of Eden, rather than a blissful benediction and consecration of a union worth celebrating, the consequences of “The Fall” read more like a divine indictment and sanctioning of “forced submission to the constraints of the heterosexual contract...[and] opposite sex desire.”³⁵ For, Stone reminds us, the presence of such legislation reveals not its primacy (as cause) but its necessity (as effect) and, therefore, the existence of deviations from the very norm

member this so-called *Root* (origin) myth and Wisdom within the Hebrew Bible. Eve and Adam chose the continental Tree of Knowledge as Good versus Bad, rather than eating freely from the Tree of Life, that is, the rhizomatic Relation of Wisdom.

³³ Though it is unclear whether they see their difference as dual at this point in the narrative, their cognizance of bodily difference is substantiated by their assemblage of and adornment with “loincloths” (3:7). Accordingly, I interpret them to be self-conscious in distinction from becoming self-aware.

³⁴ See Genesis system 3:16-20; Also see Ken Stone, “The Garden of Eden and the Heterosexual Contract” in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, eds. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 48-70. Previously published in *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*, eds. Robert E. Goss and Mona West (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 57-70. Also see Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 23-45. As Stone submits, the bifurcated structure of these strictures reflects not only communal instability regarding gender scripts, but also the deity’s own insecurity. One might argue that such a dimorphic view was apparent as early as verses 22 and 23 of chapter 2, when the *ishah* is created from the side of the *adam*. However, the fact that the nominal *adam*, rather than the male signifier *ish*, is employed up until 3:6, when the *ishah* hands the fruit to her *ish* (husband) suggests otherwise.

³⁵ Stone, *Bodily Citations*, 65. For Stone, while binary sexual difference may be read prior to 2:23 (since “the text’s instabilities allow it to be interpreted”) and the textual inconsistencies here lend themselves to a queer reading of *ha-adam* as androgynous prior to explicit identification as *ish* beside (i.e., over and against) the *isha*. According to Stone, the first human creature is “what Butler might call an ‘inconceivable’ creature” because the original human created by Yahweh “may incorporate both ‘man’ and ‘woman’” and, therefore, be entirely unintelligible as *either* “male” or “female” (63).

it seeks to authorize.³⁶ There is much more than sexual dimorphism at stake in this passage, however. For Stone, the consumption of the fruit is only the means to an end, creating the conditions for Yahweh to institute the gender binary; it is not the Tree but Yahweh's contract that ordains the bifurcation and bespeaks underlying cultural anxieties about Diversity.³⁷ The symbolic significance of the Trees is of little consequence to Stone.³⁸ Yet if merely means to an end, what are we to make of Yahweh Elohim's perplexing prohibition and evocation of expiry, spoken to the *adam* before the one was made two?³⁹ "You may eat freely of every tree in the garden; but the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, you shall not eat, for the day you eat of it, you will die."⁴⁰ And what of the ensuing dialogue between two characters heretofore entirely absent?

Just after his pronouncement, the Creator deems solitude unsatisfactory for the *adam* and fashions the *ishah*,⁴¹ who moments later is conversing with a strange serpent, that inquires, "Did God say you couldn't eat from any of these trees?" "No," she replies, "only the one in the middle. If we *touch* it, we will *die*." The snake assures her they will

³⁶ Stone is, of course, channeling Foucault, Wittig, and Butler. Stone, *Bodily Citations*, 48-70. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978); Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

³⁷ Not to mention any sort of deviance and difference.

³⁸ In fact, in his 2006 essay, he does not even mention the Tree or its infamous "apple."

³⁹ I unequivocally associate the Trees and their fruits by appealing to Nkrumahian consciencism, where he identifies the "cardinal ethical principle of philosophical consciencism" as the treatment of all humans "as an end in [themselves] and not merely as a means" (95).

⁴⁰ Genesis 2:16b-17, my translation.

⁴¹ She is only "woman" at this point, since she is named Eve by Adam after the divine sentence.

not die, but will instead become like Elohim .⁴² (Might this be the Nkrumahan God-complex from which idealism suffers?)⁴³ Intrigued, the woman and man eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good/Evil.⁴⁴ Their eyes are “opened,” they see their bodies, create garments to cover their now “private parts,” and hide from the non-omniscient deity. Once the god ascertains their whereabouts, the two confess, and in Genesis 3:16-20, Yahweh Elohim becomes, like his omnipotent counterpart in Genesis 1-2:4a, the great Dualizer, divine divider of the cosmos.

Beyond Stone’s interpretation of Eden as divine inauguration of the binary gender system, there is a deeper dualism (Root structure) that has been read into in this pericope. I would argue, in distinction from Stone, that the couple’s bifurcated judgment of their gender identity occurs the moment they *touch* the fruit, making the ante-Eve’s summary of God’s embargo prescient, for when they touch the fruit they do *di*. They do not *die*, as

⁴² Genesis 3:1-5. My translation. It also bears noting that the serpent does not say they will be like Yahweh Elohim, but Elohim “knowing good and bad.” In this way, the serpent conjures the deity from the first creation story in Genesis 1-2:4, whose main activity was separating by dividing entities in two.

⁴³ Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 19.

⁴⁴ Ironically, the first time the man speaks in the entire narrative, it is in response to Yahweh Elohim, when he identifies his location and states that he is afraid, naked, and hiding (Genesis 3:9-10). The second time he speaks, he blames the woman for the predicament they are in (Genesis 3:11-12). See Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLI/I (March 1973): 42-7; Phyllis A. Bird, “Images of Women in the Old Testament,” in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. Rosemary Radford Reuther (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 41-88; Phyllis Trible, “Women in the OT,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*, eds. Keith Crim, Lloyd Richard Bailey, Sr., Victor Paul Furnish, Emory Stevens Buck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, d1976), 963-66; Carol Meyers, “The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel,” in *Biblical Archaeologist*, (September 1978): 91-103; Phyllis A. Bird, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Genesis 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, eds. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 329-361; and Judith Ochshorn, *The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).

the serpent stated, but instead come to understand themselves as two diametrically opposed entities; having altogether lost sight of their original union (in one body)?⁴⁵

While this dichotomy is gendered in Genesis 3, the name of the Tree from which they eat speaks to a more universal schema, reflective of Elohim in Genesis 1.⁴⁶ By eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good/Bad, they absorbed judgment (that discriminates in deferential dyads) rather than Life (consciousness),⁴⁷ and this is a sentence unto death.⁴⁸

The Root takes all upon itself and kills everything around it. Their contumacious consumption of that *dichotomous* fruit, results in the ordination of a deep Root-structure of meaning, organizing bodily difference (as originary and) according to antagonistic hierarchical dualisms,⁴⁹ a deference that includes human and non-human bodies alike (where good/evil, male/female, white/black, the West/the Rest, etc.). Though Glissant did not explicate the correlation, *this* is the Root myth of origins, which he claims animates

⁴⁵ As indicated by their body awareness and covering in 3:7. As Stone, and others have conceded, while one might argue that gender dimorphism was apparent as early as verses 22 and 23 of chapter 2—when the *ishah* is created from/at the side of *ha-dam*—like much of the Hebrew Bible, this is not incontrovertible. The fact that the nominal *adam*, rather than the male signifier *ish*, is employed up until the *ishah* hands the fruit to her *ish* (husband) in 3:6, suggests otherwise. (Though Stone makes no mention of this point.)

⁴⁶ See Genesis 1-2:4a.

⁴⁷ I understand life, through Wisdom, to be as awakened awareness, conscientization, and like Nkrumah's conscientism. The dualistic discrimination of the Tree of Knowledge of Good/Bad is *either/or* where *good and bad* might be better represented as *good/bad*, *good vs. bad*, by which I mean, *good always triumphs over bad* (because good is God and bad is evil).

⁴⁸ In *Conscientism*, Kwame Nkrumah identifies conscientism over and against Western European rationalism and idealism, whereby the entire universe is “neatly tucked away in our minds” (19). Conscientism on the other hand honors the value and humanity of all persons, recognizing the importance and “the objectivity of different kinds of being” (90).

⁴⁹ A structure of intelligibility according to dichotomy rather than diversity, which instantiates dualisms that are only secondarily or retrospectively demarcated by divine decree.

and authorizes the West's ideal of Sameness.⁵⁰ It feeds off the Tree of the Knowledge of Good/Bad and seeks by whatever means necessary to starve the world of Wisdom's diverse multiplicity that is the Tree of Life.⁵¹

The institution(alization) of this oppositional ordering system restricts and regulates interpretations, iterations, identities and their expression. Incapable of apprehending any other outside of the dehumanizing duality of its Root structure of meaning. As Glissant contends,

The idea of civilization, bit by bit, helps hold together opposites, whose only former identity existed in their opposition to the Other...The duality of self-perception (one is citizen or foreigner) has repercussions on one's idea of the Other (one is visitor or visited...conquers or is conquered). Thought of the Other cannot escape its own dualism until the time when differences become acknowledged. From that point on thought of the Other 'comprehends' multiplicity, but mechanically and still taking the subtle hierarchies of a generalizing universal as its basis.⁵²

Thought of the Other can only escape dualism through the archipelological awareness of and devotion to difference in terms of diverse multiplicity. The now unconscious, ubiquitous and terminally bifurcated generalizing universal (worldview) to which Glissant is referring is unmistakably the product of Western European (ancient Greek, Roman appropriation of the Mediterranean) epistemological hegemony, which colonized Genesis and absorbed Eden as its primary Root myth. As such, it is unequivocally grounded in what Glissant identifies as *Root*, in distinction from Relation, *identity*. The former is rooted in a static sense of self and/as territory, whereby the Other is (unintelligible as human and, therefore) assimilated, abjected, and/or annihilated; the latter is "produced in the chaotic network of Relation," circulating, extending, emerging

⁵⁰ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 72-73, 97-98.

⁵¹ Cf. Genesis 3:24. Also see Rawson, "Reading (with) Wisdom," 2015.

⁵² Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 14, 17.

in opacity, *giving on-and-with* rather than groping.⁵³ When the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good/Evil are interpreted through a Glissantian Relational poetics, as representing rhizomatic Relation and totalitarian Root respectively, the Wisdom sayings on the Tree of Life in Proverbs may then be grasped (in totality though never absolutely) according to Wisdom's rhizomatic reasoning *and* antipathetic refusal of the monolingual intolerance of the Root.⁵⁴ In this way, Wisdom represents the oralitury other-wise of an archipelogs, *the subterranean convergence*, the rhizome that unremittingly refuses the absolute (epistemological) colonization of (the activity of) creation, the Bible, and (their) interpretation.

Wisdom as Tree of Life & the Rhizomatic Poetics of Relation

It is in multiplicity and Diversity, the correspondence and connection, distancing and divergence of the rhizome, that Glissant proffers his own sort of hermeneutics as a poetics of Relation. While Glissant never identified his work as such (it was unequivocally a *poetics*), one might argue that his oeuvre represents both: elocution that frames interpretation and expression flavored by the landscape and experience of the Caribbean. In brilliant contrast to the Sameness of Western European intellectualism,⁵⁵ Glissant understands the archipelagos to embody an entirely other way. These authorized, “inherited categories must not...be an obstacle to a daring new methodology,” which he advances; an approach that is able to adequately respond to the demands of our global

⁵³ Ibid., 140-4, 190-2.

⁵⁴ A Root whose neurotic obsession with narcissistic bifurcation impedes life and inevitably induces death.

⁵⁵ As well as the Christianizing mission.

climate.⁵⁶ For Glissant the “quarrel with history,” evinces “the urgency of a reevaluation of the conventions of analytical thought.”⁵⁷ And so, it is within the fractured and freighted liminal space of our world becoming archipelago,⁵⁸ amidst the fragments and shards of time represented as events, memories, and (hi)stories in the face of an unforeseen future, that the Martinican poet conceptualizes *creolization*, as the threshold and materialization of such a *daring new methodology*, instantiating the archipelagic (fluid and connective) thinking of a rhizomatic relational poetics.⁵⁹ Herein lies Glissant’s “quarrel with history,” this sacred and supreme symbolic signifying processes can only be subverted through the resistance of the Root and the “reevaluation of the conventions of analytical thought,” followed by strategic reimagination and revisioning (or remembering) through archipelagic epistemologies.⁶⁰

Creolization is the impossibility of racial or cultural “purity,” exposed and superseded by the mixing of the blood and cultures of Indigenous Americans, Africans, and Europeans.⁶¹ More than “the meeting and synthesis of two differences” (Retamar’s

⁵⁶ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 65.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Akoto-Abutiatié’s hermeneutic is but one example of the sort of African diasporic interventions that represent this effort and seek to disrupt Western epistemological hegemony.

⁵⁸ Glissant, *Traité du Tout-Monde*, 194.

⁵⁹ I consider *Poetics of Relation*, like all of Glissant’s work post-1980, to be an expansion on and extension of his theorizing of creolization as/in *Caribbean Discourse*.

⁶⁰ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 65. Akoto-Abutiatié’s hermeneutic is but one example of the sort of African diasporic interventions that represent this effort and seek to disrupt Western epistemological hegemony.

⁶¹ Creolization is a process manifest in the Creole language and its deployment by Martinicans. “The ‘function’ of Creole languages, which must resist the temptation of exclusivity, manifests itself in this process, far removed from the fascines (linked facet, fascination) of the fire of the melting-pot. We are also aware of the mysterious realm of the unexpressed, deep in all we say, in the furthest reaches of what we wish to say, and in the pressure to give weight to our actions” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 250-1). Glissant (re)appropriates the term Creole as creolization, repurposing it as process rather

métizaje), creolization is, for Glissant, “a limitless *métissage*” of inexhaustible diffraction and incalculable effects.⁶² Creolization implicitly but also intentionally resists and revises Eurocentric episteme and, as such, becomes a vehicle for reinterpretation.⁶³ Perpetually pleasuring in paradox, Glissant asserts that creolization is “a form of expression through which we [may] consciously face our ambiguities and fix ourselves firmly in the uncertain possibilities of the word made ours.”⁶⁴ (And, I would add, the *world*.) Glissant attributes the unique conditions within which Creolization has emerged to the presence-absence of several factors that distinguish the Caribbean archipelago, but

than persona, language, or identity (a *how* more than a *what*), and he does so in order to represent a uniquely Martinican counterpoetics with global resonance.

⁶² Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 34. I am here appealing to Glissant’s elaboration on creolization in *Poetics of Relation*. While his ruminations on the concept in *Caribbean Discourse* are ample, they are amplified and all the more lucid (in their brilliant opacity) when brought into conversation with his later musings. Further illuminating his distinction between the two, Glissant proceeds, “Creolization diffracts, whereas certain forms of *métissage* can concentrate one more time. Here it is devoted to what has burst forth from lands that are no longer islands.” According to Glissant, the Creole language functions as the most conspicuous symbol of creolization, for its “genius consists in always being open, that is, perhaps, never becoming fixed except according to systems of variables that we have to imagine as much as define.”

⁶³ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 162-170. In his essay “An Exploded Discourse,” Glissant illustrates the specific ways in which French is manipulated through the creolizing of French phrases. In Martinique, for example, the instruction, “Do not drive too closely” takes a variety of forms, which play on French terms for driving, rolling, and being nearby or close and, thereby, poke fun at the original restriction. This playful refusal to acquiesce and perfectly mimic French is akin to Bhabha’s postcolonial ruminations on mimicry (“not quite, not White”), but is itself not quite mimicry because, according to Glissant, it both intentionally and unintentionally sabotages the mastery of the French Caribbean elite over the Martinican. Glissant also points to carnivalesque as exemplary of this sort of playful subversion.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 168. Glissant is here motioning to the ways in which Creole is strategically deployed in popular protest movements. In this way, Creole is released from its “irresponsibility” and fashioned into “a weapon in its own struggle.” He continues, “All the people together or an elitist group, liberated poetics or defiant anti-poetics, we must force self-expression into existence because it does not have the time to mature through some slow evolution. Perhaps we do not have the time to wait for the precious linguists. When they catch up with us, it could well be to explore the traces of what has already happened.”

the true force of creolization might just be that while it is archipelagic, it is not exclusively Caribbean.⁶⁵ Caribbeanness, he explains, is “a form of disalienated relationship with the other, who in this way becomes our fellow [hu]man.”⁶⁶ Identity in the Caribbean archipelago, unlike the European continent, is not found in the monolithic myths of ancestral origins, the ideal of Sameness, the dignity of individualism and nationalism, or the ownership of private property, but in diaspora, interbeing, Diversity, opacity, alliance, and shock.⁶⁷

Comparing the Caribbean Sea to the Mediterranean, Glissant describes the latter as “an inner sea surrounded by lands, a sea that concentrates...([and, therefore,] imposes

⁶⁵ Ibid., 249-250. He expounds upon each in the following ways, Creole is the presence/absence of “compromised languages, accompanying the survival of vernaculars and the development of major languages,” the presence-absence of “a cultural ‘ancestral’ hinterland he understands to have allowed for “the systemic success of techniques of survival,” the presence-absence of “an extensive physical hinterland” is due to the “success of cultural accretion based on *marronage*,” and, finally, there is the presence/absence of the potential “to create or maintain an autonomous system of production.” “[R]einforced by the colonial need for isolation,” Glissant understands each of these distinct dynamics to have shaped the various strategies of struggle deployed by Caribbean peoples, resulting not so much in the obliteration of nationalism but in an entirely new conceptualizing of a nation, one not contingent upon exclusion.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 250. “The ‘function’ of Creole languages, which must resist the temptation of exclusivity, manifests itself in this process, far removed from the fascines (linked facet, fascination) of the fire of the melting-pot. We are also aware of the mysterious realm of the unexpressed, deep in all we say, in the furthest reaches of what we wish to say, and in the pressure to give weight to our actions.”

⁶⁷ Glissant writes that the “shock of relating...has repercussions on several levels,” since Martinique is a composite culture, it is always vulnerable to the intolerances of other countries *entering into its composition*. Therefore, he contends, “This composition culture is fragile in the extreme, wearing down through contact with a masked colonization.” Martinique is but one country in the West Indies that is postcolonial, yet still very much negotiating its own decolonization. The primary dilemma is whether or not to “just go along with it,” which results in “privileged disquiet;” “the one that comes from having to consume the world without participating in it, without even the least idea of it, without being able to offer it anything other than a vague homily to a generalizing universal” (145). Resistance in Martinique, Glissant continues, is not only in traumatic reaction, but in their relationship to and protection of the Caribbean, Creole, and the ecology.

the thought of the One),” while “the Caribbean is, in contrast, a sea that explodes the scattered lands into an arc. A sea that diffracts.”⁶⁸ In this way, Glissant considers archipelagos an illustration of Relation.⁶⁹ In the perpetual motion of this rhizomatic reality creolization emerges, a dynamic of diversifying diffraction, “adventure of multilingualism and...the incredible explosion of cultures;” the errantry, the chaos, the diasporic interdependence of the *tout-monde*.⁷⁰ The irruption of creolized bodies within space, time, and language, then, is in no way limited to Martinique or the Antilles. For Glissant, creolization is a global phenomenon and a cultural practice and not for the purposes of becoming one with the Other, but to establish “a cross-cultural relationship, in an egalitarian and unprecedented way.”⁷¹ It is process *and* practice; thought of the Other and the other of Thought; acceptance of alterity without alteration, yet entailing

⁶⁸ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 33. The idea of the One is common to Greek, Hebrew, and Latin antiquity and later in the emergence of Islam.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 34. Careful not to confer advantage onto the Caribbean, Glissant highlights the universal quality of archipelagean connectivity. He observes, “the reality of archipelagos in the Caribbean or the Pacific provides a natural illustration of the thought of Relation.”

⁷⁰ Ibid. Glissant considers the main themes of such a poetics, to which he intentionally and repeatedly returns in *Poetics*, to be “the dialectics between the oral and the written, the thought of multilingualism, the balance between the present moment and duration, the questioning of literary genres, the power of the baroque, the nonprojectile imaginary construct.” He then concedes that his own repetition of these thematics evinces that “such a poetics never culminates in some qualitative absolute. For, in reality, he continues, “Relation is not an absolute toward which every work would strive but a totality—even if for us this means disentangling it, something it never required—that through its poetic and practical and unceasing force attempts to be perfected, to be spoken, simply, that is, to be complete” (35).

⁷¹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 249. Glissant weaves into this discussion of the interrelated histories within the Caribbean. He sees “the civilization of cassava, sweet potato, pepper, and tobacco” as pointing to the future of “a cross-cultural process;” which is, he contends, why the Caribbean “struggles to repossess the memory of its fragmented past.” He continues, “This practice of cultural creolization is not part of some vague humanism, which makes it permissible for us to become one with the next person. It establishes a cross-cultural relationship, in an egalitarian and unprecedented way.” Which is also why his might be considered a utopian vision.

action, participation, and transformation; creating world beyond truth as singular and possessive.⁷² Glissant offers an alternative approach to the expression and interpretation of bodies: human, textual, epistemological, civic, and geographical. More than a methodology and beyond *negritude* or *créolité*, Glissant engenders a distinctively Caribbean movement with the capacity to wrap itself around the world, not to dominate nor asphyxiate but in order to relate and re-create global politics through and as poetics, a poetics of Relation.⁷³ At its most rudimentary, a poetics of Relation is the creolized errantry of the poetic-political frustration of and revolt against Eurocentric episteme.⁷⁴

Within a poetics of Relation, Glissant writes, “one who is errant (no longer traveler, discoverer, or conqueror) strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows that [s]he will never accomplish this—and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides.”⁷⁵ Just as we find in the Wisdom of Hebrew and African Proverbs, a poetics of Relation perpetually *strives to know or grasp* that which is

⁷² Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 155. Glissant proffers, “The other of Thought is always set in motion by its confluences as a whole, in which each is changed by and changes the other.”

⁷³ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 169. Glissant defines poetics as “the implicit or explicit manipulation of self-expression.” Akin to *negritude* and *créolité* and even *testimonios*, Glissant understood this self-expression to be cultural, collective and Caribbean, distinctive, however, in its expansive inclusivity.

⁷⁴ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 34. The poetic, in Glissant’s imaginary, is always already political. In *Poetics*, Glissant confirms, “What took place in the Caribbean, which could be summed up in the word *creolization*, approximates the idea of Relation for us as nearly as possible.” Glissant affirms that creolization instantiates a poetics of Relation as the frustration of myths of origin and purity as well as the subversion of hierarchical binaries of empirical-colonial epistemologies (that seek to know so as to name, to understand in order to own), which in its latter form is articulated in/as an errantry accessible to and embodied in the (totality of the) world, the *tout-monde*. Relation revolts against the West’s machinic assemblages which claim Root identity as “legal”/lethal sovereign over bodies through the governance of language, literature, History, global socio-economic and political relations. Also see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.

⁷⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 20.

beyond possession, but *never* in order to possess.⁷⁶ “Wisdom is the Tree of Life to those who *grasp* her and anyone who takes hold of her.”⁷⁷ The stratospheric striving to know *the totality of the world*, the all-world of Relation, is the search for Wisdom as the (Baobab) Tree of Life.⁷⁸ The process (and practice) is, however, not a purpose for there is no telos, no end, no goal, which would imply arrival, finality, and, therefore, death. To have and to hold here is not synonymous with to claim or to own. To grasp and even to gain is not to grope and then retain. And the collateral beauty of our world as *chaos-monde* is threatened by the ignorance of this misinterpretation.

Wisdom, that is the *tout-monde* of Relation, is available in the capacity to acknowledge and honor the necessity of affectibility, the impossibility of omniscience, and the absurdity of absolute origin or authority.⁷⁹ In Glissant’s imagination, a poetics of Relation, like Wisdom as the (Baobab) Tree of Life, “is latent, open, multilingual in

⁷⁶ In distinction from Glissant, implicit in my application of “grasp” is the impossibility of ownership or propriety. “Grasp,” in this way, contains the wisdom of Akan proverb above, signifying a concept akin to Glissant’s *com-prendre*, or “giving-on-and-with” rather than inferring “the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves” (Glissant, 191-192).

⁷⁷ Proverbs 3:18, My translation; HALOT 303; 1751. *Chzq*, hif, 3p, plural. The root signifies to be or grow strong, to have courage in the *qal* and to make firm or strong, gird, repair, or sustain in the *piel*. Here, in the *hiphil* (*chaziqim*), the verb signifies to sieze, grasp, to take and keep hold of. In the preceding verse, Wisdom claims herself as the path to peace and the way to true wealth. (See Rawson 2015.)

⁷⁸ In Glissant’s poetics, there may be echoes of the Pythagorean Monad, the Platonic Khora, as well as the Plotinian One (which he indirectly grants), yet his argument for totality immanently and explicitly frustrates these Eurocentric (Ancient) Mediterranean paradigms. Appealing not only to the history (manifest in the very present absences) of the Caribbean but according to its geography and ecology.

⁷⁹ See Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 141. In his introductory remarks on the disruption of “the old idea of identity as root,” in light of our global situation, he writes, “the violence of poverty and mud but also an unconscious and desperate rage at not ‘grasping’ [*com-prendre*] the chaos of the world. Those who dominate benefit from the chaos; those who are oppressed are exasperated by it.”

intention, [and] directly in contact with everything possible.”⁸⁰ It not only emerges in the interaction of everything imaginable—the implicit potential for the entanglement of all bodies—it is the very possibility, the potentiality, of such contact.⁸¹

Poetry’s circulation and its action no longer conjecture a given people but the evolution of the planet Earth...Every expression of the humanities opens onto the fluctuating complexity of the world. Here poetic thought safeguards the particular, since only the totality of truly secure particulars guarantees the energy of Diversity. But in every instance this particular sets about Relation in a completely intransitive manner, relating, that is, with the finally realized totality of all possible particulars.⁸²

The circularity of a poetics of Relation is no circuit at all; not “a line of energy curved back onto itself” nor a trajectory.⁸³ It is rhizomatic and in this sort of dynamic, “we imagine the disclosable aesthetics of a Chaos, with every last detail as complex as the whole that cannot be reduced, simplified, or normalized,” each part “implicated in the activity of every other.”⁸⁴

Of course, Glissant reminds us, “Chaos is not ‘chaotic,’” but cha(o)smic; a lacuna, a womb, the *χώρα* of creation, yet not singular mythic Root.⁸⁵ Within the *chaos-monde* of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 32.

⁸¹ And here, I understand Wisdom, the Baobab Tree of Life, and (Derrida’s rendering of) Plato’s *χώρα* to converge.

⁸² Glissant, *Poetry of Relation*, 32.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 32-3. Glissant asserts that “each of its parts patterns activity implicated in the activity of every other,” then expounds, “The history of peoples has led to this dynamic. They need to stop running on their own momentum to join in this movement, since they are inscribed in it already. They cannot, however, ‘give-on-and-with,’ until they reach the point at which they go beyond assenting to their linear drive alone and consent to global dynamics—practicing a self-break and a reconnection.”

⁸⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 94, 95. In Glissant’s excogitation, “Chaos is not devoid of norms, but these neither constitute a goal nor govern a method there. *Chaos-monde* is neither fusion nor confusion: it acknowledges neither the uniform blend—a ravenous integration—nor muddled nothingness. Chaos is not ‘chaotic.’ But its hidden order does not presuppose hierarchies or pre-cellencies—neither of chosen languages nor of prince-nations. The *chaos-monde* is not a mechanism; it has no keys. The aesthetics of the *chaos-monde*...embraces all the elements and forms of expression of this totality within us; it is totality’s act and its fluidity, totality’s reflection and agent in motion.” And

Relation, we come to experience and appreciate “the aesthetics of the universe...cleared of a priori values.”⁸⁶ Our *chaos-monde*, epistemological assemblage relating to and in relationship with itself, opening, closing, gathering, scattering, returning, rebelling, enduring, exploding, mending, morphing. A poetics of Relation “diversifies them infinitely yet brings them back, nonetheless, to a full burst of unity;” always irreducible either to the One or the Other.⁸⁷ Such is Glissant’s illustration of identity, as he juxtaposes *Root* and *Relation*. According to Glissant, the immediacy and intensification

Relation, according to Glissant, is “the *chaos-monde* relating (to itself)” for Relation is that “which simultaneously realizes and expresses this motion.” Also see Glissant, *Poetics*, 136-140. “[T]he danger of being bogged down, diluted, or ‘arrested’ in undifferentiated conglomerations” must always be resisted (142). For expansion on the notion of the “chaosmic,” see James Joyce, *Finnegan’s Wake* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939); Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University, 1995); and Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). Also see Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Sydney: Power, 1995).

⁸⁶ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 94. It is found in the presence-absence, the institution and abolition of order, in “the impassioned illustration and refutation” of pre-established norms. Χώρα, like *chaos-monde* of Glissantian poetics of Relation, is fluid and perpetually in motion. A mirror of the be(com)ings s/he hurls into the cosmos as cosmos. Characterized, then, by her “suchlike”-ness (τοιούτων), χώρα is “manifest but never as itself” (Plato 49d-e). She is “the same” yet never the same (50b). The space of (the becomings) of all beings, χώρα is never (a) “being” but perpetually becoming because always changing—transformed by the matter transforming within her. “Being moved and marked by the entering” and exiting figures, χώρα is matrix (εκμαγειον), imprinted or “stamped” by her process as perpetual place birthing life. Indirectly equated by Plato to the excessive desire of the woman’s womb, χώρα is constantly on the move within the universe, blocking up its normal processes, thereby disrupting the well-ordered cosmos through her incessant and excessive desire to birth new life (88d-e). Χώρα’s is a chaos which, like Relation, in its motion is, in fact, the exact opposite of what is typically understood as “chaotic.” Chaos, according to Glissant, opens onto an entirely new phenomenon that is Relation or “totality in evolution, whose or der is continually in flux and whose disorder one can imagine forever” (133).

⁸⁷ Glissant, *A Poetics of Relation*, 140. Also see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21. In this section, Glissant might as well be speaking about khora and is most certainly ruminating rhizomatically. And it is in this hyphenated space where creativity is differentiated from (the) origin and branches are mistaken for roots that the amorphous shape (or *shapelessness*) and manifold fecundity of the rhizome replaces the root as metaphor of be(com)ing.

of globalization has impacted identity; no longer bound to “the sacred mystery of the root,” it may now be conceptualized beyond permanence, “a capacity for variation.”⁸⁸ As a result, *Root identity*, is no longer adequate; rooted, as it is, in Eden-like myths of origin, establishing the self and territory, “set[s] in motion the thought of the other and of voyage,” and claims bodies *as* territory, where the birth of the colony is the death of the colonized Other.⁸⁹ *The single root kills all around it.* The Root originated in the West, Glissant observes, as the movement of the nomad became fixed as “nations declar[ed] themselves in preparation for their repercussions in the world.”⁹⁰ The requisite of this fixing was expansion through colonization.⁹¹ Gradually, as nations acquired autonomy from the West they assimilated and replicated the West’s (di)vision of power, which

⁸⁸ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 141. Glissant proposes that this shift has also resulted in the exacerbation of inter- and intra-communal violence, dominated and dictated as they are by “the flash agents of Communication.” He contends that identity is understood more now as “a variable—either under control or wildly fluctuating.”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 143-4. Glissant asseverates that myths of origin, such as the Garden of Eden, are “sanctified by the hidden violence of a filiation” rather than Relation. This process, promoted and preserved through conquest and its authorization, is most readily apparent in colonization. Though Glissant privileges opacity, he is absolutely clear in his distinction of land from territory. He asseverates, “Territory is the basis for conquest. Territory requires that filiation be planted and legitimated. Territory is defined by its limits, and they must be expanded. A land henceforth has no limits. That is the reason it is worth defending against every form of alienation” (*Poetics*, 151).

⁹⁰ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 14. This “fixing” is colonization, the expansion and declaration through domination and subjugation. The poet’s next move is surprising, for in order to establish a correlation between the rhizome, skeptics (atheists), nomads, (orphans) and anarchy (in distinction from “a settled way of life, truth, and society”) en route to his critique of Western imperialism, Glissant turns to none other than Immanuel Kant. However, Glissant points out, this “parallel” with Kant’s reflections on anticonformism does not indicate that rhizomatic thought is necessarily subversive, nor that it “has the capacity to overturn the order of the world,” since that would entail “ideological claims presumably challenged by this thought.” From here, Glissant proceeds to narrate the development of Western civilization, and its obsession with power as control of land (as territory) and people through colonization, from the nomadic to the nation. (See pages 12-13 in the Introduction.)

⁹¹ And the progressive subsumption to imperial intolerance and intransigence.

prevents *true* liberation⁹² because animated by “the totalitarian drive of a single, unique root” and dualistic self-definition (“pitting citizen against barbarian”).⁹³ The truly insidious and ironic implications of the Root is that rather than operating as source of sustenance for the life-force it grounds, it becomes the very condition for its termination.

Relation identity, on the other hand, requires no cosmology because it emerges in “the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures...the chaotic network of Relation,” the *echo-monde*.⁹⁴ Relation does not derive legitimacy from entitlement but “circulates, newly extended” and conceives of land as place “where one gives-on-and-with”⁹⁵ rather than territory to be claimed; it “exults the thought of errantry and of totality” (not absolutism or totalitarianism), reveling in opacity rather than transparency.⁹⁶ Glissant understands the rooted Rootlessness of Relation’s creolized

⁹² See Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 382. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari speak to this exact process in terms of the economy of flow and the possibility or preclusion of collective expressions of desire. “For a revolutionary group at the preconscious level remains a *subjugated group*, even in seizing power, as long as this power itself refers to a form of force that continues to enslave and crush desiring-production...A subject-group, on the contrary, is a group whose libidinal investments are themselves revolutionary, it causes desire to penetrate into the social field, and subordinates the socius or the forms of power to desiring-production; productive of desire and a desire that produces, the subject-group always invents mortal formations that exorcize the effusion in it of a death instinct; it opposes real coefficients of transversality to the symbolic determinations of subjugation, coefficients without a hierarchy or a group superego.”

⁹³ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 14.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 93, 144. Rather than *the hidden violence of filiation*, Relation identity materializes within the chaotic network that is the totality of the *chaos-monde*.

⁹⁵ Glissant’s *donner-avec*.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 144. “The opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence. We are far from the opacities of Myth or Tragedy, whose obscurity was accompanied by exclusion and whose transparency aimed at ‘grasping.’ In this version of understanding the very desire to grasp contains the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A

errantry to be exemplified in the rhizome, which is *the root that extends to meet other roots*; an enmeshed and ever-expanding network, root system sans colonizing rootstock.⁹⁷ Challenging the idea of totalitarian Root while retaining the notion of rootedness, *each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other* in dynamic poetic Relation, *rooted* in the rhizomatic Wisdom of the Tree of Life.⁹⁸

“The tree is filiation,” write Deleuze and Guattari, “but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance.” They continue,

The tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’ but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and...and...and...’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be.’ Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions...[Instead,] establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings.⁹⁹

Entirely “unlike trees or their roots,” the rhizome is assemblage, ever-expanding and connecting to any point without necessary or obvious correlation, composed, “not of units but...directions in motion.”¹⁰⁰ Without beginning or end, the rhizome grows and

gesture of enclosure if not appropriation. Let our understanding prefer the gesture of giving-on-and-with that opens finally on totality” (192).

⁹⁷ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11. A rhizome is “a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently.” First acknowledging Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s aversion to notions of the root and of being rooted, Glissant proceeds to offer a gloss of the rhizome, which though a type of root is advanced in distinction for the single, unique Root (tree). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari identify the root-tree as representing a Western European epistemological framework. The philosophers understand “the East” and “Oceania in particular” to offer “something like a rhizomatic model opposed in every respect to the Western model of the tree” (18).

⁹⁸ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11. Rhizomatic thinking is “the principle behind...the Poetics of Relation.” This concession, however, is merely a lacuna for Glissant, a sort of threshold opening onto a vast landscape of possibility in the creolized errantry and opacity of Relationality.

⁹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 21. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari engage and theorize the rhizome (as thought assemblage) in order to resist binary logic (as root-tree) and to think

overspills from *the middle*, in between.¹⁰¹ A poetics of Relation is rhizomatic, *chaos-monde in relation*, a choreography of diverse bodies in motion, vibrating, migrating, diffracting, without absolute origin, telos, or terminus.¹⁰² Is this not diaspora? Creolization of the *tout-monde* in our creative expression as a poetics of Relation.¹⁰³

Errantry, opacity, interbeing, alliance, the resonances between rhizome and Relation are palpable and the same is true of rhizome's relation to Wisdom as (Baobab) Tree of Life.¹⁰⁴ When we accept Glissant's formulation of Root identity as rooted in the binary logic of a single Root that must destroy Diversity, is this not the Tree from which Eve and Adam eat?¹⁰⁵ This Tree, like all Root-trees, is genealogical and defined by the

multiplicity. In the former, the rhizome is made manifest in and functions to sustain their articulation of the economy of flows. In their larger project, which includes *Anti-Oedipus*, the philosophers, like Glissant, are interested in power, its neuroses, apparatus, its effects and affects; particularly in the neurotic (egoic) compulsions of colonization, politically, economically, intellectually, and psychically. Remember, "[U]nlike trees or their roots," Deleuze and Guattari explicate, "the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature... It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion."

¹⁰¹ Ibid. They write, "neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows... between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*" (25). Recall that the Tree of Life grows in the middle of Eden (Gen. 3:9).

¹⁰² What Derrida and Caputo after him might call a *khôra*-ography. Of course, such *khôra*-ographies were, for Derrida in relation to gender; his (in the words of Caputo) "dream of innumerable genders"—a dream of mine as well. Expounding on the Derridean utopic vision Caputo explains, choreography is "the joyful, dance-like marking off of places, multiplying the places of sexual spacing" (105). See Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 71-105; and Derrida "On Colleges and Philosophy," Interview with Geoffrey Bennington, in *Postmodernism: ICA Documents*, ed. Lisa Appignanesi (London: Free Association Books, 1989): 227-228.

¹⁰³ Our variegated expressions of self, culture, and creativity.

¹⁰⁴ Particularly when we read Wisdom as Relation and in relation to the Root-Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad/Evil.

¹⁰⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 21. Interestingly, in Proverbs 8:36, Wisdom actually states that those who miss Wisdom destroy themselves.

ontological and axiological dualisms “between here and there... good and bad.”¹⁰⁶ The Tree of Life, however, is Wisdom, Relation, and it is rhizome, *root extending to meet other roots*; Wisdom is a Tree entirely *unlike trees or their roots*.¹⁰⁷ So while this Wisdom-Tree is nominally arborescent, its value is not in its literal Tree-ness, but in its symbolic intensities and resonances (*echo-monde*).¹⁰⁸ Wisdom as the (Baobab) Tree of Life, according to a poetics of Relation, is never stagnant or idle, a rhizomatic assemblage perpetually in (creative) process, always connectable (and detachable), inexhaustible in its capacity for modification, variation, and offshoots (adjuncts if you will) because Wisdom is (the Tree of) Life lived in/as the *chaos-monde* of Relation.¹⁰⁹

In Proverbs 3:19, we find that is by Wisdom that God created and creates.¹¹⁰ In 4:7a, we read, *Wisdom is superlative, therefore, gain Wisdom*; the word translated “gain,”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 20. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad/Evil is “defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 21. An *acentred, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying*, anti-structure system and anti-genealogy map, I believe Wisdom displays these characteristics especially in Proverbs 8. Also see Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 93.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Wisdom and the Tree of Life “is not the object of reproduction: neither external reproduction as image-tree nor internal reproduction as tree-structure.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Wisdom is perpetually produced and constructed over and again; reinterpreted, re-membered, reimagined otherwise.

¹¹⁰ Proverbs 3:19. (And, I would add, continues creating through us.) The verse is translated, “The Lord founded the earth by wisdom” in the TANAKH. A closer exegetical exploration alerts us to two terms utilized here which have broader significance in the Hebrew Bible (and for the people of Yehud): *yasad* and *aretz*. The former is a verb which can be translated “to found, establish; destine, allocate; or allow,” while the latter could be translated “ground, earth; piece of land; territory, country; regions; or the underworld” (HALOT 90-1). What I would like to highlight is that in addition to a more overt reference to creation, this text might (among other things) potentially infer God’s allocation of land, which could be as territory (possession), but might also be as earth equally created by and distributed among all creatures.

may also be translated “create,” inferring human participation in Wisdom’s genesis.¹¹¹

This is an allusion to creation and a reference to Wisdom’s self-assertion through creative expression; an expression in which humanity must actively participate in order for Wisdom to create and be created in all the earth—an expression which is, according to Glissant, poetics.¹¹² Addressing the necessary response to the disappearance, suffering, and economic exploitation of human lives,¹¹³ Glissant appeals to poetics, arguing for poetics of Relation as political resistance to dehumanization. Poetics is, he explicates,

the implicit or explicit manipulation of self-expression...[it is] the only weapon that memory has against this human waste and the only place to shed light on it, both in terms of an awareness of our place in the world and our reflection on the necessary and disalienated relationship with the Other. To declare one’s own identity is to write the world into existence.¹¹⁴

Wisdom is (a poetics of) Relation and Wisdom is *in* Relation, leading us to declare our own identities and, thereby, to create; writing the world into existence other-wise. While references to and representations of Wisdom abound in the Proverbs and elsewhere,

¹¹¹ HALOT 1169-1170. *Resith*, typically translated “beginning,” derives from the Hebrew word *rosh*, which signifies *head*, *the top*, *that which comes first* or *the very best thing*, which is why I chose to translate it “superlative” here. In 4:7a, we find translators attempting to make sense of what appears to be syntactical ambiguity (“*reshith chokmah qanah chokmah*”). The translators of the TANAKH and most other versions of the text render this sentence: “The beginning of wisdom is—acquire wisdom.” However, the opacity of Hebrew syntax, particularly in a situation such as this, offers more possibility than this translation allows. Therefore, I translate *qanah*, “create, which signifies not only generation or production but acquisition, ascription, and attribution.

¹¹² Glissant, *Poetic Intention*, 94. The poet, for Glissant, strives to “experience the world [in its] actuality” and in so doing enacts “the creation of that which does not exist” (70, 78). The poem, then, “reaches toward that indistinction [between creator and created] which is not confusion but synthesis” (79). In this affective-creative process, knowledge “no longer impede[s] *immediate contact* with the world. On the contrary: knowledge of things is knowledge of the self as a function,” “a condition of the Ensemble” of creation that is the *tout-monde*.

¹¹³ As always, Glissant’s scope includes and extends beyond the Caribbean.

¹¹⁴ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 169. It is to re-member the world through the W/word.

Wisdom speaks *for herself, about herself*, and does so with exuberant and audacious self-expression.¹¹⁵ In these chapters, *Chokmah* declares her own identity, writing the world into existence, as/in a poetics of Relation. And Wisdom is a Nasty Woman, who refuses to wait her turn.

Proverbs opens and we find Wisdom brazenly shouting in the streets, in the heart of the city, at the borderlands and the threshold. “Reject me and I won’t beg for your attention, listen to me and I will lead you to Life.”¹¹⁶ She’s not begging, but she’s hard to ignore. Again, in Chapter 8, she’s crying out in the center, on the fringes, at the gate.¹¹⁷ From the heights to the wayside,¹¹⁸ she’s at the crossroads,¹¹⁹ and once again at the threshold; taking a stand (in resistance),¹²⁰ inviting us all to listen, to love her, and to let

¹¹⁵ Descriptions of Wisdom are interspersed throughout the book of Proverbs’ beginning and the majority of these statements are third person endorsements of Wisdom’s great worth. In chapter 3, for instance, the orator of the Proverbs speaks hyperbolically of Wisdom’s value, asserting that nothing can surpass or even compare to Wisdom’s ways; Wisdom is greater, better, and more precious than anything (3:14-17). In Proverbs 1, 8, and 9, however, Wisdom speaks in the first person.

¹¹⁶ Proverbs 1:27-33, my translation.

¹¹⁷ HALOT 1246-7,1212. The allusion to creation in 1:20-21 is often lost in (mis)translation. While the most common translation, “squares,” the referents include the expanses of land and/or water. The verb typically translated “cries aloud,” in Prov. 8, *teronah* (from *rnh*), signifies both a “cry of jubilation, rejoicing” and a “cry of lament, wailing.” Either way, it is clear that Wisdom is making a racket. Also see Rivera 2010; Rawson 2015.

¹¹⁸ HALOT 231-2. The use of *drk* here may be an allusion to Genesis 3:24, where God stations the cherubim and the sword to safeguard the *etz chayim*. If God is guarding the way (*derek*) to Tree of Life with the fiery ever-turning phallus and Wisdom is standing in resistance “along the way” (*ale-derek*) asserting that s/he is available to all people, might it be that Wisdom is, in fact, resisting God’s attempts to guard and, therefore, prevent, access to the Tree of Life? This might, then, also explain why Wisdom seems to be asserting herself so strongly (and) in relation to God in Proverbs 8.

¹¹⁹ HALOT 732. The phrase here is literally “between pathways.”

¹²⁰ HALOT 714-5. The Hebrew word here represents positioning oneself and/or to be in opposition.

her lead us as she led God at creation; Wisdom leads to Life.¹²¹ “Find me, find Life...(Dis)miss me and die¹²²...Come, taste, and eat of my fruit and drink the wine I have mixed. Let go of foolishness and Live!”¹²³ Wisdom takes us back to Eden to re-

¹²¹ The extent of Wisdom’s self-assurance in self-assertion in Proverbs 8, surpasses her previous self-revelations, as Wisdom speaks in greater detail and determination and particularly of herself in relation to God. Reiterating and, therefore, claiming what was previously professed of her (particularly in Proverbs 3), *Chokmah* then makes some strange and significant moves in her self-affirming soliloquy; moves which might be interpreted as part of an earlier rhetorical tradition that established her co-equivalence with the divine, which in later transcription was quashed. Among these instances are Wisdom’s repetition of the phrase “I am,” Wisdom’s allusion to Jeremiah 29:13 in verse 17, and Wisdom’s representation of creation in verses 22-31. I actually understand there to be more evidence of Wisdom’s claim of co-divinity, but believe these examples to be sufficient within the scope of this project. With regards to the phrase “I am” is present in 8:12, 14, 17, and 27. While the phrase is not identical to that of Elohim in Exodus 3:14, which is verbal (the 1st person form of the verb “to be”) rather than substantive (1st person nominative). It also bears noting that this phrase holds such profound symbolic valence that the writer of John places these words in the mouth of Jesus in 6:35, 48; 8:12, 8:58; 9:5; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1. Which holds particular import when one considers that in John’s midrash on creation in the first chapter of the gospel, the author is all but stating that Jesus is Wisdom (*Sophia-Logos*) and that Proverbs evinces Jesus’ presence at creation (John 1:1-4). Proverbs 8:7 is most often translated, “Those who love me I love, and those who seek me will find me.” Likewise, Jeremiah 29:13 is typically rendered, “You will search for me and find me, if only you seek me wholeheartedly.” The only equivalence in Hebrew is the word translated “find” in both verses. The translations, however, suggest a deeper correlation between seeking God and seeking Wisdom (wholeheartedly). Proverbs 8:7a, I would add, might alternatively be translated, “I am love to/for those who love.” (See HALOT 17-8.) Cf. note 77 of this chapter.

¹²² Proverbs 8:35, 36; HALOT 305, 329. Wisdom closes, saying, “All who hate me love death.”

¹²³ See Proverbs 9:5-6. HALOT 526, 806-7, 984. “Walk in the way of understanding.” *Asher*, the verb often translated “walk” in 9:6b, also signifies leading and happiness. In chapter 9, Wisdom speaks in the first person one last time, as the Tree of Life offers a final, personal invitation to partake of Wisdom’s resources and live. Wisdom speaks out (for and of herself), inviting us all as s/he does, and in so doing, we participate in/as the divine Wisdom (of) creation creating—we respond through our own creative self-expression and we participate in and embody Wisdom as Tree of Life. Wisdom, like Glissant, exhorts us to embrace and express ourselves in the fullness of our divine Diversity, refusing to deny the multiplicity making us wise/Wisdom. Glissant’s creolized, errant, tout-monde poetics of Relation, in fact, offer the rhizomatic reasoning necessary to interpret the Bible as archipelagic assemblage and to grasp Wisdom as Tree of Life. A rhizomatic poetics of Relation offer us the space and vehicle within and by which to

member, she is the Tree of Life and the creative expression of identity; and *we* have a choice: Root or Wisdom (as rhizomatic route other-wise)? The Root-Tree of the Knowledge of Good/Bad stands firm in malignant opposition to Life as and in Relation, denying Diversity through its delimitation of difference as definitively dual; a death-dealing dichotomy determined from a singular point of origin, peering down on its Other.¹²⁴ The Wisdom Tree of Life is our poetics of Relation, manifest in the opacity and multiplicity of the *tout-monde*, our active participation, as affective archipelagic assemblage, in divinity expressing, creating, *writing the world into existence* other-wise.¹²⁵

Reading the Bible rhizomatically and, therefore, relationally, intentionally averts universal, absolute, univocal, or even (more) “authoritative” interpretations, attributable to a particular (original) author or scholarly source, and instead strategically multiplies meaning. It eschews the West’s representation of the book and Literature, language and identity, as Root, grounding, authorizing, and colonizing History,¹²⁶ and invokes instead the Wisdom of African and Afro-Caribbean thinkers, poets, and iconoclasts, who, like

reflect upon how the Bible (as the oral tales of Folk and Official literature) can, is, and will always be (re)appropriated, re-presented (oraliterarily), and re-membered. Wisdom as Tree of Life in the Hebrew Bible is the and our expression of Relational identity as poetics, politically revolutionary *because* radically (inter)relational and, as a result, profoundly relevant in our twenty-first century global context.

¹²⁴ It is defined in binary (hierarchical) opposition where the One is Good over and against the Evil Other/s.

¹²⁵ While Wisdom in Proverbs is represented as wo/man, rather than female subordinated to male or vice versa, Wisdom is the all-world Relation identity necessary to/for divine creation-expression. The complementarity that is Wisdom-God is not in the binary opposition of Sameness, but manifests in the Diversity of creation creating.

¹²⁶ The book is only one node for Deleuze and Guattari, for assemblages themselves are ubiquitous. In fact, all of life can be understood as or in terms of assemblage (*agencement*). In this way, they are intentionally subverting the book in the History of the West, which has signified cultural, political, and epistemological power.

Glissant, seek to disrupt continental thought.¹²⁷ Being that creation has been colonized by the Western European episteme, which read Relational rhizome as Root-Tree, it is far more fruitful to read Wisdom rhizomatically as Tree of Life, our creative expression of Relation.¹²⁸ Through poetics of Relation rather than Root, Wisdom as Tree of Life invites us to a radically Relational, (intertextually) diverse, (biblical) hermeneutics. Espousing *archipelagic thinking* instead of the sort of *continental thought* that has heretofore dominated the field, we can read Wisdom in/as the perpetual becoming of (self) creation-expression in opacity, rather than a means toward the possession/division of Knowledge/Territory (i.e., transparency).¹²⁹ In other words, when we displace

¹²⁷ He does so, of course, through the rhizomatic, or archipelagic, thinking of a relational poetics. Glissant speaks to our infinite intertexts when he writes, “No matter how many studies and references we accumulate (though it is our profession to carry out such things), we will never reach the end of such a volume; knowing this in advance makes it possible for us to dwell there. Not knowing this totality is not a weakness. Not wanting to know it certainly is. Consequently, we imagine it through a poetics: this imaginary realm provides the full-sense of all these always decisive differentiations. A lack of this poetics, its absence or its negation, would constitute a failing” (*Poetics*, 154).

¹²⁸ Acknowledging Eden’s hijacking by the Root-Tree of the Knowledge of Good/Evil, reading Wisdom in this way resists the Western Root. In this way, Relation identity becomes a creative communal theopoetics. Wisdom as rhizomatic tree rather than root-Tree through a poetics of Relation is the perpetual frustration of all claims to origin through originality; such a poetics is a claim to originality but not as origin.

¹²⁹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 61-2. Elucidating the connections he identifies between opacity and Relation, on the one hand, and transparency and continental thought’s rooted filiation on the other (but also the West’s devious deployment of opacity in its production of myth of/as origin, not to mention the frustration of any absolute distinction), Glissant notes, “If it is true that the intolerant violence of filiation was formerly buried in the sacred mystery of the root, and that entering into the opacity of this mystery was tragically grated, and if this opacity therefore both signified the mystery and simultaneously masked its violence—this always took place in function of a final underlying transparency in the tragic struggle. This same transparency, in Western History, predicts that a common truth of Mankind exists and maintains that what approaches it most closely is action that projects, whereby the world is realized at the same time that it is caught in the act of its foundation. Against this reductive transparency, a force of opacity is at work. No longer the opacity that enveloped and reactivated the mystery of filiation but another, considerate of all the threatened and

Eurocentric episteme, in favor of African and African diasporic ways of knowing-being-interpreting, we may grasp the Tree of Life as the Wisdom of Relation in/as resistance to Root(ed)/Territorialism.¹³⁰ Wisdom as the Baobab Tree of Life is a (theo)poetics of Relation and the rhizomatic, archipelological assemblage of our all-world entanglement, always already frustrating (hierarchal binarisms of) continental thought through the multiplicity-Diversity of our embodied hermeneutics, our verbal carnage, our bibliorality.¹³¹

Stretching upward into sky, beyond the eye...I...I...We are the rootless roots of the upside-down tree...We...We...Stretch (with) me. Grasp what My-nd cannot. What will not rot. Round and round, around we reach. We are the Wisdom of the Baobab Tree. Of Life. Not I, not you, not me. We are the Wisdom of the Baobab Tree.

delicious things joining one another (without conjoining, that is, without merging) in the expanse of Relation. Thus, that which protects the Diverse we call opacity.” Let us “return,” then, Glissant advises, “Not to a replenished outrageous excess of specificities but to a total (dreamed-of) freedom of the connections among them, cleared out of the very chaos of their confrontations.” Of course, this returning is only to once again depart. Of Glissantian opacity, Michael Wierdorn posits that it “serves as a sort of protective mechanism insulating the radical difference of the other from the self’s at times depredatory search for knowledge. Opacity thus dictates that in the other an unknowable remainder persists...Glissant uses opacity and the set of paradoxes that accompany it as part of a larger enterprise of creation: that is, not only the creation of an ethical mode of being between self and other but also the impetus for creation of new literary forms. Through accommodating contradiction and allowing paradox to endure, opacity points us towards possibilities for new forms of literary creation.” See Michael Wierdorn, “Go Slow Now: Saying the Unsayable in Édouard Glissant’s Reading of Faulkner,” in *American Creoles: The Franco-Caribbean and the American South*, eds. Martin Munroe and Celia Britton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 184.

¹³⁰ Rather than the imperial, nationalistic, neo-liberal territorialism of the Root, we enter, extend, and emerge in the Wisdom of Relation as entanglement. We grasp the Wisdom and profoundly revolutionary implications of a poetics of Relation *in* Relation to and as the *chaos-monde*.

¹³¹ A conceptualizing of humanity that pushes Césaire and Fanon’s efforts to articulate a transcendent notion of the human even further than either imagined.

Chapter 2 The Rhythms of Relation: Africana, Oraliture, & Affect

“But every poetics led us to believe something that, of course, is not wrong: that excessiveness of order and a measured disorder exist as well. The only discernible stabilities in Relation have to do with the interdependence of the cycles operative there, how their corresponding patterns of movement are in tune. In Relation, analytic thought is led to construct unities whose interdependent variances jointly piece together the interactive totality. These unities are not models but revealing echos-monde. Thought makes music.”¹

“For, however much the two series may resemble one another, they do not resonate by their resemblance, but rather by their difference.”²

The mind is inherently embodied.³

[A]ll structures discerned turn out to be binary (we live in the age of the computer), and binarism is achieved by passing over elements, often crucial elements, that do not fit binary patterning. Moreover, the binary structures, however interesting the abstract patterns they form, seem not to explain the psychological urgency of a narrative and thus they fail to account for why the story is a story.⁴

While Glissant’s notions of creolization, his recapitulation and amplification of *Antillanité*, as well as his poetics of Relation are central to the bibliorial hermeneutic I elucidate, his theorization of the relationship between orality and writing as and in oraliture is equally integral to the archipelological interpretive modality of bibliorality. According to Glissant, the oral is “the organized manifestation of Diversity” and the necessary supplement and panacea to the economy of Sameness, which inscribes

¹ Glissant, *Poetics*, 92-93.

² Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 228.

³ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 3. Lakoff continues, “Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical.”

⁴ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*. 30th Anniversary Edition (New York: Routledge, 2012), 161. Ong is speaking specifically to the failure of Structuralist analysis, since Saussure and proffered by Claude Lévi-Strauss, which, like all continental epistemologies, is impelled to classify and categorize the world through its bifurcation.

universals through writing.⁵ Writing, then, *must be nourished by the oral if it is to survive*. The poetics and dynamics of this relationship might, in fact, be interpreted through his theory of Relation in terms of rhizomatic and Root identities. Even as Glissant does not advocate the denial or dismissal of ancestral roots, recognizing identity as composite and theorizing self-construction and expression as a complex and convoluted process with no absolute origin, so he imagines the relationship of writing and speech.⁶ Beyond being merely dialogical, this relationship is rhizomatic; it is interpenetrative and creates new nodes at every encounter.⁷ In honor of rhizomatic (poetics of) Relation, this chapter is itself a polynodal node. Rather than being compelled by the compulsive obsession with ontology and transparency, characteristic of continental thought and its Root epistemology, I look to Africana and Afro-Caribbean philosophy in particular for it has, Paget Henry explains, “avoided comprehensive theories of being,” and instead focused on the “poetically...constructed nature of social reality, the need to reconstruct its African past, and to project alternatives for the future.”⁸ Accordingly, in this chapter, I explore the complexity of Africana as an oralitury onto-epistemology, particularly in its poetic articulation by Afro-Caribbean poet-philosophers, I reflect upon the freighted relationship of the oral and the written, and, focalizing upon its oralitury rhythmic materializations in the archipelagos, I move toward thinking oraliture and affect archipelogically as a rhizomatic affective assemblage.

⁵ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 100. See note 66 in Chapter One.

⁶ See Shirleen K. Lewis, *Race, Culture, and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory from Négritude to Créolite* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 76. Also see Glissant, *Poetics*, 11-22.

⁷ Is it necessary to differentiate between dialogue and rhizomatic??

⁸ Henry, 47.

In the first major node, I address (the articulation of) the relation of orality to literature within Africana and specifically in Afro-Caribbean philosophy, in light of the Western Root's problematic hierarchical bifurcations of literacy/orality and prose/poetry (as well as male/female). Orality is neither inherently nor uniquely African but the historical precedent and prevalence of orality within African(a) cultures and diasporic communities as well as Africana as a critical theoretical field is exceptional and of particular import to a project such as mine.⁹ I commence with some introductory remarks about Afro-Caribbean philosophy, philosophers, and their archipelological interventions toward decolonizing epistemology (its Euro-, logo-, and androcentrism) and reclaiming sovereignty within the Caribbean.¹⁰ I then turn to a consideration of the relationship of orality and literature within Africana more broadly, exposing the primary problematics within their historic hierarchical bifurcation in Western European scholarship, and its effects upon Africana (as a) critical discourse. Zeroing in on the Caribbean archipelago, I ruminate on its oral modalities in/as the creolized verbal carnality that is oraliture. Next, I turn to biblical studies and its lack of oralituracy and look specifically to the work of Walter Ong and Eric Havelock as representatives of the empiricism of Western Root episteme as well as their influence within orality as a discursive field and upon classical and biblical studies' reliance on the Root, considering rhizomatic and oraliturhythmic routes other-wise.

⁹ While oral cultures, like storytelling, manifest in manifold around the globe, I foreground orality within Africana and Afro-Caribbean oraliture and philosophy due to my intellectual, creative, and epistemological lineage.

¹⁰ Two noteworthy decolonizing interventions from Africana scholars are Carole Boyce Davies, Meredith Gadsby, Charles F. Peterson, and Henrietta Williams, eds., *Decolonizing the Academy: African Diaspora Studies* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003); and Noel Leo Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981).

In the second key node, I move more intentionally toward (reading with) rhythm, looking to the oral modalities of carnival and folktale, as creative expressions of communal and self-identification and assertion with particular cultural valence within the Caribbean as critical (rhizomatic, poetic, archipelological) disruptions of the Root by Relation. Finally, I look to the previously un(der)explored resonances between orality and affect via rhythm as a distinctively Africana and archipelagic way of relating in poetic Relation, which leads me to none other than the rhythmic reasoning of the Rastafarians. Attentive to the divisions that have plagued academic discourse and its “disciplines,” I am particularly interested in folktale and/in the Hebrew Bible as well as its intersections with carnivalesque-grotesque—a theme to which I will return in Chapter 5 in my exegesis of the Samson folktale.¹¹

Node a ~ Decolonizing Epistemology: Africana, Orality & Literacy

Oraliture, Afro-Caribbean Philosophy and Decolonizing Epistemology

Glissant’s perspective on writing resonates with that of Jacques Derrida, as Valérie Loichot has pointed out, where writing is “texts without an end, where the margins and endnotes become as central as the main text, where there is no end and no beginning, an always already postponed truth.”¹² As per usual, Derrida deconstructs “the

¹¹ The Bible serves as the ideal textual/interpretive domain with/in which to explore the intersections between. I find the story of Samson—one of the Bible’s oldest/best-known folktales—to be particularly exemplary in this regard. I briefly treat folktale studies within biblical scholarship en route to a deeper examination (in Ch. 5) of the ways in which Samson’s tale has been interpreted as folklore and how scholars have (re)interpreted this convoluted narrative and Samson’s complex identity and often contradictory and, therefore, completely perplexing actions and relationships.

¹² Valérie Loichot, “Negations and Subversions of Paternal Authorities in Glissant’s Fictional Works” in *Naming the Father: Legacies, Genealogies, and Explorations of*

text” by inverting the very hierarchical binary episteme characterizing and constituting continental thought, thereby disrupting without entirely escaping the bifurcation of speech and writing. Glissant likewise deconstructs the relationship of speech and writing, but does so toward creative (re)construction. For Glissant, Western European philosophy is in and of itself unqualified to think the relationship of the written and the oral, or of (their) Relation, both in and beyond the Caribbean archipelagos, a *supplement* is requisite; “the complementary discourse of whoever wants to give-on-and-with must be added to the West.”¹³ The West must go rhizomatic but/and in order to do so it requires the Rest, not as T.A. but as teacher, not as Adjunct or even as Assistant but as Associate (on the tenure track), instructing us all in archipelagic epistemologies. Effectively engaging in cross-cultural discourse insists upon a way of thinking, reading, and relating that occupies the cracks and disrupts binarisms, a Wisdom that grasps creative

Fatherhood in Modern and Contemporary Literature, eds. Eva Paulino, Terry Caesar, and William Hummel (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000), 117, 118.

¹³ Glissant, *Poetics*, 191. My use of “supplement” is an allusion to Derrida’s deconstruction of the relationship of writing to speech as presented by Plato, Rousseau, Saussure, and Lévi-Strauss. Writing, understood as secondary to speech. This logic was based on the Western European understanding of speech as a representation (or symbol) of consciousness, but a (more) direct link to mental cognition and a (more) pure conduit of meaning, which was, therefore, established as originary. In this way, writing was conceptualized not only as a symbol of a symbol or doubly derivative but as supplement; writing “exists for the sole purpose of representing” speech, but speech may exist without ever being written (Saussure, 23). (A framework, Derrida points out, originally articulated by Plato and Aristotle.) Derrida’s disruption of this binary hierarchy rests upon his exposure of speech’s implicit lack (and proving writing’s, as *arche-writing*, precedence). For, he contends, if a supplement (i.e., writing) is necessary in the first place to establish the concept (of speech) as whole (and a language), then it must be inherently deficient. See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 143-156. Also see especially Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1983), 23-32. Glissant was himself fluent in poststructuralist discourse, which begs the question of his historical marginality/liminality within Africana. Did his own break from Negritude and alignment with postcolonial theory influence his status within Africana thought?

multiplicity, one which opens our capacity to conceptualize and corporealize in the flow and the in-between of writing and speech, thinking and feeling, body and text, now and then, us and them, you and me. A rhizomatic poetics of Relation enables us to interpret oraliturally and, therefore, archipelagically through this Diverse world in which we live and move and have our being.

An archipelagic epistemology is *de rigueur* to think writing orally and to think orally even as we write, it resists transparency and requires opacity, and is poetic rather than purely logical; it is archipelological.¹⁴ Rather than the “tortured relationship between writing and orality” specific to the American novel, which reflects “a kind of complicity with the word, of a functional conception of time (consequently, of syntactical time),” Glissant locates himself in the creolized landscape of the Caribbean archipelagos, at “the edge of writing and speech.”¹⁵ Not as (the writer’s) reproduction of speech, but in synthesis, “synthesis of written syntax and spoken rhythms, of ‘acquired’ writing and oral ‘reflects,’ of the solitude of writing and the solidarity of the collective voice.”¹⁶ This synthesis Glissant identifies in and as *oraliture*. In his introduction to *Caribbean*

¹⁴ See my discussion and critique of Plato and Havelock below.

¹⁵ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 147.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 147. Glissant writes, “I think that, beyond the languages used, there is a form of expression specific to the [“Other”] American novel that is at the same time the product of a reaction of confidence in words, of a kind of complicity with the word, of a functional conception of time (consequently, of syntactical time), and ultimately of a tortured relationship between writing and orality. One of the effects derived from my own literary activity is concerned with precisely this interest: I am from a country in which the transition is being made from a traditional oral literature, under constraint, to a written nontraditional literature, also equally constrained. My language attempts to take shape at the edge of writing and speech; to indicate this transition—which is certainly quite difficult in any approach to literature. I am not talking about either the written or the oral in the sense that one observes a novelist reproducing everyday speech, using a style at the ‘zero degree of writing.’ I am referring to a synthesis, synthesis of written syntax and spoken rhythms, of ‘acquired’ writing and oral ‘reflex,’ of solitude of writing and the solidarity of the collective voice—a synthesis that I find interesting to attempt.”

Discourse, J. Michael Dash contrasts Western literature's disembodied epistemology with Glissant's poetics, decrying the detrimental effects of its "disincarnate aesthetic" upon the cross-cultural imagination and encouraging active corporeality rather than cognitive complacency as the route to wisdom and knowledge. He observes,

Knowledge lies in walking away from these complacent mental spaces and plunging into the vortex of ritual. This creative disorientation of the individual is evident in the town's festivities...In this tangle of new forms, this verbal carnality, Glissant visualizes the poetics of *Antillanité*. This idea stands in clear opposition to the longing for the virtues of clarity and the disincarnate aesthetic of those who wished to suppress the cross-cultural imagination. It also is opposed to the demiurgic reconstruction of the world in terms of some master text.¹⁷

This tangle of new forms, Glissant's (creolized, archipelagic) poetics of Relation, is the word made flesh making worlds. In the interstices and interaction of rootedness and Relation, the written and the oral, oraliture materializes in creolized verbal carnality; the living textual bodies of an archipelagos. Identity is (re)imagined always already across cultures and in the plural in and as a creolized poetics of Relation, emerging and embodied in lived experience and creative expression: verbal carnality.¹⁸ *Antillanité*, as oraliture, represented for Glissant the cross-cultural and interstitial irruptions enacted and, therefore, effectively interpreted by the creolized archipelogs of a poetics of Relation.

¹⁷ Michael Dash, foreword to *Caribbean Discourse*, xliii. Dash, like Glissant, references "The Tempest" in an effort to critique the way in which, "Prospero's as well as Christophe's imposition of their highminded rhetoric on the polyphonic voices that threaten their grand project of rehabilitation."

¹⁸ My use of the "word made flesh" is strategic and an allusion to both Glissant's representation of Genesis as "the Word made Flesh" and those paradigmatic words in the gospel of John. Where the former (in the common) represents archipelagic thinking within/as the tout-monde of Relation and the latter (in the proper) signifies the appeal to origin, characteristic of continental thought's contingency upon Root identity. See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 72-73; and idem, *Poetics of Relation*, 144-151.

Marking an “epistemological break,” Dash observes that Glissant’s vision signals a departure from “earlier nationalisms and counter-discursive ideologies because it not only demystifies the imperialistic myth of universal civilization but also rejects the values of hegemonic systems” (and Glissant’s full entry into post-colonial theory).¹⁹ Glissant abnegates “ideas of cultural purity, racial authenticity and ancestral origination,” which characterize (Western European) Root identity, in order to revel in the rhizomatic rhythms of Relation as verbal carnality.²⁰ As Glissant demonstrates, folktale and carnival are, like

¹⁹ Michael Dash, *Edouard Glissant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 148. Likewise, both Celia Britton and John Drabinski argue for Glissant’s incorporation into the line-up of traditional triumvirate of postcolonial theorists: Said, Bhabha, and Spivak. Drabinski, critical of European philosophy’s disregard for Glissant’s critical interventions, outlines the development in and of Glissant’s thinking from Caribbeanness and *Antillanité* in the 1970’s to creolization and the archipelago as episteme in the 1990’s. For Drabinski, fragmentation is the key to Glissant’s theorizing of identity and difference; rather than “a theme for thought,” fragmentation is “a way of beginning a theoretical apparatus for identity” (172). The rhizome, Drabinski notes, offers both “a sense of connection to place” (via its roots) and perpetual movement; “mobility makes and unmakes place.” He continues, “The rhizome deterritorializes, but only to re-root and poly-root in the multilingualism of the archipelago.” See Celia Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999); John E. Drabinski, *Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 170-173; and Drabinski, *Abyssal Beginnings*, forthcoming.

²⁰ *Ibid.* In “Root versus Rhizome,” Richard Clarke critiques Dash’s representation of Glissant as “inflated” and argues that Glissant’s own depiction of the rhizome is overly “simplistic” and requires more careful scrutinization (13, 20). For, Clark argues, rather than subverting the West’s dichotomy, (like Négritude) it shares the same “underlying episteme or problematic,” thereby perpetuating it (13). Clarke considers root and rhizome identity to be “informed by a neo-Hegelian historical materialist” episteme (21) and an “*organicist* problematic” (24) which are both inherently Eurocentric (imperialist) frameworks. He motions to Orlando Patterson’s differentiation of “segmentary” and “synthetic” modes of creolization in order to distinguish Négritude from Antillanité respectively, where the former represents local culture constructed by and from within various groups and the latter is an intercultural amalgam (21-2). Clarke is quick to point out the way in which a rhizome is “no less predatory than any form of root system,” it “does not mix well with other species,” and the way in which it expands has actually led biologists to represent its movement as “one of imperial hegemony” (24). While Clarke’s critique of Dash’s glorification of Glissant is apropos, it is his reading of Glissant that is overly simplistic, rather than the poet himself. Drawing upon Stuart Hall, Michel

proverbs, primary performative and poetic relational modes of an oralituary epistemology within Africana and the Caribbean archipelagos (an archipelogics) and the imaginative collaboration, exhibition, exploration, and celebration of diverse, creolized identities constituted in and as community; rhythmic ritual embodiments of cross-cultural (subterranean) convergence, dispersion and divergence as rhizomatic, archipelagic assemblage: verbal carnality.²¹ Approaching carnival and folktale rhizomatically, or archipelogically, we engage these creative creolized cultural modalities as integral socio-political and (trans)cultural mediums within oralituary cultures, whose historic reliance upon these vehicles enables communities to construct history and (re)produce culture through the artistic performance of an Africana aesthetic. “Practices of creativity are, for postslave black/Caribbean communities, ways to imagine and bring forth integrated and soldered human and environmental alternative to the crude mechanics of capitalism that

Foucault, Robert Sternberg, and, of course, Jacques Derrida, his post-structuralist/post-Saussurean critique of Glissant neglects entirely the poetic dimension of rhizome as Relation. For Glissant himself only appealed to the rhizome in order to illustrate Relation, he did not spurn rootedness neither did he distinguish rhizome from root in diametric opposition. (It also bears noting that Clarke sees Stuart’s work as succeeding where Glissant failed [i.e., in constituting “a radical epistemological break with the dominant discourse in the study of Caribbean culture”].) Richard Clarke, “Root Versus Rhizome: An ‘Epistemological Break’ in Francophone Thought” in *Journal of West Indian Literature* 9, no. 1 (April 2000): 12-41. Also see Orlando Patterson, “Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study,” in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, eds. H. Adams and L. Searle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975): 305-49; Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (New York: Harvester, 1993), 392-403.

²¹ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xvi. Acknowledging the paradox resident within folklore, Glissant writes, “though folklore debilitates, it just as powerfully creates rhizomes. One could say that modernity, when it puts us thus in a position to be relative without being lost, coadjusts without confusing” (*Poetics of Relation*, 199).

arose from plantation slavery.”²² In other words, their rhythmic repetition through performative re-memberings is the verbal carnality, the creolized poetics of Relation, that constitutes strategic consolidation of a diverse communal cross-cultural and transnational identity through the conveyance and construal of meaning and practice; and always in Relation to and/or resistance against the dominant Root-tree/culture. (Even in the transmission of communal values, particularity is privileged.)

Aside from policing the corroboration of credibility via the appropriate avenues of authority and authorization, *continental thought* presumes (and demands) the principal task of the responsible historian, philosopher, sociologist, theologian, literary critic or scholar of religion and/or the Bible is the effectual establishing of *root* terms; a nefarious symptom of Western European logocentrism. The rhizomatic thinking of the archipelagos, however, reminds us that as concepts, terminology like any body (human and non-human alike), may only be elucidated and grasped *in Relation* to (their engagement/interactions with) other bodies. Rather than commencing by clearly defining terminology, through a poetics of Relation concepts retain their opacity and abstrusity and it is only as we successively encounter them that we become better acquainted. In relation to the text-body, ideas are defined, affected, and altered by and through other conceptual bodies in ever-emerging mo(ve)ments, but never to possess absolutely. (Whether spoken or written, words are always already vulnerable to interpretation,

²² Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 6.

corruption, transmutation, and/or extinction.) As Glissant advised: “displace all reduction.”²³

I seek to resist and thereby displace the over-simplification of Africana and dismissal of its particularities, a symptom of empiricism that has led to its misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and at times its relative erasure by Western European epistemologies (and, specifically, the Frankfurt School’s monopoly on critical theory), which, incapable of adequately apprehending or interpreting Africana, do not consider it an authoritative and equally legitimate epistemology and critical theory. Like Glissant of *Antillanité*, creolization, and poetics, Reiland Rabaka depicts Africana not as a static body of knowledge but as a way of relating to and within time, space, and (the constant revision of) history.²⁴ Africana is an onto-epistemology, it is rooted (in Africa) *and* it is rhizomatic, it is diasporic and it is archipelagic; defined not by the Root but by its movement(s). As a complex onto-epistemology and as a critical theoretical discourse, Africana represents a multiplicity of embodiments and expressions of an oralituary epistemology “rooted” in Africa, and Afro-Caribbean philosophy is but one of its many (cross-cultural) modes; undeniably one of its most fluid and motile nodes that likewise

²³ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 190. In distinction from transparency, opacity becomes necessary for true solidarity in Glissant’s theorizing of Relation. (See Glissant, 189-194.) “[O]pacity is also the force that drives every community: the thing that would bring us together forever and make us permanently distinctive. Widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent of nonbarbarism. We clamor for the right to opacity for everyone” (194).

²⁴ Reiland Rabaka, *Africana Critical Theory: Reconstructing the Black Radical Tradition, from W. E. B. Du Bois and C. L. R James to Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral*. Kindle Edition. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), Loc. 321. Rabaka’s approach to elucidating Africana Critical Theory itself reflects an anti-colonial, archipelagic approach (that resists reduction). Rabaka does not commence his 2009 monograph answering the question “What is Africana?” This and other relevant inquiries, instead, permeate the volume, which offers rhizomatic reflections upon these queries and a robust mapping of the discursive field that is Africana (as) critical theory.

contains various modes and nodes (e.g., Negritude, Créolité, the Rastafari, etc.).²⁵

(Retaining differences and Diversity even as they resonate.)

In *Caliban's Reason*, Paget Henry identifies the ways in which distinctively Africana ways of knowing, being, and relating conflict with Western European epistemologies, why and how Afro-Caribbean philosophers, in particular, can and have creatively and effectively responded to and from within this tension. Henry sets up the various dichotomies, which, like the oral and the literary, have plagued Africana, resulting in psychic fragmentation and what W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon deemed double consciousness.²⁶ Primary among them, Henry asserts, is the presumed difference between “philosophy” (i.e., continental thought) and its Afro-Caribbean counterpart—a disparity he locates in divergent views on the notion of subjectivity and expression.²⁷

²⁵ The Relation of Africana to its various oral/literary modes likewise should not be oversimplified nor their differences collapsed in order to highlight the level of complexity and diversity within this onto-epistemology and critical discourse. In his chapter entitled “Afro-American Philosophy: A Caribbean Perspective,” Paget Henry argues for an Africana philosophy, which might become the bloom space for previously distinct diasporic African philosophical discourses, embracing African, Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, and other diasporic African philosophies in order that their collaboration might resolve their previous invisibility and irrelevance due to “European racism and imperialism” (163). Delineating the similarities in the ego formation of continental and diasporic Africans through the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, Henry establishes “the important interchanges, parallels, and similarities necessary for [their] shared discursive field” in order to “share an Africana identity and a distinct Africana tradition of philosophical self-reflection” (164). See Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, 163-165.

²⁶ Henry addresses the specifics of the internalization of the colonial experience upon the Afro-Caribbean psyche due to the implantation of the “imago of the Negro” implanted by European colonization, resulting in Afro-Caribbeans having “both an African and European image of themselves. These contradictory self-images left the Afro-Caribbean psyche divided, vulnerable to ego collapse, and thus open to experiences of the ‘zone of nonbeing.’” Henry is, of course, referencing Fanon’s development of the Duboisian double consciousness in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, 93.

²⁷ See Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, 45-49. Henry explains, “From the point of view of the creative or world-constituting self, the culture of a people may be defined as the expression of a distinct consciousness of existence articulated in a variety of discourses.

Akin to Glissant, Henry understands continental thought to affirm an absolute autonomous and independent thinking subject whereas Afro-Caribbean philosophy, as archipelagic thinking, is incommensurate with such an individualistic philosophical anthropology. The sociologist explains that while Eurocentric philosophy is invigorated by existential inquiry, as a discourse, it understands itself to transcend history and quotidian life, time and place. The dilemma that inheres in Africana as a discourse, then, is precisely in the encounter, representation, and challenge of (the paradox of) oral literature within a Western European epistemological schema. How to be recognized and acknowledged when the (Western) dominant discourse cannot even comprehend your language, not to mention the ambivalence surrounding such an engagement and its negotiation. In other words, the legitimate desire to obfuscate and/or refuse dialogue entirely.²⁸ A desire, which most often manifests in the performative

Philosophy is often the discourse which we get the most general formulations of that consciousness of existence. Among Euro-Caribbeans, the consciousness that informed culture and philosophy was one that framed existence as a Faustian/imperial struggle to subdue all of nature and history. This was an insurrectionary rupture with the established cosmic order of things that inaugurated a new era in the relations between the European ego and the world. It globalized the European project of existence, weakened the powers of the gods, relocated Europeans at the center of this new world, and refigured the Caribbean into one of its subordinate peripheries.” Of course, Shakespeare’s play, *The Tempest*, is one of the “most enduring accounts” of this refiguring in its characterization of the Caribbean “native,” Caliban, and its dramatization of “the new vision of existence as the global conquest of nature and history.” Afro-Caribbean philosophy, Henry bemoans, was, therefore, “disenfranchised from the community of discourse,” and to an “extreme degree” (87).

²⁸ I am reminded of Audre Lorde’s reflections on the exhaustion and exasperation of women of Color in the face of white women’s “whiteskin privilege,” entitlement, ignorance, and expectations of the former’s explanation of their experience. (Not to mention her problematizing of white women’s seduction “into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power” [118]). See Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 114-123.

Afro-Caribbean philosophy, as an Africana and archipelagic epistemology, is acroamatic and emerges from corporeal experience.²⁹ Having been, “indelibly marked by the forces of an imperial history, and by its intertextual relations with neighboring discourses,” Afro-Caribbean philosophy is characterized by contingency, vulnerability, *marked* by history and *bound* to a particular place.³⁰ An acknowledgement of its complex contingency, however, does not foreclose its capacity to extend beyond time and space. Such radical susceptibility is the *interdependance*³¹ that becomes the very means through which Afro-Caribbean philosophy is carried into entirely new spaces of transformation; a rhizomatic recognition of rootedness sans Root identity. Afro-Caribbean philosophy is only ever *beyond* because it is always already betwixt and in-between that which is here and now and that which is perpetually frustrating (because operating outside) such fixed parameters.

As his title suggests, this dichotomy, is directly linked not simply to the colonization but the “Calibanization” of Africana peoples: the dehumanization (and metaphorical devouring) of racialized African worker’s “rationality and hence their capacity for philosophical thinking” by the Western colonial-capitalist developer.³² A White (male) trait, according to the “exclusionary racial logic” of European tradition, rationality was inaccessible to Blacks, thereby undermining the Afro-centric cultural

²⁹ As multiple and multifarious as diasporas, discourse develops in diverse and divergent ways across continents and cultural contexts. The narration of the development and trajectory of orality theory, like the various waves of the African diaspora, is full of complex layers and, like Reiland Rabaka’s critique of the development of Western philosophical discourse, is contextual and contingent.

³⁰ Henry, *Caliban’s Reason*, 1.

³¹ This is an intentional misspelling, which serves as a neologism that represents the melding of the notions of interdependence and dance, as well as their implicit resonance.

³² Henry, 12.

systems of the Caribbean as they were replaced and pushed to (re)produce Anti-African Black invisibility.³³ Throughout the nineteenth and even into the late twentieth century, Henry writes, European bourgeoisie within the Caribbean understood Africans to occupy “the zero point on the scale of human rational capability,” therefore, the European intelligencia believed them to be without philosophy and, therefore, incapable of being philosophers.³⁴ This bias, Henry asserts, was naturally inherited by Afro-Caribbean philosophy, leading to its own fragmentation, as these intellects wrestled within themselves to both assert their African roots and legitimate their scholarship³⁵—an ambivalence that inheres in the postcolonial condition universally. Caliban, the Shakespearean savage, became the archetypal antagonist of the colonial unconscious/imaginary *and* the cypher for and symbol of both the cultural and intellectual violation, erasure, and the fetishizing of Caribbean peoples by the European master/colonizer; he also, particularly through Aimé Césaire’s re-membering of Caliban in his creolized revision of *The Tempest*, became a symbol of resistance to Him.³⁶ Prior to

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 75. For a more thorough analysis of the discursive process through which the European bourgeois constructed “the cultural categories of the colonial social order,” establishing dominance through their equation with reason and displacing nonWestern cultures and peoples, but especially the “Negro”—who was “the zero-term-of-reason”—see Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis,” in *C. L. R. James’ Caribbean*, eds. Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 64-67.

³⁵ Ibid. “In sum, to understand this particularly embarrassing set of problems that have plagued Afro-Caribbean philosophy, we have to work our way through these layers of Calibanization, racial othering, discursive competition, dynamic divergences and convergences, legitimacy deficits, and inverse patterns of cultural accumulation that the tradition cultivated in order to make its contributions to the production of colonial hegemony.”

³⁶ See Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969); *A Tempest: Based on Shakespeare’s “The Tempest;” Adaptation for Black Theatre*. Trans. Richard Miller (New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1992).

his enslavement by Prospero, the island's resident colonizer, Caliban—alongside his mother Sycorax and compatriot Ariel—roamed his island-home freely. Both Césaire and later Henry's representations of Caliban reflect the ambivalence of the colonial condition and the assertion of agency by (and for) the colonized Caribbean Other. Caliban's feral defiance and revolutionary impulse as a Black slave is set in stark contrast to the mulatto Ariel's acquiescence to the colonizer's gaze. Caliban, in this sense, was a cypher for Césairean Négritude: a rejection of assimilation and the confrontation of Western imperialism, colonialism, and racism from the dignity, humanity and creative subjectivity of an authentically Black identity.

Whether or not Césaire's Caliban was inspired by a particular historical figure or is an amalgam and/or representation of diasporic African peoples in the collective struggle toward decolonization and humanization, the Martinican poet was himself indubitably influenced by one of the most prolific Jamaican leaders of all time, Marcus Mosiah Garvey. Garvey's own assertion of both personal and collective black agency incited political action both within and beyond Jamaica, serving as an important voice in the Pan-African movement as well as an integral impetus for Black Nationalism, and what would ultimately be deemed Garveyism—"a brand of militant nationalism which gave the black person a sense of identification with the whole of Africa while stressing self-reliance."³⁷ Raised in the Jamaican countryside, Garvey was an important voice in

³⁷ Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1987), 57. Paget Henry, in particular, attends to the way in which Franz Fanon's work built upon and departed from that of Garvey, Césaire, Blyden, and Padmore in their approaches to Western European mythmaking and the misrepresentation of Europe and Africa—a disparity, which Henry asserts was necessarily rooted in philosophy. Where the work of the latter was ineluctably inspired by the centering of race consciousness, the connection to Africa and the assertion of black

the international protest against Western European racial superiority and the struggle for the freedom, dignity, and equal rights of black peoples around the world, but particularly in the U.S., which is where he moved at 29.³⁸ He founded and led the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) and African Communities League, and was a great inspiration for the Rastafari movement. Garvey and C. L. R. James are but two of the radical Black thinkers both Henry and Rabaka look to as integral to Afro-Caribbean philosophy and Diasporic Africana Critical Theory and what is more broadly understood as Africana thought.³⁹

C. L. R. James, for his part, provided a Marxist critique of the postcolonial condition within the Caribbean. Through his theorizing of poeisis, James provided a creolized revision of the conceptual frame for labor, writing in 1950, “The end towards which mankind [sic] is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms is not the enjoyment, ownership or use of goods, but self-realization.”⁴⁰ Poeisis is a reverence for creation through imagination and (poetic) Relation rather than production as/and commodification. He explains that self-realization is “creativity based upon the incorporation into the individual personality of the whole previous development

identity and over and against white racism, Fanon’s project related more directly to the psychology behind this relationship and the resultant colonial ambivalence. Fanon, however, Henry reasons, through his “specific philosophical formulations” was never able to “break the binary that disenfranchised African philosophy and inhibited the emergence of a distinct regional [i.e., Caribbean] philosophy” (84). See Henry, *Caliban’s Reason*, 68-85.

³⁸ For a more comprehensive look at Marcus Garvey’s life, his greatest influences, his philosophy and politics, see Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1987), 50-67.

³⁹ In the latter, this list does not include Glissant.

⁴⁰ C. L. R. James, et al. *Facing Reality* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2006), 58.

of humanity. Freedom is creative universality, not utility.’⁴¹ The frustration with and of what James deemed the West’s “system of abduction,” spurred movements for change and for self-realization through the freedom of creative expression. And, as Sylvia Wynter posits,

for fundamental change to take place, it must take place both in the conception and in the pattern of relations...call[ing] into question both the structure of social reality and the structure of its analogical epistemology; they must involve ‘shifting our whole system of abductions. [To do this] we must pass through the threat of that chaos where thought becomes impossible.’⁴²

The poetic and political movements that erupted in the Caribbean during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries exemplify the discontent with and resistance to Western European colonization and its system of abduction as well as the solidarity of diasporic African peoples.⁴³ The work of Garvey, Césaire, James, and Franz Fanon, as well as the contributions of Edward Blyden early on in the articulation and advancement of Pan-Africanism, were vital to the development of Afro-Caribbean philosophy. Édouard Glissant and Sylvia Wynter, for their part, join the likes of Césaire, Derek Walcott and Rex Nettleford in what Henry understands to have been the poeticist tradition within the Caribbean, in distinction from the historicists named above.⁴⁴ Sylvia Wynter, however,

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Wynter, 67. Wynter is here quoting James.

⁴³ Wynter, 86, 87. See Harvey Neptune, “The Twilight Years’: Caribbean Social Movements, 1940-1960,” *Africana Age: African and African Diasporic Transformation in the 20th Century*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (2011), <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-caribbean-40.html>

⁴⁴ Henry, 93. While I do not have the space in the current project to attend to the integral Africana interventions of all the intellects Henry and Rabaka expound upon, the efforts of Edward Blyden are of particular interest and relevance to a theo-philosophical project such as my own, particularly according to his appropriation of the biblical trope of exile and the exodus in light of divine providence in his explanation of Africans forced departure and enslavement in the Americas. Blyden’s “providential historicism” was

Henry distinguishes from her Caribbean counterparts, for her instantiation of what he considers an entirely new philosophical approach whereby Wynter actualizes/accomplishes what no male thinker has yet to achieve (not even Glissant). Through her appeal to and integration of poststructuralist and Africana epistemologies, in the estimation of Henry, Wynter functions as the bridge between the poetic and the historicist and he lauds her dialectical approach as the way forward for Afro-Caribbean philosophy.⁴⁵ While I wholeheartedly agree with Henry's understanding of and exposition on Sylvia Wynter, the poet-historian herself detects this fusion already in Glissant.⁴⁶ After

highly influential in the development and strengthening of black nationalism (and, therefore, invaluable to Marcus Garvey) as it, in the words of Henry, "helped to construct a world out of the shattering of African existences by European colonialism and attempted to legitimate it through a series of providential arguments and claims." It was a "world-constituting activity... both reconstructive and historically transformative" (202). Also see Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1967) and Hollis Lynch, ed., *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of E. W. Blyden* (London: Grank Cass & Co., 1971), 26-42.

⁴⁵ Henry, 118ff. He places Michael Dash and David Scott firmly in the poststructuralist camp for their reliance upon the "standard poststructuralist dualities between language and its others (subject, spirit, history)." Aside from the European/African philosophical splitting, another of the bifurcations Henry insightfully elucidates is that of Afro-Caribbean historicists and poeticists—a detrimental dichotomy that has led to the privileging of history/historians over poetry and the poeticists and very clearly finds its roots in the West's overvaluation of the former. According to Henry, the former group includes Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James, while the latter includes Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott, and Glissant (118). While the binary so clearly delineated by the sociologist, serves to support his ultimate argument for an integration of history and poetics (in Afro-Caribbean philosophy) through a "dialectical" approach—in which historicists draw from the oeuvre of their poetic counterparts—I am not sure this dichotomy is an altogether accurate representation. (Are they ever?) Oddly, even as Henry asserts this binary, he presents exceptions to the rule in the work of both Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James, betraying the ways in which the construction of history necessarily involves thinking and writing poetically. As Glissant reminds us, any effort to write a history is haunted by poetics.

⁴⁶ Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," in *World Literature Today* Vol. 63, No. 4 (Autumn 1989): 637-48. Wynter asseverates that the only issue, which she and Glissant differed upon was his employment of *métissage* and/as his epistemic investment in the "Word of Man" and its universals

all, is not the chaotic intermingling of diverse and distinct (discursive) bodies the very performance and embodiment of his creolized poetics of Relation? I consider Wynter to be a necessary iteration of a critical intervention already in process and I believe the identification of its inauguration and/or origin is impossible, not to mention counterproductive.

It bears noting, however, that Henry's centering of Sylvia Wynter marks another important shift. A brilliant intellect, whose contributions have been highly influential for philosophy writ large, Wynter is one of the few female Afro-Caribbean writers and intellectuals recognized and respected within and beyond the archipelago, and the only Henry seriously engages.⁴⁷ Though Henry evades yet another dangerous dichotomy

(genderism, humanism, proletarianism, etc.). *Métissage*, according to Wynter, did not represent the cultural multiplicity of the Caribbean, but “a recombination of two variants of the human genome,” serving to reify “ancient symmetries and dichotomies” (647). Wynter's critique was, in fact, influential in Glissant's shift from *métissage* toward creolization. Wynter's elucidation of Glissant's critical “countertheme...of the anti-Universal” is erudite and highlights the centrality of landscape, rhythm, and/in orality. She writes, “[t]his countertheme of specificity extends from the Antilles as an Other America to that of the Creole languages themselves, of their syntax, sound, and poetics of rhythm, and confronts their orality to the written nature of the ‘official’ languages, to the specificity of the Antillean landscape, of its nonorderly seasons as explosive as the flame tree and the ponciana” (639). For further expansion on Wynter's postcolonial challenge as well as an incisive mapping of the trajectory of Glissant's ideas on identity in the Caribbean archipelagos see Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/colonial Literature* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998), 25-71, 126-188.

⁴⁷ Wynter, Lorna Goodison, Michelle Cliff, and Pamela Mordecai are all Jamaica-born writers, who have produced prolific poetic and political as well as critical theoretical interventions yet their contributions have gone relatively unacknowledged. (Wynter and Goodison in particular are Afro-Caribbean intellectuals who, growing up in Jamaica in the 1960's and 70's, were influenced by the Rastafarian movement—relationships I will further explore/engage in my next chapter.) Resisting systemic oppression and dehumanization is a primary theme and intentional objective in their work, drawing from their experience as women operating within the strictures of a patriarchal society they build upon and critique the racism, imperialism, and misogyny that inflects and infects society, in Caribbean, European and North American postcolonial contexts. (For both Wynter and Goodison, the Rastafari engage in working to semantically and politically

within Afro-Caribbean philosophy, Wynter herself exposes the historic denial not only of Africana episteme but of Caribbean women writers and intellectuals by their own communities and male contemporaries. This inequity, however, has in no way inhibited the creative expression and self-realization of these female intellectuals, whose “inscriptions of orality,” in the words of Renée Larrier, “extend beyond the incorporation of oral forms and even beyond the discourse of [*Antillanité*]...reclaim[ing] sites of inscription for women in societies where they often pass unacknowledged as storytellers.”⁴⁸ A point to which I will return in the next section.

As both Wynter and Glissant, and James before them, have claimed, in order to reconstruct society and reclaim political sovereignty within the Caribbean, “the great unifying cultural forms” of Africana within the archipelago, such as folktales, poetry, and

subvert colonialism, capitalism, and Eurocentrism, while also reinstating oppression through patriarchy.) I will revisit this inequity later in this chapter and the next. For now, however, I would like to attend to Wynter’s reading of Glissant as well as (his influence upon) her own dialectic approach to history and poetics. See Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles,” *World Literature Today*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Autumn 1989): 637-48; Michelle Cliff, *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1980); Pamela Mordecai and Betty Wilson, eds., *Her True-True Name* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1989).

⁴⁸ Renée Larrier, *Francophone Women Writers of African and the Caribbean* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 6. Larrier is interested not only in the way in which storytelling has been represented as an almost exclusively male activity, but is especially intrigued by the exclusion of women from drumming. She observes, “in most West African and Caribbean societies women do not play drums and are thus excluded from this particular site of inscription” (8). Querying, “what is their comparable space? How are women implicated in the general enterprise of orality?” In my own experience in the West Indies, while song is “defined as a female genre” and women participate in various styles of dance throughout the islands, I have never personally known a woman to bang the drum” (Larrier, 14). Critical history is implicitly misogynistic. The Nardal sisters and Aime Césaire’s first wife are not usually included. A few years ago, *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities* was published. Rhonda Ruddock, the editor and contributors are rarely recognized outside the Caribbean. The fn’s point is taken but it does not fit well here. It could but you’d have to make the connection in a pointed way.

storytelling, must be revisited, revived, and re-membered.⁴⁹ Defying the enforced duality of the colonizer within the Caribbean is, Wynter argues, the significance of these mediums, of “jazz and its derivatives...of calypso and carnival, of reggae and Rastafarianism.”⁵⁰ Each of these rhythmic performative Africana cultural forms occupy the space between the oral and the written, therefore, before I turn to an exploration of these modes and their importance to and for this process within the Antilles, I would like to consider the relationship of orality and literature within Africana over the past 50 years in light of (Root) colonization.

Oraliture in/and Africana: Oral Literature, English, & Its Creolized Oralituary Undoing

Paget Henry’s articulation of the tensions that plague Afro-Caribbean philosophy are indicative of a much larger malady afflicting Africana that is, in many ways, due to what has been conceptualized not simply as cultural or racial/ethnic difference but as an epistemic difference. At its most rudimentary this distinction might be represented as the oral and the written, where the latter has been historically, epistemologically privileged over the former within continental thought.⁵¹ This hierarchical bifurcation, though not identified explicitly by Paget Henry, has been fundamental to the (legitimization of the) colonial project and the internalization of empiricism, which has led to the diffusion, ubiquity, and reification of the Duboisian double consciousness, inflecting the writing of Africana intellectuals and their approach to orality as an academic discourse. The ways in

⁴⁹ Ibid., 87.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See Althea Spencer-Miller. “Rethinking Orality for Biblical Studies,” in *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step*, ed., Roland Boer (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 35-68.

which the privileging, idealizing and, therefore, prevalence of the English language in Africana literature has inflected the struggle for representation, self-realization, and cultural persistence is central to the decolonizing project of many Africana intellectuals. Chinua Achebe's "The African Writer & the English Language" may be one of the most acclaimed articulations.⁵² The Nigerian poet opens his essay with a freighted inquiry, querying, "What is 'African literature'?"⁵³ As his title suggests, however, Achebe's aim is to explore the ways in which the English language—an implement of and cipher for Western colonialism—has imposed itself upon the African writer.

Achebe laments the languishing of the African writer, forced to appropriate English in order to legitimate herself as in intellect, not to mention the African peoples, who, in their own homeland, contrived as nation under the auspices of British colonial rule, must assimilate in order to survive; all doing so at the expense of their "native tongue(s)."⁵⁴ The continent of Africa may be one of the most salient examples of the Western European colonizer's deployment of English as apparatus of colonization, and the Bible has often served as grammar book. As Fanon famously asserted, language itself is one of the most insidious and effective tools of colonization.⁵⁵ While language and,

⁵² Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer & the English Language," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 428-34. (Also published in 1975 in his *Morning Yet on Creation Day*.) Achebe is best-known for his "magnum opus" *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958. This piece was originally a speech he gave in 1964.

⁵³ Achebe, 428. Achebe expounds upon the multifarious meaning within this query: what makes literature *African*, the continent from which it is derived and/or the language in which it is written? Must it be composed or produced on the continent, African themed, produced by "Black Africa"?

⁵⁴ Achebe, 429, 420. While Achebe asserts that "the national literature of Nigeria and of many other countries of Africa is, or will be, written in English," it is not only Nigeria nor solely the continent of Africa for/in which this is the case.

⁵⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Weidenfield, 1967), 17ff.

therefore, labels may have been violently imposed upon indigenous peoples, their institution and application by the colonial imagination may impede but does not entirely preclude their subversion. Armed with their own cultural creations, songs and stories, Achebe argues the African writer need not abandon her “mother tongue” but should creatively appropriate the English language. The African writer’s aim should be, Achebe states,

To use English in ways that brings out his [*sic*] message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience...[a] writer who has something new, something different to say...I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.⁵⁶

Achebe’s vision for *a new English* is undoubtedly reminiscent of Glissant’s creolization and the carnivalesque spirit. However, while he attends to this challenge and its creative evasion, he limits his prescription to literature. In other words, by focusing solely upon African literature in its written form, Achebe fails to expose, much less frustrate, the very tension resident in his initial inquiry, forgoing the subversive, anti-colonial potency in the hybrid entanglement of the oral and literary.⁵⁷ Glissant is instructive here, for it is not a “pure” or original language that must be asserted or

⁵⁶ Achebe, 433, 434.

⁵⁷ Not to mention *how the significance and signification of the phrase “African literature” multiplies exponentially depending upon which term one emphasizes*. Not only, then, is one querying, ‘what makes literature *African*?’—a question that is geographical, identitarian, thematic and often racially freighted—but ‘what makes African forms of expression *literature*?’ In other words, must it be written in order to qualify as literature? Of course, it might also be argued that this interrogatory is, in fact, implied in Achebe’s exposition on the lack of ethnic literature, written in indigenous African languages.

recovered, since the very notion of “purity” is a colonial invention contrived in order to authorize, inscribe, and sustain the Western European colonial myth of origins. The truly subversive tactic, then, involves purity’s unmasking by means of failed replication and subterfuge of the dominant linguistic system.⁵⁸ And this disruption is absolutely linked to orality, particularly manifest in creolization. Orality, however, not as panacea, but as necessary threshold. Orality, by means of Glissantian oraliture, might even be considered a heuristic in order to conceptualize the non-linear, nodal epistemologies of archipelagic or rhizomatic thinking, which continental thought has yet to behold for/in all its glory.

Isodore Okpewho highlights the common, more restrictive definition of *literature*, “creative texts that appeal to our imagination or to our emotions” and the way in which the qualifier *oral* within the Academy has served to distinguish literature transmitted “by word of mouth” from written text.⁵⁹ Okpewho, as many other Non-Western scholars, is entirely suspect of the distinction due to its problematic Eurocentric assumptions and the resulting bifurcation: the historic association of the former with literate and, therefore, legitimate cultures and scholarship and the subsequent relegation of the latter to a subordinate and, therefore, illegitimate status. Okpewho is addressing the very Calibanization of Africana philosophy and epistemologies that Henry decries, for implicit in the moniker *Literature* is an intellectual lineage which distinguishes it from folklore

⁵⁸ See Glissant, *Discourse*, 147ff. Glissant’s logic here, once again, reflects his poststructuralist tenor and resonates with the postcolonial and queer critiques of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler to name a few. Also see Celia Britton’s exposition on Glissant’s representation of this discrepancy in his musings on *Language and Langage* in Celia Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999.

⁵⁹ See Isodore Okpewho, *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Characters, and Continuity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

and prevents continental thought from ascertaining the inherent value in Africana and/as archipelagic thinking. In this way, Eurocentric methods consistently fail Africana.

Solomon Iyasere, like Glissant, Dabashi, and so many others, considers Western European methodologies far “too limited and restrictive” to adequately evaluate or even to engage Africana oraliture.⁶⁰ The methods, traditions, voices, and epistemologies privileged within the Academy cannot respond to the “unique methods [Africana] writers use to give form and pattern to their experiences.”⁶¹ Nor do Western European literary sensibilities grasp the complex ways in which Africana literature does not simply ape American and European forms or genres, “producing apprentice literature, without attempting to convert it to suit their needs.”⁶² Africana literature is art on its own merit, but it also provides an entirely other approach to literature; a re-membering other-wise. Iyasere also calls for an awakening within the Western European dominated Academy, whereby Africana literature (and scholarship) might be honored equally, as artistry and a valuable and necessary contribution. He too encourages Africana writers to draw from the wealth of indigenous Africana traditions, and specifically to embrace and integrate orality rather than acquiescing to the Eurocentric overvaluation of written texts. Iyasere is not endorsing an absolute return to African origins, but argues for intentional and explicit deference to the structural and stylistic components, the epistemologies, that make literature African or Afro-Caribbean rather than Western or European.

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, for his part, confronts this tension, that is the “ever-continuing struggle [of African people] to seize back their creative initiative in history

⁶⁰ Solomon Iyasere, “Oral Tradition in the Criticism of African Literature.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13, no. 1 (1975): 107-119. (See especially page 108)

⁶¹ Iyasere, “Oral Tradition,” 108.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 114.

through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition in time and space.”⁶³ Evoking Achebe and furthering Fanon’s critique of the colonial appropriation of language, Ngugi understands the struggle for the creative control of communal/self-definition to be rooted in history. Since the writing of history is contingent upon language, he conceptualizes the construction of communal histories, much like Glissant, as taking place through the disruption and revision of History. As he reasons in *Decolonizing the Mind*, the use of arms may have imprisoned bodies, but language is the supreme instrument through which the soul is fascinated (by colonial power) and held captive.⁶⁴ The scholar’s own ambivalent relationship to English provides a springboard for his analysis of the intimate relationship of language to human experience and “the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in [African] literature...embodied deep in imperialism.”⁶⁵ The final triumph of a system of domination, the scholar writes, is when those dominated by that system “start singing its virtues.”⁶⁶ Ngugi, like Achebe and even Henry, is proposing this of African writers who have agreeably accepted and endorsed the European languages, disparaging their cultural roots and catering to audiences that could only be the petty-bourgeoisie. It has always been the peasantry and working class, Ngugi points out, who have kept African heritage, languages, and cultures

⁶³ Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, 143. “The Language of African Literature, in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, eds. Guarav Desai and Supriya Nair (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 143-68.

⁶⁴ Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986), 4, 9.

⁶⁵ Ngugi, “The Language of African Literature,” 156.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 157, 158.

alive and even when they were forced to learn the master's language, they Africanized it.⁶⁷

What Ngugi is affirming, then, is the same sort of creative adoption and adaptation Glissant identifies in the strategic appropriation of Creole by Afro-Caribbean folk and/as the subterfuge of the French colonial master. It is the failure to conform to Western European ways of knowing, being, and relating; failure as the impossibility of absolute acquiescence or replication, subtle subversion, as well as deliberate and defiant noncompliance. This sort of subversive self-assertion is characteristic of Africana epistemologies and, more than an approach, it is a revolutionary force, an intensity we might witness in various cultural forms in and around the Caribbean. And one of its most radical embodiments is the Rastafari; a community and a movement defined by its creolization of Western European language and culture. In the vein of Edward Blyden and Marcus Garvey, the Rastafari proudly (pro)claim the dignity of their African heritage and Black identity and, refusing to sing the virtues of the Babylon system of domination, they either eschew entirely or imaginatively re-member and repurpose its apparatus in order to rail and wail against it and free themselves to construct their independent identity.⁶⁸ Such communal creative practices serve as remedies to and preventatives against what Ngugi

⁶⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁶⁸ In this way, the Rastafari are actively combatting and transcending the Kenyan writer's gravest concern: "colonial alienation;" which manifests in "an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment" (Ngugi, 163-4). According to Ngugi, colonial alienation is the primary aim and most devious trauma inflicted by the West's colonizing mission; the ubiquitous enforcement of English created the conditions for the colonization of indigenous peoples and the hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies. What begins with the deliberate disassociation from one's original language (which he likens to separating mind and body) results in the rejection of one's home community and culture.

deems “colonial alienation,” and are why he recommends African intellectuals incorporate their own languages in their writing and that their content carry the people’s “anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control.”⁶⁹ In Africana, that is, indigenous African, African American, Afro-Caribbean, and all diasporic Africana ways of knowing and being, the way forward is through. In this onto-epistemology, according to its archipelogics, the revolution of revelation is found in Relation (to the grassroots), as writers,

[R]econnect themselves to the revolutionary traditions of an organized peasantry and working class in Africa in their struggle to defeat imperialism and create a higher system of democracy and socialism in alliance with all other peoples of the world. Unity in that struggle would ensure unity in our multi-lingual diversity. It would also reveal the real links that bind the people of Africa to the peoples of Asia, South America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Canada, and the U.S.A.⁷⁰

Ngugi advocates not only communication in communal languages but dialogue across cultures as well as the intra and intercultural transmission of folklore, the sharing of our stories. The diverse unity toward which Ngugi motions indubitably inheres in creolization, it is the rhizomatic poetics of Relation, the radical revolutionary rhythms of the Rastafari, and is palpably present in the work of female Jamaican scholar, Carolyn Cooper, who represents the unity of apparent opposites and impossibility of duality within the archipelagos in their oralitrary approach.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ngugi, 165.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ In the process of writing this dissertation, Carolyn Cooper has become an important and influential interlocutor. I have begun regularly reading her blog, “Jamaican Woman Tongue: One Woman, Many Voices” <https://carolynjoycooper.wordpress.com/>

In “Writing Oral History” Cooper likewise confronts the immanent tension of self-representation and creative cultural expression in the postcolonial Caribbean. She does so, however, from the perspective of women—specifically those of the working-class Jamaican women of Sistren Theatre. Honor Ford Smith’s reflections in and performance of *Lionheart Gal: Lifestories of Jamaican Women*. *Lionheart*, she writes, is “an experiment in narrative form that exemplifies the dialogic nature of oral/scrabal and Creole/English discourse in Jamaican literature.”⁷² The author avers of the performative piece,

[I]t engenders an oral, Jamaican subversion of the authority of the English literary canon. Further, its autobiographical form—the lucid verbal flash—articulates a feminist subversion of the authority of the literary text as fiction, as transformative rewriting of the self in the persona of distanced, divine omniscience. *Lionheart Gal*, like much contemporary feminist discourse, does not pretend to be authoritative. The preferred narrative mode of many feminist writers is...testimony.⁷³

In *Lionheart Gal*, any definitive line drawn between written *text* (“illustration”) and oral *story* (“testimony”) is blurred beyond recognition—“ironically affirm[ing] the authority of the written word.”⁷⁴ The very boundaries Eurocentric convention might enforce “between literature and social document, between autobiography and fiction, between the oral and the scribal traditions,” between the personal and the political, the individual and

⁷² Carolyn Cooper, “Writing Oral History: Sistren Theatre Collective’s *Lionheart Gal*,” in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, 169.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, “Writing Oral History,” 169.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 170, 171.

collective, are sabotaged by the autonomy of autobiographical accounts as communal process, exposing the problematics of authorship and authority.⁷⁵

Unquestionably an oraliture assemblage and an exemplification of the bloom spaces which emerge in the artistic interrelation of the archipelago, *Lionheart Gal* is also a subversion of the (hegemony of the) English language as standard, introspective, epistemologically superior “father-tongue.” Here the “phallic pen” of English is disrupted by the performance of intimate relation and/in autobiographical reflection in the Jamaican *mother-tongue*, Jamikeyan or Jamaican English Patwah.⁷⁶ Cooper’s essay, like *Lionheart*, occupies the various interstices addressed in this and previous chapters, as the author explicates and artistically executes the very experimental narrative form she analyzes. Oral performance blends into transcription, from reflection to refrain, Cooper’s analysis turns into autobiography and avowal, Patwah irrupts from English in the sort of organized chaos that can only be interpreted as verbal carnality. In her creolized exposition of testimony as oraliture, Cooper’s words are animated and activated by means of her oralizing of the written toward the disruption of their dichotomy.⁷⁷

Cooper is but one of the many scholars who, like Sylvia Wynter, have, through their own integrative and interpenetrative archipelological aesthetic, critiqued the androcentric nature of the negritude, Antillanité, and Créolité movements, highlighting

⁷⁵ Ibid. Or as Cooper puts it, “The autonomous oral stories [testimonies shared by the Sistren] revolt against the constricting, scribal narrative intention of the predetermined thematic project” (171).

⁷⁶ Cooper, 172.

⁷⁷ I will return to Cooper’s broader cultural analysis and recovery in *Noises* in my treatment of Carnival and folklore en route to my exploration of rhythm and affect. Before I do so, however, I would like to explain why the Bible, as oraliture, is a Caribbean text, offering some general reflections on the major trends in orality studies and/in biblical studies.

the ways in which their veritable exclusion of women is merely a replication of Eurocentric masculinist ideology and a recolonization of the racially marked female body.⁷⁸ There have been and still are a wealth of profoundly gifted, brilliant female (as well as queer and non-binary) intellectuals that have broken open new subversive modes within the Caribbean, especially from the 1930's on. Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Suzanne Roussi (Césaire), Ina Césaire, and Dany Bébel-Gisler are just a few of the Creole women writers whose work has been sidelined if not entirely dismissed by their male contemporaries and their culture, who understood cultural production to be a purely masculine and, therefore, strictly cis-gender male activity"⁷⁹ Condé, Schwarz-Bart, Césaire, and Bébel-Gisler, according to James Arnold, distinguish themselves from those of male *créolistes* not merely on account of their gender but for their evasion of theorizing or fetishizing Creole. These intellects also often incorporate the sort of

⁷⁸ See Rhoda E. Reddock, ed. *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Jamaica, Barbados, & Trinidad and Tobago: University of West Indies Press, 2004. Similar arguments have been made by Carol Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity. Migrations of the Subject* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994); Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Gendering the Oceanic: Trespassing the (Black) Atlantic and Caribbean," *Thamyris* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1998) 205-231; idem, *Roots and Routes: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Thomas Spear, "Jouissances Carnavalesques: Représentations de la sexualité." Unpublished paper. Conference: "Expanding the Definition of Créolité." College Park: University of Maryland, 1993. For a similar critique within contemporary media see Julia Brillling, "Blackface en *Vogue*: Racialized Representations in the Fashion Magazine," in *Women's Magazines in Print and New Media*, eds. Noliwe Rooks, Victoria Pass, and Ayana Weekley (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁷⁹ A. James Arnold, "The Erotics of Colonialism in French West Indian Literary Culture," *New West Indian Guide*, vol. 68 no 1 & 2 (1994): 16. Sylvia Wynter is one among many West Indian born female writers not included in Arnold's catalogue, since she was herself critical of these movements and their essentialist presumptions. Glissant was, in fact, both lauded and challenged by Wynter for his utility of Créolite (as an essential identity).

autobiographical narrativizing Cooper illuminates in her exposition on *Lionheart Gal* through a communal practice of testimony, or what the Hispanophone Caribbean calls *testimonio*. For this reason in particular, Arnold considers their interventions “more successfully creolized” than anything produced by their male counterparts, as it is “characterized by greater openness to the wider world and less dependent upon sexual stereotypes.”⁸⁰

Testimonio also challenges the Western European framing of autobiography as individualistic.⁸¹ Through metonymic individuality, Helen Shulman Lorenz explains, “the story of a whole group of oppressed people [is] focused through the personal account of one.”⁸² Lorenz continues, “In *testimonios*, the idea is not necessarily to express individual subjectivity, uniqueness, or creativity but to give voice to what has been marginalized.”⁸³ The female *créolistes* grasped, from the first, the necessity of representing the essentially communal quality that is the creative expression of subjectivity within the archipelagos,

⁸⁰ James Arnold, “The Erotics of Colonialism in French West Indian Literary Culture,” *New West Indian Guide*, Vol. 68, no. 1/2 (1994): 16, 19.

⁸¹ I want to thank Althea Spencer Miller for directing me to the work of Helen Shulman Lorenz, “Thawing Hearts, Opening a Path in the Woods, Founding a New Lineage,” in *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*, eds. Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 496-505. She also pointed out that Derek Walcott expresses a similar consciousness in “The Schooner Flight,” when he writes, “*I and We*, Either I am nobody or I am a nation.” While Anderson (nor Walcott himself) does not include him in his category of male *créolistes*, Spencer Miller’s insight on Walcott in some ways challenges Arnold’s argument.

⁸² Lorenz, “Thawing Hearts, Opening a Path in the Woods, Founding a New Lineage,” 496.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Marcella Althaus-Reid, for her part, represents *testimonio* as marking “the ultimate acceptance of established norms and sexual regulations” and an expression of self-denial (145). Queer folks within Latin American Christian communities appropriate *testimonio*, to the contrary, in “affirmation of what normativity has denied.” Whereas the former “creates an order of conformity,” the latter, constitutes “a network of rebellious people, the sort of rebellion which nurtures theology with a deeper questioning of life” (145). See Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

giving voice to what has been marginalized (within academia).⁸⁴ They actively practice the archipelago as epistemology and as aesthetic expression. Multivalent and composite,

⁸⁴ It bears noting that the archipelagic subject formation to which Bébel-Gisler and Césaire, like Glissant and Wynter, appeal is radically Relational in resistance to the Western Root identity. It is the necessary development of what Glissant deems “a poetics of ‘subject’,” on account of being “too long ‘objectified’ or rather ‘objected to’” (*Discourse*, 149). Felix Guattari attends to this “pathic subjectivation,” which he considers central to “all modes of subjectivity.” However, it is systematically circumvented because “overshadowed in rationalist, capitalistic subjectivity.” He continues, “Science is constructed by bracketing these factors of subjectivation, which achieve Expression only when certain discursive links are put outside of signification. Freudianism, although impregnated with scientism, can, in its early stages, be characterized as a rebellion against a positivist reductionism which tended to do without these pathic dimensions. In Freudianism the symptom, the lapsus or joke are conceived as detached objects allowing a mode of subjectivity, which has lost its consistency, to find the path to a ‘coming to existence.’ The symptom through its own repetitiveness functions like an existential refrain. The paradox resides in the fact that pathic subjectivity tends to be constantly evacuated from relations of discursivity, although discursive operators are essentially based on it. The existential function of assemblages of enunciation consists in this utilization of links of discursivity to establish a system of repetition, of intensive insistence, polarized between a territorialized existential Territory and deterritorialized incorporeal Universes—two metaphysical functions we can describe as onto-genetic. The Universes of referential value confer their own texture on machines of Expression articulated in machinic Phylums. Complex refrains, beyond the simple refrains of territorialization, restates the singular consistency of these Universes. (For example, the pathic apprehension of harmonic resonances based on the diatonic scale deploys the ‘foundation’ of consistency in polyphonic music, just as in another contest the apprehension of the possible concatenation of numbers and algorithms deploys the foundation of mathematical idealities.) The abstract machinic consistency which is thus conferred on assemblages of enunciation resides in the layering and ordering of partial levels of existential territorialization. What’s more the complex refrain functions as an interface between actualized registers of discursivity and non-discursive Universes of virtuality. It is the most deterritorialized aspect of the refrain, its dimension of incorporeal Universes of value which takes control of the most territorialized strata. It does this through a movement of deterritorialization that develops fields of the possible, tensions in value, relations of heterogeneity, of alterity, of becoming other. The difference between these Universes of value and Platonic Ideas is that the former do not have a fixed character. They involve constellations of Universes, within which a component can affirm itself over others and modify the initial referential configuration and dominant mode of valorization. (For example, we can see through the course of Antiquity the primacy of a military machine based on metal weapons affirming itself over the despotic State machine, the writing machine, the religious machine, etc.) The crystallization of such constellations can be ‘overtaken’ during the course of historical

diverse and rhizomatic, *testimonio* is but one archipelagic iteration of the verbal carnality that is oraliture. And because oraliture emerges, Glissant ruminates, in the *synthesis of written syntax and spoken rhythms, of “acquired” writing and oral “reflex,” of the solitude of writing and the solidarity of the collective voice*, an archipelagic hermeneutic helps us to honor and experience the intimate and complex relational poetics of the oral and the written.⁸⁵

Transparency and the Transformation of Consciousness? The Roots Routing (of Biblical Studies): From Orality to Intelligibility, Poetry to Prose

The Bible is oraliture. And before much of the Bible was written, it was orally transmitted; its stories and statements were performed and participated in. This truism will not shock the reader and yet somehow its fantastic and imaginative tales, the proverbs, the poetry, the apocalypses and the epistles are rarely read as such. It would appear that due to the predominance of Western European episteme (as Glissant has illuminated), most of us trained within its epistemological regime simply do not know

discursivity, but never wiped out since it is an irreversible rupture in the incorporeal memory of collective subjectivity. Thus, we are situated totally outside the vision of Being moving unchanged through the universal history of ontological formations. There are singular incorporeal constellations which belong to natural and human history and at the same time escape them by a thousand lines of flight” (26-7). Guattari’s argument here conjures J.L. Austen’s speech acts and resonates implicitly with the Marxist notion of interpellation as explicated in the works of Louis Althusser, Foucault, and later Judith Butler. See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Toward an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (Verso, 1970), 162, 174-6; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1976); and Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁸⁵ Glissant, *Discourse*, 147. These women’s writing takes shape at multiple intersections and edges, writing and speech is but one. They embody the synthesis Glissant evinces, the “synthesis of written syntax and spoken rhythms, of ‘acquired’ writing and oral ‘reflex,’ of solitude of writing and the solidarity of the collective voice.”

how to read orally, or oraliturally.⁸⁶ Though many perceive the Bible affectively, readers are more generally unable to conceptualize and, therefore, to think or theorize the Bible as oraliture, rendering it virtually unintelligible since we are incapable of interpreting it as such. Ironically, rather than seeking out the Wisdom within oral cultures, who would know how to read the Bible, the production of oral cultures, the Bible was itself deployed as a tool to teach colonies to read, to speak, and to think the language of the colonizer (i.e., according to a Western European epistemological Root schema). In an effort to recognize and rectify this vituperative violence and its toxic and traumatic effects and affects, we must recognize the Bible as oraliture and, due to its ubiquity and status as a Caribbean text, interpret the Bible in conversation with Africana archipelagic epistemologies, toward biblical oralituracy and global healing.

In *From Orality to Orality*, James Maxey elucidates the issue in this way,

Many Christians in North America and Europe understand the Bible to be a literary production like many other books produced today. They understand that access to the Bible is uniquely available by literacy, a type of individual, silent, deciphering of written code. With such assumptions, the transmission of the Bible to other parts of the world—for example Africa—has been accompanied by the agenda of literacy. This has been done with minimal attention to what is often a predominant part of everyday life: the verbal arts are often the means of communication. People speak and people hear. Important stories are artfully told, and communities participate in this storytelling that is part of who they are, their identity...[the Bible] was composed to be heard and to be experienced in a communal setting. This oral setting is not so different than the oral settings found in places such as Africa today.⁸⁷

Since the inception of Form Criticism and the search for oral traditions within the Hebrew Bible, and, of course, Hermann Gunkel's *The Legends of Genesis*—which is

⁸⁶ And the fact that even the suggestion appears oxymoronic evinces our incapacity to even conceptualize their collusion and coalition, that is, their implicit Relation.

⁸⁷ James Maxey, *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 1.

recognized as the origin of orality studies—biblical studies has increasingly honored the oral *forms* inhering in the Bible, specifically through folktale and orality studies and more recently cultural criticism.⁸⁸ Its translation and interpretation, however, has, for centuries, Maxey writes, “presupposed literacy rather than orality as the predominant means of communication for the Bible’s creation, transmission, and reception.”⁸⁹ There has been a wealth of scholarship on orality in both testaments, but in academia, this has largely been a project of form and only recently of performance, and each testament has had its respective trajectory, according to their variance in structure, content, and context. Following in the footsteps of Albert Lord, Milman Parry, Eric Havelock, Berkley Peabody, Walter Ong, George Kennedy, and more recently Joanna Dewey and John Miles Foley, the range of Hebrew Bible scholars includes Susan Niditch, Robert Culley, David Gunn, Claudia V. Camp, James Crenshaw, Carole Fontaine, Galit Hasan-Rokem, Raymond Van Leeuwen, and Gerald West.⁹⁰ Among the more prominent in the New Testament are Werner Kelber, Foley, Richard Horsley, Holly Hearon, David Rhoads, Rafael Rodriguez, James Maxey, and more recently Althea Spencer-Miller.⁹¹

Orality, or what Larry Hurtado has deemed the “oral fixation,” within biblical studies is traditionally understood to have originated with Werner Kelber’s *The Oral and*

⁸⁸ Hermann Gunkel, *Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1901).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ For a mapping of orality within Hebrew Bible see Robert Culley, “Oral Tradition and Biblical Studies,” *Oral Tradition* 1, no. 1 (1986): 30-65; Susan Niditch, “Oral Tradition and Biblical Scholarship,” *Oral Tradition* 18, no. 1 (March 2003): 43-44. West is distinct in this list, for while he is indubitably invested in orality studies, his area of specialization is contextualized criticism and particularly African Christian theologies and biblical hermeneutics.

⁹¹ These lists are by no means comprehensive but meant to offer a few of the more well-known and influential scholars within the field.

the Written Gospel (1983).⁹² Kelber and Walter Ong were contemporaries and Ong was especially influential to Kelber's biblical interpretation through orality, particularly *Orality and Literacy*, which was not the first but is arguably the most renowned representation of the traditional hierarchical bifurcation of the oral and the written; where the former is associated with savage cultures and the latter is (as Ong's title suggests) indicative of civilized (i.e., more evolved) societies.⁹³ While his own interdisciplinarity led to his accessibility for scholars across the humanities and social sciences, Ong's influence upon Kelber gave him exceptional prominence within biblical studies, and the New Testament especially. Ong's approach represents the traditional Western European approach to orality, which has its roots in the structuralist analysis of Claude Lévi-

⁹² See Larry Hurtado, "Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? 'Orality,' 'Performance,' and Reading Texts in Early Christianity," *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 60, Issue 3 (July 2014): 321-340. Ong and Kelber transformed the way orality was done in NT studies. The beginning of orality studies lies with *Legends of Genesis*. This suggests that you should indicate that you are in greater interlocution with NT scholarship on orality than HB. But be sure that you understand the history of orality studies in the HB.

⁹³ Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*. 30th Anniversary Edition (New York: Routledge, 2012), 169-175. His scholarship was based largely upon his field research, for Ong was an anthropologist and a biblical scholar. Though his work has experienced a bit of a renaissance in the past couple decades, it was not Ong, but Lévi-Strauss who first championed this dualism, and Lévi-Strauss was simply applying the framework of the patriarch of structuralism, Ferdinand Saussure himself. As Ong observes that within Structuralist analysis, "often accused of being overly abstract and tendentious—all structures discerned turn out to be binary (we live in the age of the computer), and binarisms is achieved by passing over elements, often crucial elements, that do not fit binary patterning. Moreover, the binary structures, however interesting the abstract patterns the form, seem not to explain the psychological urgency of a narrative and thus they fail to account for why the story is a story" (Ong, 161). Ong is able to see beyond this binary frame, but, as his representations of orality and writing betray, he is not entirely free from the Western European drive to dichotomize. Some of the other scholars who pre-dated and influenced Ong, include Jack Goody, Ruth Finnegan, David Olson, Marshall McLuhan, and Eric Havelock, whose work has proven to be more most nuanced than his contemporaries. Each in many ways depicts the relationship in a quasi-linear progression.

Strauss, but in distinction from Lévi-Straussian anthropology, integrates the “psychodynamics of oral expression,” and for these reasons is relevant.⁹⁴ Rather than offering a conventional mapping of orality within biblical studies, or elucidating the divergences and convergences of orality within the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, I will focalize upon Ong and Havelock’s work (with a brief nod to recent ethnographic, transdisciplinary approaches to orality), I will attend to the fundamental ways in which their scholarship is empiricist and representative of the traditional Western European paradigm and how they have been catalytic for orality and/in biblical studies, and, finally, I will consider the relevance of these developments for an archipelagic, Relational remembering of the Bible (which decenters Western European episteme).

Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* was groundbreaking in its scope and breadth. Originally published in 1982, his research was contemporaneous with other studies on orality and reflects the shifting climate of interdisciplinarity in literary and ethnographic studies as well as the heightened interest in and emphasis upon orality. Due to the monolithic, Eurocentric nature of *Orality and Literacy*, it is best to consider his work in conversation with the more inclusive, diverse and transdisciplinary (but less well-known) work, which bears the same name and was edited by Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Nathalia Khanenko-Friesen.⁹⁵ These works represent different theoretical endeavors and aims, where the former juxtaposes orality and literacy by analyzing the relationship and presenting research on oral cultures from which generalized characteristics of orality are deduced, the latter provides its

⁹⁴ Ibid., 160-1.

⁹⁵ Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Nathalia Khanenko-Friesen, eds., *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

reader with the voices and experiences of oral peoples through their experience and in resistance to the Academy's/Modernity's privileging of the written to oral communication and representation. Ong's work no doubt reflects the era in which he was writing and, due to its Eurocentric paradigm, it has received its share of criticism. In fact, in the preface to the thirtieth anniversary edition of Ong's monograph, John Hartley explicates Ong's unrivaled influence upon the field of orality and attends to the manifold criticisms his work has received throughout the decades and his attempts to remain current.

Orality and Literacy is Ong's analysis of "oral cultures" with the express intent to understand the psychodynamics of oral cultures in order to conceptualize characteristics and apply these traits as categorical universals that might further literary and cultural studies.⁹⁶ One of his more significant contributions is his mapping of "the shift from oral to written speech." As many scholars have submitted, even as he sought to distance himself from it, Ong's project is unequivocally influenced and inhibited by the traditional (Western philosophical) presumption about the relationship between orality and literacy, in which the latter is a more evolved, advanced, and intelligent epistemological state of consciousness. While Ong concedes that orality is no longer viewed as "savage," "primitive," and, therefore, "inferior"—as it once was in the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, or Franz Boas, for instance—only paragraphs later, he contends that "orality is not an ideal, and never was," betraying the perseverance and obstinacy of Western empiricism's subordination of oral cultures.⁹⁷ The scholar makes

⁹⁶ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 115. See "Some Psychodynamics of Orality," 31-76.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 171. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963); *idem*, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966); 1967b); Lucien Lévy-

the imperviousness and intransigence of this presupposition, and the deleterious chasm delineated between the two, even more evident when he asserts that approaching orality “positively is not to advocate it as a permanent state for any culture. Literacy opens possibilities to the word and to human existence unimaginable without writing.”⁹⁸ Ong views orality as neither “despicable” nor “completely eradicable” but considers “both orality and the growth of literacy out of orality are necessary for the evolution of consciousness.”⁹⁹ Herein lies the travesty of Ong’s pernicious paradigm and/as the legacy of continental thought and/in the sciences and humanities: that the so-called shift from orality to literacy is interpreted as *necessary for the evolution of consciousness*.¹⁰⁰

Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1926) and *Primitive Mentality* (1923). Also see Marshal McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (London: Penguin Books, 1967). Lévi-Strauss especially represents this trend of fascination with and fetishization of the “savage” Other, which led him to study and objectify oral cultures and indigenous peoples (such as the Guaycuru, the Bororó, and the Nambikuára of Brazil) as social scientific subjects. Lévi-Strauss’ project is often and more generally conceptualized as the application of Saussurean structural linguistics to anthropology, hence the moniker “structural anthropology.” Ong, then, was following in the footsteps of a well-established tradition, which seeks to generalize empirical data that it might be organized into a structure, allowing for greater understanding, analysis and predictability of the human mind, cultures, and social relations. Interestingly, Lévi-Strauss’ work on the origin and explanation of the Trickster has received harsh criticism, primarily because he is working from a dualistic framework that cannot adequately comprehend the worldview and epistemologies (anthropology or cosmology) of non-Western peoples. Also see Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*; idem, *The Race Question*. (*Caveat emptor*: Each of these works is Eurocentric, racist, and borderline white supremacist in its assumptions, presumptions, biases, and representations of the non-Western cultures engaged. I am not sure, for instance, which is more offensive, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s book title or its original cover.)

⁹⁸ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 171.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁰⁰ An argument first advanced by Eric Havelock in *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

Ong can and should most certainly be credited with understanding the relationship of orality and literacy as dynamic and, therefore, arguing for a necessary dialogue between the two in all fields of academic research, particularly biblical studies.¹⁰¹ However, to conceive of writing as raising consciousness in distinction from orality, as he does, is to imply that oral cultures are incapable of such (“more enlightened”) levels of self-awareness and understanding. It is to render their epistemologies and philosophical discourses illegitimate and incapable of valid contribution unless and until they have transitioned (read: evolved) into a so-called literate society; thereby, reinscribing the hegemony of Western European epistemology (countries and peoples).¹⁰² Like Lévi-Strauss, Ong understood the oral word as arriving on the scene primarily, illuminating consciousness through language (whereby subject and predicate are different but entirely interrelated) and connecting humans one to another.¹⁰³ It is writing, however, that introduces division, alienation and the possibility for individual attention to the interior self.¹⁰⁴ Ong observes that “self-consciousness is coextensive with humanity,” yet there appear to be degrees or levels of self-consciousness to which only “literate” peoples have access.¹⁰⁵ Are his readers, then to assume that those who do not write have self-consciousness but not consciousness as a self, ergo, exempting them from humanity and

¹⁰¹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 169, 170.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁰³ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966). (Originally published in French in 1966.)

¹⁰⁴ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 174. Ong writes, “without a writing system, breaking up thought—that is, analysis—is a high-risk procedure. As Lévi-Strauss has well put it in a summary statement ‘the savage [i.e., oral] mind totalizes’ (1976, p. 245).” In Glissantian terms, it is capable of conceptualizing the world and being in and as *totality*.

¹⁰⁵ There appears to be a hierarchy even among the literate, as Plato and Eric Havelock’s arguments exhibit, where prosaic writing (and thinking) surpasses the poetic. See note

the category human altogether (rendering them unintelligible as a life)?¹⁰⁶ It would appear that Ong himself had not learned from humanity's failures throughout history—particularly those perpetrated by the colonial West against the very oral cultures and proclivities he seeks to honor and illumine.

My critique of Ong is not novel. John Hartley, for his part, reflects upon Ong's tremendous impact upon the field of orality studies, but is ardent and impartial in his presentation of the criticism Ong's work has received over the past few decades. chief among them is Ong's proposition that literacy "restructures" or "transforms human consciousness."¹⁰⁷ Though Ong's assertion was undoubtedly a "simplified over-generalization," not to mention an unnecessary extrapolation, his research on the history of learning systems was substantial and not without benefit.¹⁰⁸ Like much sociological research and hypotheses proffered and propagated by Western European scholars, for all his commendable intentions and valuable contributions to the field, Ong's work seems yet another example of what Althea Spencer-Miller has deemed empirical "voyeurism;" lacking the voices and perspectives of those from within oral cultures and foreclosing opportunities to incorporate such oraliterate epistemologies. One might say, then, that Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Nathalia Khanenko-Friesen's volume is an example of more recent efforts to do just that.

In a particularly incisive essay within the volume, "Telling the Untold," Oksana Kis explores the value of endorsing oral history to traditional (primarily Western, Eurocentric) written forms, presumed to be objective, representing the 'past-in-itself.'

¹⁰⁶ See note 43 in the Introduction.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

Oral history, inherently autobiographical, interrogates the factual nature of history (as History) to be a myth and exposes “the validity of historical records” by emphasizing its contingency as present-day interpretations of (past) experience.¹⁰⁹ Reminiscent of Glissant’s argument, Kis argues that while chirographic History’s static nature gives the air of authority and, therefore, validity, oral histories are fluid and malleable, performative and interactive, thereby reflecting the always already interpreted, (inter)changeable, and relational quality that defines any historical account and its recounting.¹¹⁰ Of course, as Khanenko-Friesen reasons, “the fixed ordering of events and actions, with its propensity to create a fixed meaning and message for the narrative, speaks of a particular kind of narrativization;”¹¹¹ one only retrospectively imbued with an authoritative and affective force, which had to be enforced, repeated, restricted and regulated. Narrativization has fixed and rooted because recorded (as History) and written prosaically (as Literature) reflects the epistemological paradigm that rules as unique Root and has reigned since the Greek society in which it was birthed through the Western Empire’s empiricism that has fought so desperately to defend and maintain it.¹¹²

How, then, can we honor the fluidity and fixity of narrativization? And is it even possible to document oral history so as to retain its opacity and fluidity, understanding,

¹⁰⁹ Oksana Kis, “Telling the Untold: Representations of Ethnic and Regional Identities in Ukrainian Women’s Autobiographies,” in *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*, eds. Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Nathalia Khanenko-Friesen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 282.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 286, 288.

¹¹¹ Nathalia Khanenko-Friesen, “From Family Lore to a People’s History: Ukrainian Claims to the Canadian Prairies,” in *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*, 189.

¹¹² Twyla Gibson, “The Philosopher’s Art,” in *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*, 78-79. Gibson deals directly with the construction of history (*facts, reliability, and “truth”*) in Ancient Greece and the impact such determinations have had upon our interpretation of “history.”

honoring, and re-membering (narrative) other-wise? (And particularly when the chirographic textualization of oral tradition carries stories beyond their communities of “origin,” thereby submitting them to “de-sacralizing and trivializing,” not to mention the loss of meaning, mood and moral.)¹¹³ Oral communities face a legitimate threat in the written recording of their histories, wisdom, folktales, and traditions. Rather than conceiving of the oral and written in a chronological relationship (where the latter co-opts the former), Susan Gingell contends, that many Aboriginal peoples are coming to see writing as an extension of oral tradition, affording them the opportunity to retain, reference, reproduce and reflect upon (various versions of) their oral traditions.¹¹⁴ Honoring the necessary relationship of the oral and the written, the wisdom of their cultural epistemologies and creative expression can be disseminated widely, reaching a larger, even a global audience.¹¹⁵ In this way, they may “speak to social, political, and spiritual problems that undermine well-being in the non-Aboriginal world as well, offering tellings of sacred stories as medicine for what ails us all.”¹¹⁶ As much as this impulse to elevate the innovations and insights of oral peoples (to the level of antidote to

¹¹³ Susan Gingell, “The Social Lives of Sedna and Sky Woman: Print Textualization from Inuit and Mohawk Oral Traditions,” in *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*, 137, 139.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 138, 139.

¹¹⁵ Bronwen Low and Mela Sarker understand Glissant’s *oraliture* to be writing “infused with the characteristics of oral expression and tradition. Within this vision the oral and the written enrich, contest, subvert and repeat the other—always in relationship” (114). Bronwen Low and Mela Sarker, “Translanguaging in the Multilingual Montreal Hip-Hop Community: Everyday Poetics as Counter to the Myths of the Monolingual Classroom,” in *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy*, eds. Adrian Blackledge and Andrea Creese (New York: Springer, 2014), 99-119.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

empiricism), the intention to ensure that when the subaltern speaks s/he is heard is a double-edged sword.¹¹⁷

Without critical self-awareness, the desire to learn from the oral Other may merely be an (albeit more inconspicuous and, therefore, acceptable) adaptation of appropriation, yet another strain of “studying the other,” which is an iteration of empiricism all the same.¹¹⁸ We must be vigilant, so as not to be(come) empirical voyeurs. There is an implicit bias in such a perspective and project, which replicates and perpetuates colonial appropriation: the presumption that Aboriginal peoples would want their culture and customs, wisdom traditions and proverbs, folktales and histories, placed on display for public consumption and “cultural enrichment” and that the “fixing” of memory is in any way an improvement upon its fluid narrativization or the sign of an “evolved” epistemology. There is a fine yet fathomless line between admiration and arrogation. (Such a perspective is Eurocentric, linear, and rooted in the myth of progress.) How, then, might we esteem and advocate for the wisdom, artistry, and epistemologies of oral cultures without exoticizing, excavating, extracting and (then) extinguishing? How can we honor and embrace opacity and resist the Western Roots expectation, even requirement, of epistemological reorientation, its insistence on becoming transparent so as to ensure the universal rule of the Root through its rigid rules (and hierarchical binary roles)?

¹¹⁷ My critique here is a variation on that of Gayatri Spivak in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” The attempt to ensure that indigenous peoples’ voices are heard, and in an effort to teach the world, is not an altogether dubious project (it may even be necessary) but it must be evaluated for its collusion with colonial epistemologies and missions. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Carrie Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1998), 271-313.

¹¹⁸ Cf. page 47-50.

Transparency, as a Western European Root episteme, demands explanation, claiming its “inherited” right to (see) identification, to interpret, apprehend, and interpellate as either/or. If oral, archipelological epistemologies and their diverse modalities have anything to say to us (and they have a lot to *say*), it is that it is entirely unnecessary (not to mention impossible) to exhume, expose, exegete and explicate everything in sight in order to experience, to grasp (though never in its entirety), the Wisdom of the all-world. The (Western European) *Root takes all upon itself and kills everything around it*, the rhizome is *the root that extends to meet other roots*. The rhizome represents (creolized) Wisdom, where *each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other* in a dynamic poetics of Relation.¹¹⁹ Let us, then, root ourselves in rhizomatic, archipelological Relation and *clamor for the right to opacity for all*. While the Root seeks contact toward colonization, the rhizome relates along and according to routes other-wise. It relates through the opacity of the archipelogics of (Relational) poetics. Secreting, like Creole, exemplifies this opacity, which ensures unintelligibility; thereby concealing and safeguarding sacred truth so that those not epistemologically equipped to apprehend, or grasp it, cannot.¹²⁰ Oraliture is at times deliberately obtuse (and should not be regarded as culturally exhaustive or overt) in order to avert such exploitation. It is the strategic deployment of opacity (through poetics), which prevents its being rendered transparent.

In oral (tradition as) literature and history, discretion and disclosure are as deliberate and defining as the creative oralitutory expression of non-verbal (affective)

¹¹⁹ Cf. page 76.

¹²⁰ Secreting, like Creole, is a critical creolized rethinking or re-memoring of unintelligibility.

experience. Even as communities transmit wisdom, histories, and culture orally, they also share values and attitudes about the appropriate or permissible modalities whereby their esoteric wisdom, cultural traditions and values can and should be transmitted. This understanding is particularly pertinent to the interpretation of the Bible and oraliture more broadly, for it affords the opportunity to resist the privileging/prioritization of what is written and/as transparent, and offers an opening for the interpretation of “the marked silences, the areas of privacy...not as literary failings but as deliberate choices about what should and should not be told.”¹²¹ There is profound meaning in the milieu, as the oral irrupts in the in-between of the written, infusing it with significance and signification other-wise. Aboriginal peoples are, Fagan remarks, more “capable of holding orality and literacy, act and text, private and public in tension, of seeing the usefulness and dangers of each.”¹²² The wisdom, which they stand to share with the world, then, is their opacity and their capacity to hold together the binaries bounded by the Root. The oral episteme of indigenous peoples evinces an archipelological embodiment of complex hybridity, a diverse creolité, through which they inhabit the interstices of these tensions in harmony rather than hierarchy. Therefore, the recording, reproduction and re-membering of such indigenous oral traditions as oraliture must not be exploited but honored for its wisdom, which is rhizomatic, Relation and poetic. In order to (be able to) receive such wisdom, one needs a hermeneutic through which to perceive this wisdom: to *think with the*

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Carlson, Fagan, Khanenko-Friesen, 171.

other.¹²³ And we cannot apprehend the Other in full recognition without “reading” the Root.¹²⁴

Let us recognize, relinquish, and resist the absolute authority of the (Western European) Root, see it for its Rootness; its colonization not only of bodies (land, humans, texts) but of epistemology. The Western Root, across time and territories, would come to condition the conceptual frames of every body it occupied, and it did so according to an economy of the Same, which can only apprehend/perceive difference as dual; Diversity it derides. The Root, in this way, has inhibited imagination, innovation other-wise, and limited creative expression. According to the rule of the Root, only certain ways of knowing, being, and expressing are valid, in particular, those conforming to prosaic transparency. Epistemologies defined by Diversity and opacity—those derived from a poetic imagination, characterized by poetic thinking and/in a poetics of Relation—have been denied, relegated to the margins and refused their right to contribute as intellectual equals in our epistemological all-world. *We clamor for the right to opacity for all*; we crave a poetics of Relation in order *to think with the other-wise*. Though we reject the rooting of the Root (in the investigation, identification, acquisition and authorization of origins), in order to recognize its machinations we must understand its epistemological roots and their routes, which leads us right back to the birthplace of continental philosophy and its purported patriarch, Plato.

Since Plato, Eric Havelock has argued, poetry and poetic thinking have been supplanted by a predilection for prose: the modality of true intellect(s).¹²⁵ As far back as

¹²³ See my supplement to Mignolo’s argument on page 50.

¹²⁴ The term “read” is now used within LGBTQ+ communities to denote seeing through one’s pretenses and calling this person out for their actions and/or words.

Josephus, curiosity and speculations about Homer ((i.e., the Homeric question) drove reflections on orality. The concentrated analysis of the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* through philology, anthropology and comparative [oral] literary studies, reflected a scholarly preoccupation with accessing and analyzing the oral tradition that preceded, contextualized and composed the text.¹²⁶ (The experience of living oral traditions came later, arguably through Milman Parry, where redaction theories might actually have opened the door to oral hypotheses.) In the 1960's, however, the emphasis began to shift to Plato and the ostensible "origins" of continental philosophy with Havelock's work. In *Preface to Plato*, he introduces and adumbrates what would eventually become his highly influential oeuvre: "a series of studies designed to demonstrate what may be called the growth of the early Greek mind."¹²⁷ The collection is unequivocally the most exhaustive

¹²⁵ Included in this pursuit, especially in Havelock's work, is the so-called Socratic Problem. Havelock, through his studies of Socrates (in pursuit of the Greek origins of literacy), was led to Plato, since the former wrote about the latter, who (to our knowledge) produced no written works. Therefore, while Socrates is attributed with the inception of modern education and the discovery of "self-hood," as well as, Havelock contends, "using oralism in a brand new manner, no longer as an exercise in poetic memorization, but as a prosaic instrument for breaking the spell of the poetic tradition, substituting in its place a conceptual vocabulary and syntax, which he as a conservative sought to apply to the conventions governing behavior in an oral society in order to rework them. The dialogues of his disciples, themselves literates of the new generation, carried the results of this innovation to their logical conclusion by writing them out, thereby also extending their interpretation beyond the horizon of the original. Here was revisionism with a vengeance, as applied to the most famous of all philosophic enterprises." Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 5.

¹²⁶ John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 27ff.

¹²⁷ Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1963), vii. Preface was followed by five volumes, which culminated in 1986 with the publication of *The Muse Learns to Write*. Idem, *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978); idem, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); idem, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on*

articulation of the prioritization of Greek thought and texts within orality studies (as it tracks and touts Western European culture's epistemological evolution and ascension to preeminence) and also elucidates the very principles and theories that grounded Havelock's work and became instrumental to and within the development of the discourse. The final installment, *The Muse Learns to Write*, is Havelock's most comprehensive and perspicuous recounting of his own scholarly trajectory through the mapping of Greek orality as it "transformed" itself into literacy; an epistemological transition that (through Havelock) finds its origin and institution in Plato.¹²⁸ Prior to elucidating this (unfortunate) anti-poetic alliance, however, I will briefly outline Havelock's fundamental epistemological bias, according to its representation of and influence upon scholarship within orality and biblical studies.

The popularity, acclaim and presumed validity and veracity of Havelock's work bespeaks an implicit trust in his perspective and its empyrean authority within the field.¹²⁹ However, as John Halverson among others, has argued, "this trust has been misplaced" as the shine of his scholarship seems to have deterred many academics from apprehending

Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); idem, *Origins of Western Literacy* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1976); and idem, *Prologue to Greek Literacy* (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati Press, 1971). In *Preface*, Havelock compares the creation account in Genesis 1 with the "cosmic geography" of Homer and Hesiod. In the former he distinguishes by chronology the relationship between oral writing and non-oral writing.

¹²⁸ Havelock, *Muse*, 1. Havelock walks his reader through the development in his thinking as presented in each monograph of the series. In addressing "the oral-literate equation" or "problem," Havelock also engages Derrida and his treatment of Rousseau's "noble savage" in *Of Grammatology* (*Muse*, 16-17).

¹²⁹ As John Halverson observes, in *Orality and Literacy*, Ong "cites Havelock more than any other writer except himself" (149). John Halverson, "Havelock on Greek Orality and Literacy" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 1 (Jan. – Mar. 1992): 148-163.

its “deficiencies.”¹³⁰ Havelock’s general argument rests upon the function of oral literature within “nonliterate societies” as one of preservation (a prominent argument and concern present, as we have seen, in both Ong and Carlson et al).¹³¹ For Havelock, however, ancient Greek society alone is deserving of the esteemed nomenclature and privilege of possessing “primary oralism.” No culture before or since has met Havelock’s requirements. Befittingly, this British classicist understands Greece to be unique, absolutely exceptional in its epistemology, superiority, and authority; the totalitarian single Root. And this (Western European) Root epistemology, according to Havelock, is entirely movable and has the capacity to infiltrate and inculcate almost any other root/route. (As History has shown us, for this Root has commanded the force of feet, fleet, and flight [not to mention firearms] in its colonization of the world.) This Root paradigm/framework is present/discernable throughout Havelock’s work, but nowhere more salient than *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* and later in “Chinese Characters and the Greek Alphabet,”¹³² when/where he boldly proclaims/pronounces,

Over the years, I have become convinced that Hellenism as a culture represents not a static condition of uniform sublimity mysteriously achieved and maintained as an effect of some racial advantage. Rather it should be understood as an evolving process, governed by a dynamic of change, as both language and thought underwent transformational alteration caused by a transition from orality to literacy. The instrument of change is discerned to be the invention of the Greek alphabet, at a quite

¹³⁰ Halverson, 149.

¹³¹ See Havelock, *Preface*, 100.

¹³² Havelock, “Chinese Characters and the Greek Alphabet,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* no. 5 (December 1987): 1. This paper is adapter from Havelock’s *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 51-53, 326-327, and 346-348. “Chinese Characters is a “brief apologia” for his proposal that Chinese languages be “rewritten in the Greek alphabet (or ‘Romanized,’ to use the current term).”

late stage in the history of developing cultures. The unique virtue of this instrument, and cause of the cultural dynamic, was its superior technical efficiency, as compared with all other writing systems known to have existed before Greece, or which have continued to be used since Greece. Its efficiency rested on an analysis of the components of linguistic sound, reducing them to an atomic table of elements, themselves unpronounceable, which by combination produced the syllables of actual words that were pronounceable.¹³³

Havelock articulates his intentions transparently, the apologia he offers is no *mea culpa*, but a defense of previous Eurocentric statements and yet another display of empiricism through the exaltation of (the evolution and autonomy of) Western European epistemic supremacy.

According to Havelock, humans are genetically programmed to hear language rather than see or read it. Therefore, he reasons, “[t]he job of the written word is to trigger a memory, if possible automatic, of the sounds of the spoken word...[and] no other system so far as I am aware has ever approached this condition.”¹³⁴ Havelock then proceeds to confirm himself as absolute authority on the linguistic systems of the world and their respective written orthographies: “I looked around the world ‘from China to Peru’,” he begins (if one weren’t the wiser, s/he might interpret Havelock’s self-assertion as ironic, stated with tongue firmly planted in cheek), proceeding thusly: “[I] concluded that those peoples and cultures who had adopted the Greek invention had set the pace in the development of law, literature, science, and philosophy, culminating in the industrial revolution — had in fact invented ‘modernism’.”¹³⁵ Havelock neglects to mention, however, that these are also the peoples and cultures who sought through violent means to coerce and colonize the other peoples and cultures of the world into obeisance and

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid. See Benitez-Rojo’s re-membering of modernism on pages 189-191.

acquiescence. Those able to successfully evade this process, specifically, the people employing “Arabic, Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese and Japanese” chirographic systems, Havelock considers epistemologically inferior. Deeming them “tag-alongs,” who are only able to enjoy “modernism” to a lesser (derivative) degree, on account of “their script systems, of varying character, all in varying degree, kept getting in the way;” especially Chinese.¹³⁶

Rather than marveling at the intricacy of the Chinese semantic system and honoring its complexity (not to mention its implications for and within semiotics and Structuralism), Havelock measures Chinese against Western European linguistic structures and finds it lacking and “limited,” working as it is against anthropological evolutionary development (since the “common conventions of language as encoded in our brain are acoustic, not visual”).¹³⁷ Here, he highlights a fundamental presumption within orality studies: that the characteristics and qualities of oral culture derive from those of sound. As John Schaeffer permits,

To be seen, something only has to exist, but to be heard, something has to make a sound. Sound denotes activity and frequently life; we suspect something is alive when we hear it making noises. In oral cultures a word is a happening. Words are not ‘objects’ for the nonliterate; rather, they are transitory actions. Ancient Hebrew used the same word, *dabar*, to mean both word and event (Ong 1982, 32). The ancient Greek *logos* expressed a similar unity of word and happening.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid. And though Havelock decries racism in his introduction, he undeniably renews and reestablishes his status as an empiricist when he maintains that none of their chirographic systems “could be imposed so easily upon the genes of small children so successfully as to meld into an automatic reflex at the unconscious level.”

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹³⁸ John D. Schaeffer, *Sensus Communis: Vico, Rhetoric, and the Limits of Relativism* (Durham: Duke University, 1990), 7.

In essence, synthetic thinking inheres in oral cultures; hierarchical binary, on the other hand, must be taught, just as Havelock suggests of Western European languages. In short, cultures who have yet to adopt a Western European linguistic framework need to be alphabetized (i.e., Westernized through epistemological colonization).¹³⁹ Havelock's essay, like the anthology, reads more like a manifesto than an apologia: as "those cultures which still employ non-alphabetic scripts...[and] that group, fast disappearing, which has employed no script at all," "confront" Western European cultures (by which he means "stand in the way of [global epistemological domination]").¹⁴⁰ Ultimately, Havelock outlines three potential strategies for total world alphabetization, ensuring the absolute "triumph of the alphabet."¹⁴¹

As he concludes, Havelock motions back to an idea he began cogitating in *Preface* and articulates fully, forthrightly, and finally in *Muse*: Poetry drools, Prose rules! Havelock advances that while orality had transitioned to literacy in Greek culture prior to

¹³⁹ The air of certainty and almost autocratic tone (not to mention lack of critical self-reflection) with which Havelock writes is jarring. For example, Havelock considers "the hold exercised by the Chinese characters upon the mind and emotions of educated Chinese [to be] only the most striking example of the tendency to identify script with national culture" (3). Completely unaware of his own cultural biases and desire to mold and manipulate other cultures so as to make them more intelligible for and accessible to Western Europeans, Havelock portrays the Chinese and other "non-Westernized nations" as suffering from a hubris which prevents them from playing the West's rules, so to speak. Writing with the bitterness of a scholar spurned, Havelock contends, "It may indeed be true that loyalty to a given script, usually be identified with national feeling of some kind, increases in direct proportion to the difficulty with which the script is read" (3). (SMH.)

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* I am sure Havelock would be surprised and rather disappointed to find that after all the Japanese and Chinese (i.e., "pre-Greek") people's "striving with might and main to catch up with and emulate that science and the thought which we call 'Western' or 'European'" (what he alternatively addresses as "Greek" or by its "more accurate technological definition of 'alphabetic'"), his hypothesis has since been debunked. Over three decades after this assertion, it would appear that the West is striving just as hard to keep up, catch up, and emulate the so-called East.

Plato (in the works of Homer and Hesiod, where the classicists states, “the history of European literature begins”), it was poetic and, therefore, deficient.¹⁴² In the epics and even into the dramas, Havelock detects “the ad hoc empiricism of orality as opposed to the consistent clarity of literate conceptualism;” the poetic was either meant for entertaining or it was “storage language.”¹⁴³ With Plato, the performer becomes author as the philosopher, through the sophisticated articulation of his own intellectual interventions and those of Socrates, instantiated an entirely new literary modality in the form of prose and in so doing provoked an epistemological revolution and an elevation in consciousness; a process by which prose was elevated and poetry illegitimated.¹⁴⁴ While I am reticent to attribute so much authority to one person or event, Havelock’s valorizing of Plato is illustrative of the process by which a human, concept, or discourse becomes

¹⁴² Havelock, *Muse*, 19.

¹⁴³ Havelock, *Muse*, 15, 59. “The epics as we now know them,” Havelock writes, “are the result of some interlock between the oral and the literate; or, to vary the metaphor, the acoustic flow of language contrived by echo to hold the attention of the ear has been reshuffled into visual patterns created by the thoughtful attention of the eye” (Havelock, *Muse*, 13). This view, which Havelock advances in *Preface*, understands “the purpose of oral poetry, including Homer’s, [to be the contriving of] a memorized version of social and civic tradition and government.” (See *idem*, *Preface*, 9.) Greek plays, he contends, evince the oral-literate tension, they “carry many signals of an important historical fact. Singing, recitation, and memorization on the one hand (a cultural combination we can conveniently label as orality) and reading and writing on the other (the habit of a documented and literate culture) were coming into competition and collision” (*Muse*, 21).

¹⁴⁴ What Havelock considers the literate or “word *revolution*,” was not just about reading and writing but about a shift in consciousness (*Muse*, 23). It was not the inception of writing nor (as Marshall McLuhan proposes in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*) the invention of the printing press, Havelock argues, which had the most significant “psychological and intellectual effects” upon the world, but the transformation of “the Greek consciousness,” through Plato and the introduction of prose, that would change “Europe as a whole and in fact could be held responsible for creating the character of a modern consciousness which is becoming world-wide” (Havelock, 10). In this process, the Greek Muse was not altogether “discarded... She learned to write and read while still continuing to sing” (23).

reified and personified through repetition.¹⁴⁵ In this way, “origin” is attributed retrospectively and effectively finds its way toward construction as/of cause. What Havelock lauds and apes in Plato—the derision and deprecation, the subordination and infantilization of poetic thought and expression as epistemologically inferior to prosaic writing and literature (as Literature)—would over time come to define Western European episteme and the Academy writ large.¹⁴⁶ This Eurocentric bias and grave error in/of judgment has foreclosed the development of Western European cultures as just another island existing within the epistemological archipelago of our shared planet.¹⁴⁷ Rather than

¹⁴⁵ Havelock himself has no problem with identifying origins and attributing great significance to them. Aside from Plato, the year 1963 “provides a convenient watershed date” whereupon an “explosion of interest” manifested in five separate works by five authors with no awareness of “any mutual relationship” (*Muse*, 25). These works included his own, *Preface, La Pensée Sauvage* (Lévi-Strauss), “The Consequences of Literacy” (Jack Goody and Ian Watt), *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Marshall McLuhan), and *Animal Species and Evolution* (Ernst Mayr). Of course, Havelock is himself working from Ong’s rehearsal of the critical contributions of scholars to orality studies as presented in *Orality and Literacy*.

¹⁴⁶ At one point in *Muse*, Havelock likens the utility and experience of oral poetry to a child desiring a story be retold so as to remember, relish, and retell it herself. The repetition, he writes, “is linked with a feeling of pleasure, a factor of primary importance in understanding the spell of oral poetry. But mere repetition of identical content will not get you very far. The range of oral knowledge thus supplied will be limited. What is required is a method of repeatable language (meaning acoustically identical sound patterns) which nevertheless is able to alter its content to express diverse meanings. The solution discovered by the brain of early man was to convert thought into rhythmic talk” (71). The poetic incantation (of the Muse) and/as the limitation of oral peoples to the legitimately “literate” (i.e., intellectual). Also see Derek Walcott, “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, 257-264. If one did not know otherwise, Walcott’s essay could be interpreted as a critique of Havelock’s work in particular. Of course, Havelock is himself only operating out of the sort of Western European amnesia Walcott critiques.

¹⁴⁷ Marshall McLuhan’s intervention, Havelock celebrates, for its service to the discourse through his representation of the fundamental difference (and hierarchical bifurcation) of an oral versus a literate consciousness—the way in which an “oral literature... would be qualitatively different from a ‘literate’ literature”. The empirical (or empiricist) excavation of “primary oral” cultures by “modern” Western European scholars (in this instance McLuhan) led to the Root’s (re)construction of a route to “the historical past,”

Relating as and within this world as rhizome, understanding the earth as affective epistemological assemblage, Western Europe has reckoned and reproduced itself to be single, totalitarian Root, on a mission to re-present, renovate or eradicate any root of or route to Wisdom other-wise; the Wisdom of (Relational) poetics.¹⁴⁸

Plato, only able to conceive of poetry as functional—a mnemonic device meant for the memorization and recitation of oral tradition and the preservation of social customs, laws and conventions—was incapable of apprehending the poetic other-wise.¹⁴⁹ Poetry was entirely unintelligible to Plato as poetics (of Relation), and as a product of Plato’s legacy Havelock represents the grievous effects of this repetition and replication into the present day. Poetic thinking, and its expression, represents a complexity and consciousness unrecognizable to the Root, for it is rooted in radical opacity, it is

whereby these academicians “through modern technology in the historical present” are capable of “reviv[ing]” (resuscitating or resurrecting) the oral consciousness that lies “behind the ‘linear’ consciousness of modernity, [which is] derived from the linearity of typography” (*Muse*, 27-28). According to Havelock (citing McLuhan) oral consciousness “follows its own distinct rules of thinking and feeling” (27). In other words, a non-linear, non-bifurcated epistemology. Pages later in *Muse*, Havelock critiques McLuhan’s “romantic nostalgia for the directness, the fluidity, the sincerity, the comprehensiveness of a system of communication of ideas which had to yield to the more constricting limits laid upon it by the Gutenberg invention,” contending that the “oral-literate equation is not that simple” (33). This statement reveals what appears to be the irony in Havelock’s underlying aim/assumption: keeping it simple is stupid! (The irony being that the bifurcated, linear and transparent episteme of the Western European Root found a way to reframe the diversity, complexity, and opacity of the rhizomatic poetics of Relation resident in oral cultures as simple, unsophisticated, and inept to access elevated levels of consciousness.) Of course, Rousseau displayed the same sort of romanticizing of “the ‘savages’ of his imagination,” though his attitude to writing (and its relationship to speech) is, as Derrida noted, “confused, ambiguous, even contradictory” (36).

¹⁴⁸ Havelock represents the re-presentation or renovation project in his work. For example, in *Muse*, he addresses the ways in which the languages of oral cultures were “too simple” to capture the “true orality” of these people. Therefore, Western European researchers have utilized their...

¹⁴⁹ Havelock, *Muse*, 58.

symbolic, Relational, rhythmic, rhizomatic, and archipelological.¹⁵⁰ Prose, on the other hand (in the vein of Plato and later Havelock), represents a Root epistemology, which privileges transparency, intelligibility, and empiricism. For this reason, Plato and Havelock regarded poetry as an incompetent and illegitimate literary form, inept and incapable of articulating true (Western European) philosophy because representative of the limited intellect of the very oralitrary epistemology the West has sought to uproot and overpower through alphabetization. The repercussions, then, is the enslavement of orality in the epistemological irons of either/or (the crucible of The Rest vs The West). Its only hope of escape, then, is the Relational poetics of an archipelogics, which emancipates the epistemic other-wise.

The Bible is, in this way, a relevant text, for it necessarily contains poetry and prose; prose that is always already in Relation to the poetic. The Hebrew Bible, as Havelock has corroborated, is a text that was written to “speak.”¹⁵¹ In fact, poetry and folklore are arguably the most prevalent genres in the Hebrew Bible and are often approached through similar means due to their common oralitrary epistemology.

Genesis and Proverbs fall within these categories, and Judges too, and many folklorists

¹⁵⁰ While rhythm is undoubtedly integral to the poetic as a mnemonic device, which enables memorization, Havelock’s representation of rhythm (like that of Ian Watt and others) is myopic and one-dimensional. Only capable of comprehending rhythm in terms of its pragmatic function, Havelock is entirely unable to grasp rhythm’s worth within the archipelogics of a poetic onto-epistemology. See Havelock, *Preface*, chapters 3 and 4; and Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). (Originally published in 1962).

¹⁵¹ Havelock, *Muse*, 47. Many texts were written and published to speak, the epistles of the New Testament are exemplary in this regard. Even in my own writing, re-reading, and editing of this project, I am often reading the words I am writing or have written either in my head or out loud so as to *read* the (Relational) poetics of my prose; to experience rhythm, resonance, and (therefore) affective force of my composition; to feel the bibliorality of my creative and conscious expression.

within Hebrew Bible have studied the biblical proverbs applying similar methods of analyses.¹⁵² Of course, because the Hebrew Bible consists primarily of prose (which signals the loss of its “original oral material”) it does not qualify as one of Havelock’s “model[s] for primary orality.”¹⁵³ In other words, the Bible lost its luster for Havelock (among others), since scholars had agreed that the oral consciousness of the Hebrew Bible had been corrupted, it was no longer admissible for investigation as an authentic origin (text). And yet, the pollution of its purity (that is, primary orality) through prose is promising for those of us who are curious about the ways in which the West re-membered the Bible so as to represent the rules of the Root rather than a Relational poetics. Even still, its rhizomatic, subterranean, roots can be perceived if we simply open ourselves to the (Relational) poetics of re-membering other-wise.

Ironically, as much as Plato disparaged poetry, the incredibly extensive semantic range of the Greek word from which poetry derived, ποιέω or ποιεῖς, reflects Plato’s myopia in this regard. (A notion which harkens us back to C.L.R. James own re-membering of poesis.)¹⁵⁴ The verb carries the force of the activity of creating and in the first person singular may be translated, I make, I do, I create, I bring into existence, I

¹⁵² Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 67-68. Alan Dundes is one of the scholars whose work Niditch is drawing from in her exposition on folklore and proverbs in the Hebrew Bible. Instrumental in establishing folklore studies as an academic field, Dundes oeuvre includes critical analyses of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament—something his position outside biblical studies allowed him. Rarely do you find a biblical scholar whose work spans both testaments, as one must specialize by establishing themselves (as an expert) in either one or the other testament in order to be a legitimate (authoritative) scholar. (Another unfortunate effect of the Western European Root.) Havelock himself identifies Robert Pfeiffer’s work on both Judges and Genesis in this regard (*Muse*, 47-48).

¹⁵³ Havelock, *Muse*, 48. The first three books of the New Testament, however, have not suffered the same fate according to Havelock.

¹⁵⁴ See notes 313 and 314.

produce, I compose, I write, I invent, I cause, I procure, I postulate, I put, I consider, I prepare, I play, I act, etc.¹⁵⁵ In the substantive, the concept signifies the creation, concept, or material produced by the respective act. So the very creative act and the epistemological frame out of which it emerges—which Plato derides as displaying lower level consciousness and denounces as deficient—denotes every imaginable form of creative expression. Thankfully, scholars have gradually become more aware of the epistemological injustices haunting the hallowed halls of the Academy, harassing its non-Western acolytes. While ancient Greek “classics,” and Plato’s anti-poetic prejudice, continue to have a profound influence upon orality studies, by the late 80s, as J. Miles Foley observed, the study of Greek texts longer dominated the field.¹⁵⁶ Oral Theory, he posited, had “necessarily to begin with [its original] points of contact, [but] it is now time to shift—or at least to redistribute—the emphasis.”¹⁵⁷ Foley’s assertion, while not revolutionary, suggests at least a perfunctory awareness of the epistemic imbalance and

¹⁵⁵ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940),

¹⁵⁶ John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology*, 1-2. *The Theory of Oral Composition* is a critical continuation of Foley’s previous work on Oral-Formulaic Theory.¹⁵⁶ In the monograph, Foley provides a survey of the history, development and contributions of Oral-Formulaic Theory from its inception in the work of Parry and Lord in the 1920s and 30s (and their influential predecessors), concluding with his ideas on possibilities for its future continuation and development. What Foley and the historians proceeding him consider to be “The Homeric Question.” Josephus, Foley writes, “anticipates the causal link between oral composition and narrative inconsistency” (2).

¹⁵⁷ Foley, 109. Foley proposes three principles in order to do so: tradition-dependence, genre-dependence, and text-dependence *Tradition-dependence*—allowing each oral tradition “its idiosyncratic features and actively incorporating those features into one’s critical model of that tradition”...; *Genre-dependence*—the grounds for comparison must be based upon “the closest generic fit available”...; *Text-dependence*—“the necessity to take into account the precise nature of each text: unquestionably oral or oral-derived, recorded from some performance or dictated, audio record or manuscript, and so forth” (109-110).

the detrimental (hierarchical) dualisms of West/Rest and orality/literacy within literary theory and biblical studies; an imbalance to which scholars of both testaments are attending by incorporating non-Western oraliture and traditions and increasingly through non-traditional means and modalities.¹⁵⁸ Of course, as Paulo Freire observes, those in power do not relinquish it willingly... “there is no transformation without action.”¹⁵⁹

Poetry and poetics according to the archipelogics of rhizomatic Relation is ποεισις, the

¹⁵⁸ See Holly E. Hearon, “The Implications of ‘Orality’ for Studies of the Biblical Text,” in *Oral Tradition*, Volume 19, No. 1, (March 2004): 96-107. Aside from the orality/literacy and West/Rest divide, there has been an intrabiblical divide between the testaments as well as intratestamental divides, according to form and performance. While memory has been central in both areas, orality studies in the New Testament has largely fallen into one of two camps. The Kelber-lineage has studied the structure or form of the oral text, and the other, commencing largely with the work of Richard Bauman, has focused more upon performance as “dramatic interpretation” and as “a social activity in which community identity is shaped.” On the other side of the testamental gap, scholars of the Hebrew Bible have placed particular emphasis upon oral transmission and orality as it pertains to the formal qualities within its various literary genres. The closest the Kelber lineage comes to the latter is Richard Horsley, in which he analyzes the rhythm of a text. Of course, rhythm from this perspective is still a formal characteristic more than an affective aesthetic. (This schism is in many ways an instantiation of the very divide Ong, Tannen, and even Kelber, in his earlier work, emphasize.) Foley, 2. Foley also utilizes the term “verbal art” in order to convey the “multisensory communication and reception” that is oral performance. Performance, however, as aforementioned, has often been considered in light of Greco-Roman rhetoric, and only recently has that included non-Western oral cultures. David Rhoads has identified this approach as “performance criticism.” Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies,” *BTB* 36 (2006): Pt 1, 118-33 and Pt 2, 184-84. The biblical scholars who have contributed most to the development of folktale studies within Hebrew Bible have not concentrated on performance but primarily on structure, and it has quite often engaged carnivalesque-grotesque (as an oralitrary device for the subversion of official discourse).

¹⁵⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1970), 74, 75. “An unauthentic word, one which is unable to transform reality, results when dichotomy is imposed upon its constitutive elements. When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, into an alienated and alienating “blah.” It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.”

λογος in and as action. The word is made flesh (making our all-world) through poetics (of Relation); creolized verbal carnality; the archipelagos.¹⁶⁰

In both biblical testaments, like in classical studies and literary theory, rhythm has functioned as a primary oral technique, analyzed as a literary form and increasingly as a vehicle for memorization, enculturation, entertainment and affective force.¹⁶¹ While orality and performance criticism have gained some prominence in biblical studies, affect theory has only recently been explored within the field and never in relation to orality.¹⁶² Likewise, no research thus far has ventured to think performance, rhythm, and affect in relation to one another, and especially not in and through the Caribbean archipelagos. Prior to my reflections and ruminations on affect as it pertains to orality, I will return to the Caribbean context in order to illuminate the ways in which folktale, carnival, and even carnivalesque-grotesque are embodied within the archipelagos as the creative

¹⁶⁰ Cf. page 19, 20 87, note 272, and page 137.

¹⁶¹ See Richard A. Horsley, *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006). Jonathan Draper, for his part, appeals to Marcel Jousse's *rhythmography*, "which stresses the performative balance of small units within the overall structure." Edgard Sienaert interprets Jousse in his argument for oral performance being "marked by careful structuring of 'units of sound and sense uttered or chanted in a single breath'," which are "rhythmically balanced in terms of 'cradling' and 'lifting'" (79). Draper continues, "[t]his rhythmic balancing implies bodily movement of alternatively rocking back and forward or side to side, which characterizes the memorization and performance of oral tradition in primary oral communities. The alternating movements mark and coordinate the units of material." This was true (and still is in some areas) within ancient Jewish communities and was practiced by the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who have historically utilized embodied rhythmic practices in order to memorize scripture memorization.

¹⁶² To clarify, affect and orality have not been thought together until my most recent publication. For a fascinating and incisive interventions at the intersections of biblical studies and affect, see James N. Hoke, "Under God: A Queer and Feminist Subversion of Submission in Romans," Dissertation, Drew University (2017). Also see Rawson, "Reading (with) Rhythm for the Sake of the I-an-Islands," in *Affectivity and Divinity: Affect Theories and Theologies*, eds. Stephen Moore and Karen Bray. New York: Fordham University Press, Forthcoming.

communal oralitutory expressions (of culture, agency and identity) of a creolized poetics of Relation. Therefore, what follows in the next node, is the contestation of this derogation through an appeal to the poetic imagination in creolized oralitutory or archipelological modalities from the Caribbean.

Node b ~ Reading with Rhythm: Oralitutory Affective Assemblages

The Archipelological Oralitutory Ignorance of Creole Folktale and Carnival: Creative Communal Expression and/as Poetic Relation Identity in the Caribbean

In her anthology, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the Vulgar Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*, much like “Writing Oral History” (which is contained in the volume), Carolyn Cooper centers the voices, experiences, and episteme of Jamaican women, but extends her analysis to include a range of identities and experiences within the Caribbean. Appealing to Glissant’s framing of the relationship of the oral (“long head”) and the written (“book”), Cooper explores their intersecting in Jamaica and, thereby, illuminates the truly subversive potentialities that inhere not only in Jamaica but in the cultures of the Caribbean and their diverse (archipelological) creative expression.¹⁶³ Cooper centers orality, which in the archipelagos may be conceived in terms of a broad thematic repertoire, cultural practices, and specific “verbal techniques,” which always foreground rhythm.¹⁶⁴ She highlights cultural beliefs and practices (including religion [obeah, myal, kumina, etc.], story-telling rituals, social dances, carnival, and children’s games) as well as the oral modalities within the Caribbean, which undeniably resonate

¹⁶³ Of course, she concedes, not only books are included in this particular representation, only those that do not honor the orality that inheres in (Caribbean) writing. See Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, 1-3.

¹⁶⁴ Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, 2. A Jamaican herself, Cooper centers “oral tradition” in Jamaica, but understands her work to resonate with the entire archipelago.

with many found in the Hebrew Bible and include, “the compressed allusiveness of the proverb, the enigmatic indirection of riddle, the antiphonal repetitions of oral narration which recur as set linguistic formulations in folk-tale, legend, song-text and performance poetry.”¹⁶⁵

Akin to the reception and representation of orality and oral episteme within the Western European philosophical and intellectual tradition, Cooper acknowledges, these oral modalities and Jamaican, as “the preferred language of orality, assumes the burdens of the social stigmatization to which the practitioners of Afrocentric ideology in Jamaica are continually subjected.”¹⁶⁶ The materializations of Caribbean cultural performance as collaboration, consolidation, and critique are multitudinous and Cooper identifies the tensions Jamaicans (as creolized archipelological peoples) occupy and within which they operate, finding meaning and value in the in-between through their creative cultural expression and self-assertion; not to mention addressing the ways to strategically deploy “the book” as a route other-wise. Cooper’s work is an effort to expose this travesty and to honor the verbal carnality and/in the oralitrary practices of these archipelologically innovative (and insurrectionary) Africana peoples, previously degraded as “vulgar” (and, therefore, grotesque), rendered illegitimate by the epistemological and socio-political institutions of dominant Root culture due to their association with orality and the feminized Jamaican “mother tongue.” In her interweaving of the diverse textures and oralitrary creations of a host of “cunning fabricators,” Cooper joins these poets and artists in restoring the body to the text and in so doing “pronounce[s] the ancient

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

blessings of the word made flesh: noises in the blood; echoes in the bone;” the verbal carnality of the archipelagos.¹⁶⁷

Arguably two of the oldest Africana aesthetics and effective archipelagic anti-colonial strategies, which are central to both Cooper and Glissant’s archipelological efforts and resonate in creolized rhythm and Relation, are folktale and carnival. As rhythmic performative embodiments of an Africana aesthetic and onto-epistemology, they are both materializations of an archipelological poetics of Relation. These forms represent the very modalities of cultural expression and transmission that have engendered an bibliorial subversion of the authority of the English literary canon.¹⁶⁸ Cooper identifies the ways in which folktale and carnival, like song, poetry, proverbs, music, and idioms, are creative expressions and embodiments of Caribbean culture that are likewise deployed in resistance to denigration and dehumanization.¹⁶⁹ Highlighting the strategic inversion of folly as creolized folk wisdom, Cooper submits,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 198.

¹⁶⁸ In addition to the transmission of Africana oral traditions, there are also *Antillanité*/archipelagic appropriations of Western European (Root) literature. Aime Césaire’s re-remembering of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, *Une Tempête* is archetypal in this way. There are, in fact, multiple parallels between Césaire’s Caliban and Samson, some of which I have pursued but will not expound upon in the current iteration of this project.

¹⁶⁹ Cooper is a renowned rabble-rouser, whose transgressive reappropriation of denigrated forms of cultural expression in Jamaica are critically insightful and important. More recently she has focused upon that which is considered “pure vulgarity” or “slackness” in Jamaican, rethinking (or re-remembering) the denigration of female sexuality and hypersexualizing in Jamaican DJ’s lyrics, dancehall “slackness,” and in carnival as liberating and empowering, not to mention what she deems “an embodied politics of disengagement from the Euro-centric discourses of colonial Jamaica and their pernicious legacies in the contemporary moment.” Slackness (like carnival) is, according to Cooper, “not mere sexual looseness—though it is certainly that...[it] is an ideological revolt against law and order; an undermining of consensual standards of decency...[and in her] revisionist reading, slackness constitutes a radical, underground confrontation with the patriarchal gender ideology and pious morality of fundamentalist Jamaican society.” Carolyn Cooper, “Erotic Maroonage: Embodying Emancipation in Jamaican Dancehall

The intellectual in his castle might have been educated into anxiety; the ignorant folk have the proverbial reassurance that ‘where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise.’ In Jamaican, ‘ignorant’ means more than it does in English. To ‘get ignorant’ is to become angry, to consciously assume an attitude especially in combative circumstances where the dignity of the ignorant is in question. The Dictionary of Jamaican English defines ‘ignorant’ as: ‘evidently a malapropism for indignance, though the regular sense is sometimes mingled in.’¹⁷⁰

Culture,” paper presented at The Ninth Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University, “The Legacies of Slavery and Emancipation: Jamaica in the Atlantic World” (November 1-3, 2007), 1; idem, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the Vulgar Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); idem, “Slackness hiding from Culture: Erotic Play in the Dancehall,” *Jamaica Journal* 22, no. 4 (November 1989-January 1990), 12-20; and idem, *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Also see Annie Paul, “Dancehall in Jamaica: Keeping it ‘Jiggy’ in Babylon,” paper presented to the Society for Caribbean Studies, 30th Annual Conference, The National Archives, London, 5-7 July, 2006; Gerard Aching, *Masking and Power: Carnival and Popular Culture in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Kevin Frank, “Female Agency and Oppression in Caribbean Bacchanalian Culture: Soca, Carnival, and Dancehall,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1-2. The Sexual Body (Spring-Summer 2007): 172-190.

¹⁷⁰ Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, 185-6. She references Samuel Johnson’s definition of indignant, which is cited in the *OED*, “inflamed at once with anger and disdain,” as capturing the Jamaican sense. Cooper also looks to Jonkannu as an instantiation of this creative transformation. For at least five hundred years, I believe carnivalesque and grotesque have blended and blurred in the Caribbean, finding corporeal intersection in the Jonkonnu. Jonkonnu combines the histories of (slave) resistance and survival through the grotesque, capitalizing on carnivalesque in vibrant regalia. Incorporating dance and song, traditions, artistic vehicles, cultural symbols and costumes, Jonkonnu embraces, expresses, and exaggerates certain features, forms, and practices rejected as abject, vulgar or repulsive. In this way, carnivalesque-grotesque comes alive in the Jonkonnu as an archipelagic assemblage, continuing to function as a performative vehicle of ritual embodiment for the solidarity and identity of creolized bodies in community, celebrating an Africana aesthetic other-wise. Jonkonnu frustrates the bifurcated containment of *either* “this” *or* “that.” (The name is purportedly a derivation of the name of a powerful Ahanta chief and merchant on the Gold Coast, who was backed by the Akans in the conflict against the Dutch on the coast of present-day Ghana. His actual name is unknown but is believed to have been John Kenu, John Canoe, January Conny, or something to that effect. Therefore, the festival is alternatively spelled Jonkannu, Junkanoo, Jangkunu and Jankunu, even the diversity of its spellings reflect the way in which its textual representation refuses static determination and, therefore, its truly orality, creolized, and carnivalesque-grotesque character.) Embodying the rhizomatic opacity of a poetics of Relation, its creolized aesthetic leaves even scholars of the form uncertain of what exactly it represents. And, yet, as Karina Smith argues in

The very ways in which Jamaican's have reappropriated an English word used in their degradation exemplifies the ways in which what is apprehended as unintelligible or ignorant by the Western European Root can be creatively reconceptualized and re-membered through creolized archipelogics.

Glissant asserts the same of Martinicans, whose ambiguous and, therefore, ambivalent appropriation (and application) of Creole incites Glissant to advocate for the intentional and strategic deployment of humor and subterfuge within the Creole language, as in folktale.¹⁷¹ Glissant understands Creole, like reggae and the Rastafari, to have profoundly revolutionary possibilities through its implicit defiance not only of English

“Re/Telling History,” Jonkonnu is unequivocally and unabashedly political. The Jonkonnu, as a creolized, or archipelagic, aesthetic assemblage, channel their “ignorance” and anger into an art form, reappropriating, repurposing, and re-membering, symbols, language, and cultural artifacts used against them/intended to dehumanize them, and they do so in order to rise above their struggle and assert their (Africana or archipelagic) agency. Like *Lionheart Gal*, Jonkunnu is employed by the Sistren Theatre Collective to raise awareness through and about the voices and experiences of women in the Caribbean. Their deployment of this creolized cultural form demands and draws attention to “the importance of defying continuing forms of economic exploitation” (Smith,). These women draw upon Jamaican history, the Afro-Caribbean performance traditions of Jonkonnu, as well as folktale, to foreground women’s involvement in labor rebellions. See Karina Smith, “Re/Telling History: Sistren’s *Ida Revolt inna Jonkonnu Stylee* as Neo/Colonial Resistance,” in *Thirdspace: A Journal of Feminist Theory & Culture* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2007), 17-36; Kenneth Bilby, “Surviving Secularization: Masking the Spirit in the Jankunu (John Canoe) Festivals of the Caribbean,” *New West Indian Guide* 84, nos. 3 & 4 (2010): 179-223; idem, “Masking the Spirit in the South Atlantic World: Jankanu’s Partially Hidden History” Presented at The Ninth Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference: The Legacies of Slavery and Emancipation: Jamaica in the Atlantic World. (New Haven: Yale University, November 1-3, 2007); and Sylvia Wynter, “Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of Folk Dance as a Cultural Process,” *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (1970): 34-48.

¹⁷¹ Glissant 166ff. Achille Mbembe, for his part, does not consider the determination of the peoples’ intention as resistance or resentment as secondary “The key point,” he states, “is that, in this specific historical context of domination and subjection, the postcolony neither minces nor spares its words” (108). See Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California, 2001. (Originally published in 1992.)

but of Western European (Root) epistemologies.¹⁷² The Creole folktale, Glissant concedes, is exemplary in this regard. He posits,

The Creole folktale is the symbolic strategy through which, in the world of the plantations, the mass of Martinicans developed a forced poetics (which we will also call a counter-poetics) in which were manifested both an inability to liberate oneself totally and an insistence on attempting to do so.¹⁷³

The Creole folktale is fantastically flawed and failed forced poetics, and herein lies its potential for critique (as a counter-poetics) of the hegemony of Western European episteme. Rather than an inhibiting factor, the very ambivalence of the Creole folktale (as postcolonial oralitrary narrative) *is* its subversive and decolonizing force. It embodies the paradox of the postcolonial condition, enabling its stubborn subversion of the dominant Eurocentric metanarrative. As Glissant understands it, Creole folktale embraces and incorporates its so-called inadequacies, it recognizes and revels in its limitations, and in so doing, defies “the criteria for transcendence into writing,” by “constantly refusing to perfect its expressions.”¹⁷⁴ As an oralitrary expression, the Creole folktale “includes the

¹⁷² Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 128.

¹⁷³ Glissant, *Discourse*, 128. Glissant’s example here is the King, Brer Tiger and Brer Rabbit. Where the King represents the European colonizer, Brer Tiger is the black foreman, and Brer Rabbit is “symbolic of the cleverness of the people” (130).

¹⁷⁴ Glissant, *Discourse*, 129. He posits, “[a]n analysis of the folktale reveals the extent to which the inadequacies with which the community is affiliated (absence of a hinterland, loss of technical responsibility, isolation from the Caribbean region, etc.) are fixed in terms of popular imagery. What is remarkable is that this process is always elliptical, quick, camouflaged by derision. That is what we shall see in the folktale. The latter really emanates from a forced poetics... a tense discourse that,” built upon and through these inadequacies defy Western European conditions for validation. In fact, Glissant writes of this tense discourse, it is “woven around the inadequacies that afflict it... in order to deny more defiantly the criteria for transcendence into writing, to constantly refusing to perfect its expression.”

ritual of participation but carefully excludes the potential for consecration.”¹⁷⁵ It embodies and expresses (the “ignorance” of) verbal carnality as subversive strategy, a subterranean convergence, and/in the archipelogics of a poetics of Relation.

An interlocutor particularly important to Glissant’s rumination on Creole folktale is Mikhail Bakhtin, who has also been highly influential within biblical studies and particularly his work on carnival and the grotesque.¹⁷⁶ *Rabelais and His World* is Bakhtin’s watershed exposition on carnivalesque-grotesque as a revolutionary literary modality and a transgressive political strategy, wherein he illuminates its intrinsically subversive tone and deployment.¹⁷⁷ As a literary critic and semiotician, Bakhtin was

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Though it might appear that Glissant’s re-membering of Creole and the Creole folktale is at times overly romantic, he is quick to acknowledge the ways in which the dialect and the oral narrative form have, in many ways, served to perpetuate oppression within the Caribbean. Of course, as Glissant is quick to remind us, such transparency and absolutism is not possible nor is it desirable.

¹⁷⁶ Other of the most formidable Bakhtinian concepts to have found resonance within biblical studies are heteroglossia, polyphony, dialogism, and unfinalizability. Aside from Edith Davidson’s application of carnivalesque-grotesque, two recent works by biblical scholars engaged in Bakhtinian interpretation are Christy L. Cobb, “The Last Laugh: Aspects of Bakhtin’s Carnavalesque in Late Ancient Martyrdom Accounts” (paper presented at the annual meeting for the North American Patristics Society, May 23-25, 2013) and Sarah Emanuel’s Bakhtinian reading of the book of Revelation entitled *Roasting Rome: Humor, Resistance, and Jewish Cultural Persistence in the Book of Revelation*.

¹⁷⁷ In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin analyzes the work of the Renaissance thinker, writing in sixteenth century France, and excavates Rabelais’s carnivalesque-grotesque tales for their function within folk culture, which sits in the space between the Official Authorized (Western Discourses) and the (discourse of the) common people. Rabelais’s work provides Bakhtin a vehicle through/by which he may explore the even greater potency of carnivalesque when brought into relationship with (the) grotesque—a kinship Bakhtin seeks to illuminate in Rabelais’s *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and to enact in his anthology on this work. Rabelais was not Bakhtin’s first articulation but it is certainly his most comprehensive. See idem, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984).

expanding upon even as he challenged Saussurean structuralism.¹⁷⁸ Each of his axial paradigms were themselves expositions on and signifiers of the surplus of meaning, which resides in the structure of language. It is for this reason, in fact, that (post)structuralists, psychoanalysts, and literary theorists such as Julia Kristeva have found in him a fertile interlocutor. (Kristeva, akin to Glissant, was invested in poetics and their import to an epistemological uprising; her approach, however, serves as yet another example of the Western European epistemic Root's misrecognition or unintelligibility of cross-cultural epistemological routes other-wise.) Carnavalesque-grotesque, Kristeva submits, disputes the law of language as rooted in the 0-1 interval, and, as a result, "challenges God, authority and social law; in so far as it is dialogical, it is rebellious."¹⁷⁹ Therefore, Kristeva appeals to Bakhtin's carnivalesque-grotesque (as well as dialogics) to illustrate the ambivalence that inheres in the expression of language and the interpretive moment Kristeva asserts that Bakhtin "was one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to *another* structure."¹⁸⁰

The Bulgarian-French poststructuralist literary theorist then proceeds to attribute the exposure of language's inherent mobility to Bakhtin, maintaining that "[w]hat allows a dynamic dimension to structuralism is his conception of the 'literary word' as an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary

¹⁷⁸ See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Also see Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 1984. Bakhtin's work, in this way, is akin to other (post)structuralists such as Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida.

¹⁷⁹ Kristeva, *Revolution*, 49.

¹⁸⁰ Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," 35-36.

or earlier cultural context.”¹⁸¹ It is here that Kristeva locates the origin of intertextuality and, seeking to define the idea and its implications as the revolutionary force of poetic language, she once again motions to Bakhtin’s theorization of carnival and the grotesque.¹⁸² Intertextuality, she writes, “denotes [the] transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another...demand[ing] a new articulation of the thematic—of enunciative and denotative positionally.”¹⁸³ Kristeva explains, “If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an intertextuality), one then understands that its ‘place’ of enunciation and its denoted ‘object’ are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated.”¹⁸⁴ Since, for Kristeva as Bakhtin before her, “each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read,” then, the carnivalesque structure (and scene) becomes exemplar of this ambivalence and excess of meaning as “the only space in which language escapes linearity (law) to live as drama in three dimensions” and where “drama becomes located in language.”¹⁸⁵ Is this not the creolized rhizomatic thinking of an archipelogics?

Regrettably, as many overt resonances as there are between Kristeva’s theorizing of intertextuality and poetic language and Glissant’s créolité and poetics of Relation, as well other Africana concepts and re-memberings,¹⁸⁶ her work has rarely extended beyond

¹⁸¹ Kristeva, 36.

¹⁸² See Kristeva, *Revolution*, 61.

¹⁸³ Ibid. I will treat Kristeva’s own notion of abjection as it relates to the grotesque in Chapter Four.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 59-60.

¹⁸⁵ Kristeva, “Word,” 49.

¹⁸⁶ Okpewho and Ngugi especially.

continental thought and philosophers.¹⁸⁷ A true poetic revolutionary in so many ways, Kristeva's epistemic insularity precludes the radicalization of intertextuality and its epistemological revolution in/through a cross-cultural poetics of Relation. Western European intellectuals, such as Kristeva, have lavished (and languished) in the luxury of choice, which has historically enabled the Academy to marginalize, exclude, or ignore entirely non-Western epistemologies and theoretical discourses.¹⁸⁸ As a product of continental thought, Western European literary studies and its Root sensibilities, Bakhtin's work is more accessible, intelligible, and attractive to Western European and even non-Western scholars, who are expected and required to apprehend and absorb the "Canon" (as their own [epistemological lineage]) and to employ its methods exclusively, in order to qualify and render their own scholarship legitimate, authoritative, and intelligible as such. (Even this, however, Sylvia Wynter asserts is an opportunity to "think through, then beyond its limits.")¹⁸⁹ Were an Africana scholar to engage only those

¹⁸⁷ And when it did, she received harsh criticism. One of the most notorious is Gayatri Spivak's critique of Kristeva's *About Chinese Women* in which Spivak exposes Kristeva for her colonial gaze and Orientalist analysis of the evolution of the role of women in China. (Kristeva is, in a sense, guilty of speaking for the subaltern.) According to Spivak, Kristeva's appropriation is yet another instance of the "obsessively self-centered" project of a First World intellectual engaging and/by excavating the Other (of the 2/3rd's world) in order to establish and legitimate her own selfhood/subjectivity (137). *About Chinese Women*, then, Spivak asserts is an example of "colonialist benevolence" (161). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981), 154-84. Also see Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women* (Marion Boyers Publishers, Ltd., 1977).

¹⁸⁸ See Hamid Dabashi's critique on pp. 41-43.

¹⁸⁹ Of course, even in this, Sylvia Wynter detects the potential for epistemological disruption and, therefore, revolution. She contends, "So the academic system that you have gifted the 'natives' with could seem, at first glance, to be merely a Trojan Horse! But note the paradox here. That Word, while an "imperializing Word," is also the enactment of the first purely degodded, and therefore in this sense, emancipator, conception of being human in the history of our species. And it is that discontinuity that is going to make the idea of laws of Nature, and with it the new order of cognition that is

interlocutors sharing her culture, ethnicity, or epistemology, however, both she and her work would be (and historically have been) discredited, deemed insufficient, and labeled unscholarly.

As I have argued in the previous node of this chapter, the at least double deferral of meaning (and textual unfinalizability) that characterizes Bakhtinian dialogical discourse and to which Kristevan intertextuality is indebted does not originate in Bakhtin, in Derrida, in (post)structuralism, in its *centralis ratiō* and *primum argumentum*, or even in continental philosophy. Once again, the Western European Root has attributed and thereby appropriated origin erroneously and, ironically, in this instance it is the very origin of the interrogation of the search for textual origin (and authority). Meaning is fluid and curiosity about the event of its fixity through absolute attribution (and the acknowledgment of the impossibility therein) has existed since the aspirations and efforts toward such an end (i.e., the effort to institutionalize Culture, History, Literature, and Truth as Root). The moment and modality of the materialization of linguistic signification (or its obstinate refusal to politely acquiesce or discretely comply with the rules of the Root) is not accessible as origin; and the more the Root works to repress rhizomatic rememberingings other-wise, the more subterranean convergences nodally irrupt. Language

the natural sciences, possible. So there can be no going back to a before-that-Word. So as ex-native colonial subjects, except [when] we train ourselves in the disciplinary structures in which that Word gives rise, [and] undergo the rigorous apprenticeship that is going to be necessary for any eventual break with the system of knowledge which elaborates that Word, we can in no way find a way to think through, then beyond its limits. Wynter, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with David Scott," *Small Axe* 8 (2000), 159. Also see "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désêtre: Black Studies toward the Human Project," in *Not Only the Master's Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice*, eds. Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (New York: Paradigm Press, 2006), 107-169.

always fails (to fully express our meaning or intention), but its failure is also its revolutionary possibility; its intrinsic poetic opacity. The acknowledgment of meaning's motility and language's innate defiance or errancy (what Derrida conceptualized as *différance*, that which defined deconstruction, and what the philosopher asserted of Saussurean structuralism, namely that it contained the seeds of its own de[con]struction) may have been attributed to and broadly disseminated through Bakhtin, Derrida, continental philosophy and literary theory, but the paradigm has existed in carnival and the trickster wisdom of Africana folktale (among other non-Western episteme) for thousands and thousands of years; a point to which I will return later in the chapter. For now, back to Glissant, Bakhtin and what, if anything, carnivalesque-grotesque folktale has to do with carnival in the Caribbean?

Glissant himself drew from Bakhtin in both *Caribbean Discourse* and *Poetics of Relation*. In fact, in his introduction to the former, Michael Dash makes explicit the connection he identifies between Bakhtin and Glissant, particularly according to the political climate in which each wrote and its influence upon the nature of their theorizing of carnival and folktale as revolution(ary).¹⁹⁰ Though each wrote during times of tremendous political instability within their countries of origin, there is also marked difference between their analyses due to their respective contexts: carnival in Eastern Europe was defined by the folk subversion of official culture, whereas carnival in the Eastern Caribbean is specifically rooted in resistant slave traditions. The resonances are important but the divergences should not be ignored. History and landscape matter. While

¹⁹⁰ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xliiff. Michael Dash among others has detected parallels in the Soviet Union of the 1920's in which Bakhtin was writing and Glissant's experience in Martinique in the decades following.

carnavalesque-grotesque in contemporary Eastern Europe is primarily textual (and at times theatrically performed), carnival continues to be a thriving extemporaneous and even improvisatory cultural event in the Antilles. Carnival embodies the rhythmic and relational movement of archipelagic and archipelological peoples. Incorporating music, dance, costumes, and myriad artistic creations, carnival is an archipelological aesthetic form of cultural celebration and expression in and beyond the Hispanophone, Creolophone, and Anglophone Caribbean.¹⁹¹ The evolution and expression of carnival has been extravagant, imaginative, and affectively ambivalent; it is an embodiment of relational poetics of the postcolony, cultivated in the in-between of creolization, capitalism and colonialism.¹⁹² In this way, carnival stands as an example of “subaltern and marginalized peoples adopting [and adapting] the same strategies [as the elite] for their own political purposes;” carnival is always already creolized.¹⁹³

Famous for its typically exotic and glamorous decadence, carnival has drawn the Western gaze and its greenbacks, yet carnival’s fantastic and hyperbolic modalities of creative cultural expression also push the bounds of acceptability and edge toward the

¹⁹¹ Anikó Imre, *Identity Games: Globalization and the Transformation of Media Cultures in the New Europe* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009): 205. Also see Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989): 122-9.

¹⁹² Though Caribbean Carnival now exhibits capitalistic commodification and containment, this complex reality with chronological layers, economic activity, ecclesial connectedness, and vestigial reminiscences...this affects but does not entirely preclude its attainment of the grotesque.

¹⁹³ Philip W. Scher, *Carnival and the Formation of a Caribbean Transnation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003). The ostensible origins of carnival are Western European and it is indubitably a celebration linked to Western Christian traditions associated with Lent. Once again, we must be leery of the location of origin (or Root) in and by the West, for absolute origins are inaccessible. Colonialism has either co-opted these festivals or corrupted and/or destroyed the evidence either of their existence other-wise or their erasure.

grotesque, and not only in their excess. Rather than solely signifying degradation and disgust, as traditional conceptualizations of the term connote, the Bakhtinian notion of the grotesque means multiply. It is a radically experiential, interpersonal and affective approach to the body and/in relation to the world and resonates with carnival as a creative creolized cultural aesthetic expression in the archipelagos in some interesting and surprising ways. Bakhtin represented the grotesque as an explicitly material, collective, integrative bodily principle. In fact, one might consider it anti-colonial, and even archipelological. The grotesque, Bakhtin submits,

is opposed to severance from the material and bodily roots of the world; it makes no pretense to renunciation of the earthy, or independence of the earth and the body. We repeat: the body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed...not to the private, egotistic "economic man," but to the collective ancestral body of all the people.¹⁹⁴

Bakhtin's grotesque moves us in the direction of taboo (and the unthinkable) only when interpreted according to the empiricism of the Western European Root. The degradation of and involved in the grotesque "digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one...Grotesque realism knows no other level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving."¹⁹⁵ The (archaic) grotesque body is entirely open and vulnerable to the world, it is susceptible to contamination, corruption, and destruction, and it often exceeds its own boundaries and

¹⁹⁴ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 19.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. In this way, the grotesque also bears resonance with Plato's khora.

limitations.¹⁹⁶ It affects and is affected by the all-world in which it *lives and moves and has its being*. The grotesque body is radically interpenetrative and operates fully in the in-between of the poetic other-wise; doing, undoing and being undone, (re)creating and remembering. It is yet another iteration of the verbal carnality of the archipelagos. The resonances (in)between Bakhtin's carnivalesque-grotesque and the archipelogics of a creolized poetics of Relation in relation to carnival (and Creole folktale) are as palpable as they are profound and, therefore, deserve critical reflection.

Prefiguring his poetics of Relation, in *Caribbean Discourse* Glissant adumbrates strategies for a popular revolution in Martinique in terms of *a cross-cultural poetics*, invigorated by and implicated in the spirit of carnival. Michael Dash's summary of Glissant's vision makes visible its congruence with the grotesque. Dash elucidates,

Caribbean Discourse presents the Caribbean in terms of a forest of becoming in the untamed landscape, in the human carnival, in the interplay of linguistic and aesthetic forms. Unfettered by an authoritarian language or system, the human forest of the carnival becomes an exemplary Caribbean space. Individual and community, tree and forest, parole (individual utterance) and langue (collective expression) interacts as old hierarchies are dismantled and old associations erased.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 26. "Contrary to modern canons," Bakhtin distinguishes the archaic grotesque (of Rabelais) as "not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation. This is the ever unfinished, ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other."

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., xli.

Carnival expresses and embodies the in-between of the islands and of creolization, the verbal carnality of the archipelagos. And what is for Glissant a forest (of relational rhizomes) forged in the creolized archipelagic bloom space of self-cultivation and cultural expression, is for Derek Walcott, a phoenix, rising from the (tr)ash. Carnival is a Caribbean ritual and “a mass art form which came out of nothing, which emerged from the sanctions imposed on it.”¹⁹⁸ Walcott submits, “seriously, solemnly dedicates itself to the concept of waste, of ephemera, of built-in obsolescence...[not] of manufacture but of art...this regeneration of perpetually making it new.”¹⁹⁹ Like reggae, dub poets, and the “auto-mechanics of the Caribbean—the devalued, ‘low culture’ artists and artisans,” which Carolyn Cooper features, carnival creates “out of the garbage of the material conditions of our times.”²⁰⁰

Though their images differ, these symbols signify a similar vision for carnival’s significance within the Caribbean. It is a (re)creative archipelagic epistemology. It is embodied, collective, innovative, imaginative, and rhythmic. Carnival in the Caribbean is

¹⁹⁸ Derek Walcott, “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, 261.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. Walcott concludes his essay, “In the indication of the slightest necessary gesture of ordering the world around him, of losing his old name and rechristening himself, in the arduous enunciation of a dimmed alphabet, in the shaping of tools, pen or space, is the whole, profound sigh of human optimism, of what we in the archipelago still believe in: work and hope: It is out of this that the New World, or the Third World, should begin. Theoretical and idealistic though this sounds, it is our duty as poets to reiterate it. The embittered despair of a New World writer like [V. S.] Naipaul is also part of that impatience and irascibility at the mere repetition of human error which passes for history, and that irascibility is also a belief in possibility. The New World originated in hypocrisy and genocide, so it is not a question for us, of returning to an Eden or of creating Utopia; out of the sordid and degrading beginning of the West Indies, we could only go further in decency and regret. Poets and satirists are afflicted with the superior stupidity which believes that societies can be renewed, and one of the most nourishing sites for such a renewal, however visionary it may seem, is the American archipelago” (264). See note 886 for more on this essay as and in response to Naipaul.

²⁰⁰ Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, 191.

the re-membering of carnivalesque-grotesque through verbal carnality. It represents the imaginative in-between of the islands and their creative capacity to rhythmically and relationally re-member identity and its expression in the archipelagos. Glissant considers “the camouflaged escape of the carnival” to have constituted another route, “a desperate way out of the confining world of the plantation.”²⁰¹ On account of its “baroque irreverence” and “creative excess,” carnival, like Creole folktale, “represents the very opposite of the plantation or the Garden of Genesis, with its regulated and regimented space.”²⁰² Carnival and Creole folktale are rhizomatic routes out of emancipation from oppression; it is “creative disorder.”²⁰³ Glissant asserts that their cultural valence is always contingent and that the very ways they materialize (the way they quite literally matter, as embodied oral performance and cultural performativity) varies according to context and that it is only in situations of imperial conquest and domination and severe segregation and stratification, therefore, that Creole folktale and carnival, like/as carnivalesque-grotesque, have value and import as necessary cultural critiques with profoundly revolutionary implications. Glissant is unequivocal in his linking of identity, its negotiation and expression within the Caribbean to the complex socio-political and economic climate among and in-between the islands (not to mention the ways in which the diversity and density of his experiences as a Martinican have profoundly influenced his interests in the political efficacy of aesthetic oralitrary strategies).²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xli-xlii.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xli, xlii. In his introduction to the collection of essays, Michael Dash identifies the resonances between Glissant and Mikhail Bakhtin. In their treatment of folktale, both writers are considering the value and appropriation of particular folktales within contexts of imperial domination—due to the socio-political

Carnival is an integral part of the “tradition of oral festivity” and the “corporeal rhythms” of the Caribbean; “an essential component” of a Caribbean epistemology: archipelagics.²⁰⁵ Carnival is most relevant to Glissant for its revolutionary capacity as an embodiment of *creolization*.²⁰⁶ Carnival only holds such profound possibility (in its reclamation and re-membering) through *Creolité* precisely in its colonizing through capitalistic commodification, its “appropriation by the official media as a kind of local eccentricity.”²⁰⁷ Rooted as it is in a valuation of both the individual and collective bodies, carnival, as creolization, is “a form of revolution permanente...of ceaseless change,” a “demonstration of a cross-cultural poetics [and] a joyous affirmation of relativity.”²⁰⁸ Glissant writes,

If we speak of creolized cultures (like Caribbean culture, for example) it is not to define a category that will by its very nature be opposed to other categories (‘pure’ cultures), but in order to assert that today infinite varieties of creolization are open to human

contexts in which both of them were writing—Bakhtin in the 1920’s in Russia and Glissant in and around Martinique in the twentieth century. Dash, in fact, reads Glissant as audaciously/boldly inhabiting and wrestling (artistically) with “a world in turmoil in which the old lines of authority were removed and had been replaced by a mixing of languages, cultures, and social groups.” Dash highlights how these conditions were the catalyst and lacuna out of which each conceptualized the poetics of carnival. Through his vision of carnival, Bakhtin develops “an aesthetics of incompleteness in which a new exuberant relationship between body, language and politics emerges and replaces an old and rigidly confirming order,” akin to Glissant’s creolization, neither being rooted in a pure, coherent discursive origin, discourse, or origin, both are animated by and are a form of *révolution permanente* (Glissant xlii, xliii). As much as Dash highlights the similarities between their contexts and experiences, it is as important to acknowledge their obvious differences. The primary being the racial-cultural distance between Eastern Europe and the Antilles.

²⁰⁵ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xli.

²⁰⁶ As Creole is a disruptive “impure” form of French and Jamaican Creole speech is, in the words of Sylvia Wynter, “an Amalgam of West African structural forms with a primarily English vocabulary” (70). Sylvia Wynter, “One Love—Rhetoric or Reality? Aspects of Afro-Jamaicanism,” *Caribbean Studies* 12, no. 3 (1972): 64-97.

²⁰⁷ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xliii.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, xlii, xliii.

conception, both on the level of awareness and on that of intention:
in theory and in reality.²⁰⁹

It is the repossession or reappropriation of carnival, and likewise folktale, by creolized archipelological bodies, which disrupts the attempts of the Western European Root to co-opt the form and its routes. Through the reclamation and re-membering of the cross-cultural relevance of both carnival and Creole folktale, their capacity for radical political transformation and epistemological revolution becomes reality as creolized, archipelological embodiments of Diversity in resistance to Sameness and Relation rather than Root in and through a poetics of Relation.²¹⁰

As Glissant's work exhibits, Bakhtin's exploration of festival and folktale vis-à-vis carnival and the grotesque can be entirely relevant to orality's embodiment within Caribbean carnival and Creole folktale.²¹¹ According to Bakhtin, there are two kinds of festivals, representative of two dominant worlds and corollary world-views. (Bakhtin's bifurcated representation is, unsurprisingly, indicative of his Western European framework. I would locate carnival, as a creolized archipelological aesthetic, in-between Bakhtin's categories.) "Official" (as authorized, authoritative) state-sponsored events and

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 140, 141.

²¹⁰ Wynter, "One Love," 70. Wynter critiques the way in which "literary 'blackism'" in Jamaican writing, which she contrasts with "the exploration of neo-autochthonous blackness," "involves a middle-class exploitation of cult religions, folklore, which [became] widespread in the cultural life of the neo-colonial Caribbean." Wynter cites both Andrew Salkey and Rex Nettleford as examples of this trend in the 60's and 70's, which she considers to be losing steam in light of a "new wave" of Afro-Jamaican consciousness (71).

²¹¹ Dash not only elucidates their resonance in his introduction to *Caribbean Discourse* but in *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a World Context* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1989).

“Folk,” which are of and by the people and marked by a carnivalesque spirit.²¹² The latter, then, is characterized by the manipulation of the socially sanctioned norms, ordered and regulated through and as “regular” (official, linear, Western European Root) time by the former. Official culture, then, is strategically inverted and, thereby, subverted by folk through the construction of what Bakhtin deemed a “world inside out” or *world-upside-down*.²¹³ For Bakhtin, the construction of reality as world-upside-down (heretofore WUD) is perhaps nowhere more palpable than in and through the performance of carnivalesque-grotesque folktales (again, always inflected according to the context, the culture and conditions, out of which it emerges).²¹⁴ While Bakhtin understood carnivalesque and the grotesque as independent entities, together they constitute a (re-membering of the) world other-wise. Their collective appeal to humor and chaos in the disruption of the hierarchies constructed and perpetuated by official cultural and as oralitutory modes, appropriated as “official” festival, offers release to all sectors of society.²¹⁵ Carnivalesque-grotesque was and still is a modality for and a means

²¹² Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 5ff. (Translated from *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* and originally published in Moscow in 1965)

²¹³ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 11. In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin analyzes Rabelais’s art, excavating his tales for their function within folk culture, occupying the space between official, sanctioned (Western) discourse and the (words and ways of the) common people. It is not merely the oral traditions of such folktales and/or their performance Bakhtin emphasizes, but the very culture and conditions out of which carnivalesque-grotesque folktales emerge.

²¹⁴ Ibid. Glissant, likewise, is juxtaposing these two forms of festival and discourse in his work. In a previous iteration of Chapter Four, I explored Bakhtin’s chronotope in relation to Glissant’s reflections upon configurations and representations of landscape, time and space, in the language and literature of the Caribbean.

²¹⁵ For those familiar with the Caribbean iteration of carnivalesque in Carnival it is often (though not *sin qua non*) recognized as an official festival. However, as I will elucidate, Caribbean manifestations are always already a hybrid of official and folk.

to political resistance and epistemological revolution, wherein certain aspects of culture (honorable or normal) are depicted as ugly, exaggerated, and disgusting.²¹⁶

As aforementioned, though this subversive modality might have been visible in Africana folktale and folk festivals and carnival in the Caribbean, Bakhtin rendered it transparent through the prose of Western European intellectualism. Therefore, these Africana oral modalities have gone relatively unrecognized within the Academy. (Glissant is one of the few archipelological intellectuals to have engaged Bakhtin's work in this way so as to render the resonances recognizable and relevant to the Western Root mind and its philosophical discourse toward the decolonizing of epistemology.) It is not only the lack of Western European intellectual engagement with Africana epistemologies and theoretical contributions, however, but also the ignorance of thriving Africana aesthetic and cultural forms, which has led to the Academy's epistemological emaciation; and what Derek Walcott deems "the amnesia of the American, [and] particularly of the African."²¹⁷ Western European scholars have historically been guilty of colonial appropriation on the one hand or obliviousness on the other, and often some combination of both (as is the case with Havelock and Ong).²¹⁸ Western European scholarship on

²¹⁶ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xlii. In the introduction to *Caribbean Discourse*, Michael Dash posits, "Bakhtin develops through his vision of the carnival an aesthetics of incompleteness in which a new exuberant relationship between body, language and politics emerges and replaces an old and rigidly confirming order."

²¹⁷ Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?", 259. Walcott is not arguing for a return to a time before "America" enforced its History and its "civilized virtues" ("social order, a lineally clear hierarchy, direction, purpose, balance"), "for we cannot return to what we have never been... The Old World, whether it is represented by the light of Europe or of Asia or of Africa, is the rhythm by which we remember."

²¹⁸ I am viscerally and acutely aware that even with the best intentions, the encounter with the other can yet another study on the self and a mere exercise in intellectual masturbation; where the subaltern is once again silenced. As the maxim goes, *the road to hell is paved with good intentions*. See note 187.

carnival is another example of this deficiency and subsequent attenuation. Kristeva, like Bakhtin and numerous others, looks to Western European textual materializations of carnival in carnivalesque-grotesque, long past its heyday. In the Caribbean archipelago, on the other hand, the form has existed as a queerly creative cultural and rhythmic ritual space for centuries and continues to be a vibrant and flourishing communal practice infused with Africana traditions.²¹⁹

By frustrating hierarchical binaries through the disruption of clear distinctions between culture and nature, official and folk, history and futurity, then and now, here and there, carnival is queer (i.e., non-normative). That is not to deny its official function as an “official,” state-sponsored festival (and economic franchise). Carnival is, in many ways, the celebration and, therefore, reification of institutionalized expectations of Caribbeanness, cultural conformity, (hetero)normativity, performativity, and patriarchy. And it inarguably contributes to the further exploitation and disempowerment of real live disenfranchised and disempowered peoples through its problematic political, cultural, and economic alliances. Mariana Torgovnic, in fact, addresses carnival’s immanent problematics. The issue, she observes, “is one of *sprezzatura*, of carnivalesque rejoicing, of celebrating the crossing and recrossing of things, of believing that contact and polyphony are inherently liberating.”²²⁰ Torgovnic’s skepticism relates directly to the

²¹⁹ See Anikó Imre, *Identity Games: Globalization and the Transformation of Media Cultures in the New Europe* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009): 203-206. Aside from attending to the difference between modern materializations and their iterations beyond the Caribbean, Imre also highlights the way in which carnival and carnivalesque-grotesque explicitly transgress boundaries of gender, not only those of culture, class, time, and space.

²²⁰ Maria Torgovnic, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990): 40. Also see Achille Mbembe’s scathing criticism of the use of humor, play, and vulgarity by “postcolonized [African] subjects” as ultimately

impermanence of carnival. The beauty of carnival is its disruption of normative (“official”) ways of being-in-the-world, its subversion of the Western Root’s binary hierarchies. She permits, “one cannot tell male from female, rich from poor, black from white: those differences, ordinarily so crucial, do not matter for the duration of the carnival. Everything is freer there, everything is possible.”²²¹ Torgovnic highlights Carnival’s subversive, ambiguous, topsy-turvy, *WUD*, and profoundly queer energy. However, she is quick to remind her reader, when the festivities conclude, there are social and economic facts that condition reality, which carnival, when applied unconscientiously, ignores entirely.

The lived reality of domestic violence, underemployment, capitalist exploitation, neo-colonialism, empiricism, and onto-epistemological erasure must not only be

problematic. “Since these processes are essentially magical,” he argues, “they in no way erase the dominated from the epistemological field of power” (129). These practices serve to support postcolonial relations, “relations of conviviality and covering over, [and] of powerlessness par excellence—from the viewpoint of the masters of power and of those they crush” (129). An argument, which resonates with Paulo Freire’s understanding of oppression as dehumanizing both for oppressed and oppressor, since such a power structure negates and denies the humanity of both. Achebe depicts public events in the postcolony as a sort of carnival performance in and of themselves, where the honoring of achievements (educational, political, etc.) of postcolonial subjects are “mock honors” (130), which perpetuate the entrenched hierarchy, instantiating and confirming the ambivalence of mimicry, the Bhabhaian “not quite/not white” (“almost but not quite...almost the same but not white”) schema. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000): 43-61; Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-92. In this section, “Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse,” Bhabha draws heavily from Fanon’s interventions regarding dual consciousness and collective catharsis in *Black Skin, White Masks*, an other (or scape goat) upon whom the collective aggression of society may be released (Fanon, 145). (Akin to Julia Kristeva’s abject.) Bhabha then reference Edward Long’s *History of Jamaica* by means of example, in order to illustrate the “negrophobi[a]” of Western European white authors, which led to their representation of “[Negroes]...as the vilest of human kind.” Also see Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008); and Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia, 1982).

²²¹ Maria Torgovnic, 40, 41.

acknowledged but must compel carnival as a Caribbean creative modality *and* as a cultural critique. Resonating and resounding with the archipelagic rhythms of Africana, carnival is always already creolized and, therefore, carries or bears the seeds of its own subversion (as official festival). As much as carnival has been colonized through its commodification, it is simultaneously a creative creolized bloom space for the disruption of dominant discourse by the subjugated. It could incite a socio-cultural phenomenon that exposes and challenges carnival's oppressive underbelly, its complex empiricism, not to mention its problematic ambivalent effects and affects, but let us not forget that this critique and disruption, in fact, is already in effect.²²² This critique can come from any life at any location on any level. Power is never unidirectional or univocal. It always moves from and through multiple routes, it operates on multiples planes at various frequencies and varied intensities.²²³ All the better when the critique comes from multiple communities and in solidarity; when the critique is creolized. For example, Héctor Dominguez Ruvalcaba, argues that carnival is itself a queer festival and that “by deconstructing the gender system,” within carnival, the very “foundations of the nation

²²² See Carolyn Cooper's blog, “Carnival Belongs to Brown People,” *The Gleaner* (April 10, 2016) <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/commentary/20160410/carnival-belongs-brown-people> also “Carnival Belongs to Brown Skin People,” *Jamaican Matey Groupie* (April 10, 2016) <http://www.jamaicanmateyangroupie.com/other-articles/carnival-belong-to-brown-skin-people-by-carolyn-cooper/> Accessed June 20, 2017.

²²³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978); and James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Also see Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre's application of Scott's notion of hidden transcript, especially “the range of offstage physical and verbal practices that register dissent from the performance of power typically embodied in the ‘public transcript’,” in her reading of Q. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, “Communities Resisting Fragmentation: Q and the Works of James C. Scott,” in *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 193.

and the state” are called into question.²²⁴ What it is to be queer and to queer something has, in more recent years, expanded to include non-normativity, which is not limited to the transgression of the binary gender system. Even as it operates to reinstate norms, however, Ruvalcaba argues that carnival can and does represent a Caribbean embodiments of queerness. I would only add that carnival is but one bloom space wherein creolité and queerness, as critiques of and creative responses to the Western European Root normativizing of the other-wise, have found common (archipelological) routes. Testimonios is yet another queerly creolized bloom space other-wise.

Marcella Althaus-Reid, for her part, treats LGBTQ+ Argentinians’ deployment of testimonios as corporate coming out stories. We circle back around to reflect upon this creative creolized cultural practice, through which the individual gives collective *voice to what has been marginalized* in order to consider the ways in which there are always

²²⁴ Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba, *Translating the Queer: Body Politics and Transnational Conversations* (London: Zed Books, 2016), 64-66. An opinion also held by James Green and Emilio Bejel among innumerable others. It is important to note that this argument has primarily been made by Gay male scholars and that it is not being made without recognition of and resistance to homophobia throughout the Caribbean. See James N. Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Sexuality in Twentieth Century Brazil* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); Emilio Bejel, *Gay Cuban Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001). Of course, the socio-cultural, political critique of carnival articulated in the music of the Calypsonians should not be disregarded. Though in more recent years, Soca has been considerably less politically conscious—Machel Montano, the self-proclaimed “king of soca” and front-man of The HD Family, is but one example—its roots are unarguably in resistance. (Calypso was originally employed by slaves in Trinidad and Tobago as a mode of communication.) For more on this history, see Sandra Pouchet Paquet, Patricia J. Saunders, and Stephen Stuempfle, eds., *Music, Memory, Resistance: Calypso and the Caribbean Literary Imagination* (Kingston, Jamaica and Miami: Ian Randle, 2007.). To be clear, carnival’s queerness is not directly or explicitly related to the explosion of gender norms, but more broadly represents a politics of subversion and the deployment of the body in relation to rhythm and to music as a re-remembering and critical social commentary.

(queer) creolized routes other-wise.²²⁵ Regardless of the “official” (original) intent for this modality, like carnival, testimonios may be appropriated in order to celebrate “the life of the excluded, expos[ing] those images and sexual practices that have been covered, denied, and punished...mak[ing] visible the obscene (i.e., what is not proper to be shown in public’).²²⁶ Rather than covering over or severing the obscene, embarrassing, shameful, abject, or “unclean” parts of our (communal) body, carnival as testimonios as the (carnavalesque)grotesque can and should be the celebration of and in our capacity to affect and be affected collectively; to (allow ourselves to) be contaminated, wrecked, pushed, pulled, and (de)constructively constituted (by and in Relation to the) other-wise. It is (re)creation and our effective affective re-membling in community. Althaus-Reid, (in the vein of Glissant, Walcott, and Cooper), posthumously haunts and exhorts us to do as these creolized Caribbean bodies have for centuries, to take theology and make it indecent, to take old forms and make something entirely new, to revel in the (grotesque) body—as vehicle of life and death (to take the Bible and re-membling other-wise).

As carnivalesque-grotesque functions within folktale, it can and does materialize in carnival, even as folktale is performed within Africana and the archipelago in

²²⁵ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 145. Also see note 83 of this chapter.

²²⁶ Ibid. Ruvalcaba highlights the way in which Carnival in Brazil has “become one of the central sites of representations of Brazilian nationalism,” making the figure of the transvestite “a prominent image of Brazilianness.” Of course, the nation’s endorsement, consumption, and representation of nonhegemonic sexualities, as Jasbir Puar has argued, is also a way of the nation-state’s absorption or co-optation of such “deviant” identities, colonizing these bodies so as to neutralize their collective force. Homonormativity in this way, allows such nonconformist identities (previously viewed as threatening) to exist while keeping the dominant power structure fully intact. See Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

particular.²²⁷ These social, political, and cultural mediums play an instrumental role in performing and reproducing (communal, cultural) identity and solidarity and, as such, should be interpreted, understood, and engaged archipelogically, through what Glissant deemed *folk imagination*. Through folk imagination, the various archipelagic oral modalities work together as necessary parts of their cultural performance and, thereby, function as rhizomatic routes to re-memberings (of history) other-wise, which instantiates and enacts the “creative link between nature and culture [that] is vital to the formation of a community”²²⁸—a connection severed by the West’s routing claim over History as totalitarian Root. These are indubitably Africana aesthetic modes that—because they have rhythmically risen from and within the archipelago out of the fissures, the lacuna, created by History—are integral to history’s re-membering. It is not necessarily the festival performance of these tales, but their oral performative re-membering by multiple interpretive bodies (individual and collective), which contributes to the constitution of not only history but epistemology other-wise; always already as a subversive strategy constructing individual, communal and transcultural identity. Africana epistemologies, which employ archipelagic thinking rather than continental thought, offer this opportunity but only as we honor their rhizomatic roots as routes other-wise, engaging them in relation to real-life circumstances. If these modalities are engaged merely in theory, they are vacated of their affective and effectual force.

²²⁷ Though carnival and carnivalesque-grotesque (like speaking and writing, folk [tale] and official [festival]) are not self-same, once we acknowledge and understand the important differences between them (form, foci, and context, in particular), we are better able to explore their connections and the ways in which the spaces emerging in-between their divergence and convergence instantiates creative resonance.

²²⁸ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 63.

Heather Russell is an exemplary scholar in this regard. Russell's archipelological sensibilities and her own rhizomatic roots and routes extend from Jamaica through the diaspora in *Legba's Crossing* leading her to confront the archipelago's ambivalence, and its consequent celebration of "the crossing and recrossing of things."²²⁹ For Russell, the West African god Esu-Elegbara, or his New World corollary Legba, has been an Africana medium through which one might experience at least the possibility of real "material transformation."²³⁰ For in her appeal to Legba one is imbued with agency through àshe, "the West African spirit force that is 'the-power-to-make-things-happen'...a key to futurity and self-realization" and "the *sign* of creative power."²³¹ In this way, àshe, and even Legba, might be understood as Africana embodiments of an archipelological and, therefore, rhizomatic Wisdom; one which occupies the cracks. Legba lives in limbo and, as such, he inhabits the in-between. He is the god of crossings. As Henry Louis Gates has identified,

Esu, the god of indeterminacy, rules [the] interpretive process; he is the god of interpretation because he symbolizes the ambiguity of figurative language...he signifies the very divinity of the figurative...Esu is our metaphor for the uncertainties of explication, for the open-endedness of every literary text...Esu rules the process of disclosure, a process that is never-ending, that is dominated by multiplicity. Esu is discourse upon a text; it is the process of interpretation he rules.²³²

²²⁹ Heather Russell, *Legba's Crossing: Narratology in the African Atlantic* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), Loc. 1978. Russell's engagement with Torgovnic's critique is included in her treatment of Glissant and "the reintroduction of materiality in the discursive domains of African Atlantic theory" (Loc. 240-291).

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid., Loc. 1969.

²³² Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 21. Part of this excerpt is cited in Russell, Loc. 138.

Esu-Elegbara, or Legba, represents (movement across and) the epistemology of the archipelagos, its archipelogics.

Even as Russell thinks the archipelago in terms of crossing, in *The Repeating Island* Antonio Benitez-Rojo engages the Caribbean as a bridge, one which is fluid, mutable, and entirely movable. Advising and enacting a “rereading,” a critical, epistemological and relational re-membering, of the archipelago, Benitez-Rojo commences from the “geographical fact” of the Antilles as “an island bridge connecting, in ‘another way,’ North and South America.”²³³ As archipelagic, the West Indies are, Benitez-Rojo writes, “a discontinuous conjunction...a field of observation quite in tune with the objectives of Chaos.”²³⁴ Referring to Chaos configured through recent scientific paradigm rather than its traditional conceptualization, Benitez-Rojo explains that Chaos in this way signifies the “dynamic states or regularities that repeat themselves globally,” in the “(dis)order that swarms around” that which we call Nature.²³⁵ Chaos is the (dis)order of nature as *the dynamic states or regularities that repeat themselves globally*. It is the (dis)ordered rhythm of repetition in the poetic archipelogical re-memberings of oralitrary cultural narratives other-wise, the stories shared in-between us as global residents always already in rhizomatic Relation. We are connected, implicated, always related, resonating and responding, via the movable bridges that (re)configure and (re)create us all as creolized affective archipelagic all-world assemblage. We are the world becoming archipelago and should think (of ourselves) as such.

²³³ Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), Loc. 114.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

The Caribbean reverberates with rhythm. It repeats itself. According to Benitez-Rojo, the Caribbean is collectively a type of DeleuzoGuattarian machine and, unlike any machine of the Western colonial (Root) regime, it evolved into a production machine that became absolutely essential to the (domination of the) European capitalist machine.²³⁶ The Caribbean machine repeated itself, it was rhythmically reproduced as and in the plantation and, under Western European auspices, Benitez-Rojo proclaims, not only did this machine “produce no fewer than ten million African slaves and thousands of coolies,” it manufactured mercantile and industrial capitalism, African underdevelopment, the population of the Caribbean, “imperialism, wars, colonial blocs, rebellions, repressions, sugar islands, runaway slave settlements, air and naval bases, revolutions of all sorts, and even a ‘free associated state’ next to an unfree socialist state.”²³⁷ (Benitez-Rojo’s could be considered a compelling archipelological re-membering

²³⁶ Explaining his deployment of “machine,” Benitez-Rojo writes, “when I speak of a machine I am starting from Deleuze and Guattari’s concept. I am talking about the machine of machines, the machine machine machine machine; which is to say that every machine is a conjunction of machines coupled together, and each one of these interrupts the flow of the previous one; it will be said rightly that one can picture any machine alternatively in terms of flow and interruption. Such a notion, as we will see, is fundamental to our rereading of the Caribbean, for it will permit us to pass on to an even more important one” (Loc. 200). He is speaking specifically of the evolution and impact of the Western colonial-capitalist machine’s invasion of the Caribbean (from Columbus onward), which he indirectly likens to sexual assault. Benitez-Rojo does not mince words or waste time in his lambast of Western Europe’s conquest of the Caribbean archipelago, whose expansion via the Atlantic. “Let’s be realistic,” he reasons, “the Atlantic is the Atlantic (with all its port cities) because it was once engendered by the copulation of Europe—that insatiable solar bull—with the Caribbean archipelago; the Atlantic is today the Atlantic (the navel of capitalism) because Europe, in its mercantilist laboratory, conceived the projects of inseminating the Caribbean womb with the blood of Africa; the Atlantic is today the Atlantic (nato, World Bank, New York Stock Exchange, European Economic Community, etc.) because it was the painfully delivered child of the Caribbean, whose vagina was stretched between continental clamps...” (Loc. 172) Benitez-Rojo all but names the Caribbean, χώρα.

²³⁷ Benitez-Rojo, Loc. 246.

other-wise that challenges Havelock's representation of the machinations and repercussions of "modernism.")²³⁸ Rhythm can be as destructive as it is creative.

As a result of its freighted history, and its complex rhythms, Benitez-Rojo argues that the Caribbean is more than "a multiethnic sea or group of islands," it is "an important historico-economic sea and, further, a cultural meta-archipelago without center and without limits, a chaos within which there is an island that proliferates endlessly, each copy a different one."²³⁹ He wants us to talk about the Caribbean "we can see, touch, smell, hear, taste; the *Caribbean of the senses*;"²⁴⁰ the Caribbean we can *think with* because it is the Caribbean we (can) feel.²⁴¹ Accordingly, the Caribbean machine, Benitez-Rojo writes,

[I]s something more: it is a technological-poetic machine, or, if you like, a metamachine of differences whose poetic mechanism cannot be diagrammed in conventional dimensions, and whose user's manual is found dispersed in a state of plasma within the chaos of its own network of codes and subcodes...[where] polyrhythm (rhythms cut through by other rhythms, which are cut by still other rhythms)—if it takes us to the point at which the central rhythm is displaced by other rhythms in such a way as to make it fix a center no longer, then to transcend into a state of flux—may fairly define the type of performance that characterizes the Caribbean cultural machine.²⁴²

The Caribbean is a technological-poetic machine and its rhythm is restorative, it relational, and it is rhizomatic. The rhythm of the archipelological poetic machine that is the Caribbean displaces the Root rhythm because it is a diverse polyrhythm. It is also a *metarhythm*, "which can be arrived at through any system of signs, whether it be dance,

²³⁸ See Havelock's description of modernism on pp. 150-152.

²³⁹ Benitez-Rojo, 246.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁴¹ See my supplement to Mignolo's argument on page 50 and again on 143-144.

²⁴² Benitez-Rojo, Loc. 416.

music, language, text, or body language, etc.”²⁴³ It is this archipelological understanding of rhythm, as meta, which represents the rhizomatic all-world of Relation while resisting (its reification as) Root metanarrative. It is also intertextual in the *Africana* and archipelological sense (where text signifies beyond what is written) and, therefore, integral to re-membering the Bible other-wise through bibliorality.

When one reads (with) rhythm in this way, one comprehends the ways in which reading is affective and implicitly relational; an interpenetrative interpretive event. Benitez-Rojo thinks of reading as a “double seduction,” for “[w]ith each reading the reader seduces the text, transforms it, makes it [his/her/their] own; with each reading the text seduces the reader, transforms [her/him/them], makes [her/him/them] its own.”²⁴⁴ Moving “from literature to carnival,” Benitez-Rojo announces that carnival within the Caribbean is a paradoxical practice and its complexity “cannot be reduced to binary concepts.”²⁴⁵ Through its double sacrifice, “the groups in power channel the violence of the oppressed groups in order to maintain yesterday’s order, while the latter channels the former’s violence so that it will not recur tomorrow;” this is the carnivalesque spirit and it is here that carnival as a disruptive archipelagic force meets reading meets biblical interpretation, as rhizomatic rhythmic re-membering, other-wise.²⁴⁶ Carnival is always already creolized, an archipelagic aesthetic modality of rhythm, dance, and performance with variations across the Caribbean, offering otherwise oppressed peoples the means to empowerment. It instantiates a creative creolized bloom space to disrupt the dominant

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, Loc. 434. Again, Benitez-Rojo inadvertently offers the necessary archipelological response to (and critique of) Havelock’s Eurocentric perspective (here on the supremacy of Western European languages).

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Loc. 509.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Loc. 5688.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

discourse, to remember their freighted history and rhythmically re-member themselves so as to enact real change.

**“Rethinking Orality for Biblical Studies”?
Rhythm, Affect, and Bibliorality (The Bible as Oraliturgical Bloom Space)**

Althea Spencer-Miller is part of a more recent trend in biblical studies to engage and interpret the Bible orally. In her article, “Rethinking Orality for Biblical Studies” she articulates the conviviality of orality and Africana/Afro-Caribbean biblical hermeneutics.²⁴⁷ The New Testament scholar offers hermeneutical and experiential insights on orality as epistemology with critical relevance for biblical interpretation. Drawing from, interrogating and expanding upon Ong’s oeuvre, Spencer-Miller reminds her reader that while Ong’s work instantiated a revitalization of orality in biblical studies, orality itself has a rich and long history with/in biblical literature and its field of study.²⁴⁸ Ong explored the psychodynamics of orality, providing certain “dimensions, categories, and descriptors of orality,” but Ong, and those who have followed in his stead, have done so from a definitively *literary orientation*—the hegemonic hermeneutic of “a Western

²⁴⁷ Althea Spencer-Miller, “Rethinking Orality for Biblical Studies,” in *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step*, ed. Roland Boer (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 35-68. Spencer-Miller, like Wynter, Cooper, Goodison, Cliff, and Rankine, is a Jamaican who migrated from the Caribbean to pursue her studies and, eventually, career.

²⁴⁸ Spencer-Miller, 35. Also see James D.G. Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013)—especially his chapters “On History, Memory and Eyewitnesses: In Response to Bengt Holdman and Samuel Byrskog,” “Kenneth Bailey’s Theory of Oral Tradition: Critiquing Theodore Weeden’s Critique,” and “The History of the Tradition (New Testament),” which systematizes orality in biblical studies (including how form criticism ignored orality)—and Rafael Rodriguez, *Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014).

epistemological framework.”²⁴⁹ In order to think orality within biblical studies, Spencer-Miller argues, this literary orientation must be supplemented/supplanted by an oral-literate self-consciousness, which offers the anticolonial “auto-ethnographic breadth and depth” ethically responsible biblical interpretation necessitates by frustrating the imposed binary of speech and writing, orality and literacy.²⁵⁰

Ong’s work, as most Western biblical scholarship, has left significant lacunae in biblical studies that Spencer-Miller attempts to expose and attend to in this “ovulatory essay”, exploring, as she does, “the possibilities in reciprocal insemination between oral and literary epistemologies.”²⁵¹ The New Testament scholar contends that the voyeuristic, literary posture of the Western “cerebral-cognitive universe, constrains the holism of communication events in the Caribbean context” and any other culture which is orally oriented.²⁵² “Rethinking Orality,” then, is more than anything the application of Spencer-Miller’s own creolized oralitrary, communal-self-consciousness to biblical interpretation in order to prove the very ways in which such an epistemological “transposition” can and will revolutionize the field; a field in which subjectivity has historically been stigmatized as “bias[ed], prejudice[d], and [suffered] the accusation of an inability to objectify

²⁴⁹ Spencer-Miller, 36, 37. Kelber, who has refined his approach to the relationship of orality and literacy over the past four decades, is credited with having first identified the literary, or “chirographic bias’s of Western intellectuals,” initially exposed by Ong, within New Testament studies, not to mention its influence upon the texts of the New Testament. See Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Gospel of Mark, Paul, and Q* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), xv.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 36, 40.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 47. While this, one of my favorite sentences in the piece, pertains more specifically to “Rethinking Orality,” there is little doubt that the scholar is intent on disrupting the hierarchical binary of literacy/orality in biblical studies.

²⁵² Ibid., 37.

oneself in separation from the textual material, a regnant value.”²⁵³ However, Spencer-Miller reasons, if the accounts found in the Bible (and she is here thinking with and about Q) were orally performed within the oral culture of the ancient Mediterranean and only written secondarily, should one not privilege an oral motility when interpreting such texts, “engaging alternative cultural imaginations as viable and necessary for the tasks of reconstructing ancient cultural epistemologies” in order to do so efficaciously?²⁵⁴ She observes that in biblical studies what is

Lost in translation, and thus a lacuna, is the awareness that an oral mentality remains as the matrix of communication and of performance as communication. Orality is so much more than speech. The reading and performing of texts is oral first, because reception is an oral mentality, and only secondarily, because it is spoken.²⁵⁵

Appealing to Michael Jackson’s definition of radical empiricism, or radical empirical ethnography, that “unlike traditional empiricism, which draws a definite boundary between observer and observed, between method and object, radical empiricism denies the validity of such cuts and makes the interplay between these domains and the focus of its interest,” Spencer-Miller emphasizes an empiricism characterized by participatory experience or “experiential subjectivity.”²⁵⁶ In this way,

²⁵³ Ibid., 47. She continues, “Yet, biblical critics have normalized their cultural subjectivity into invisibility and normativeness with the illusion that auto-ethnographic invisibility equals objectivity.”

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 51.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 40.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 47. Haun Saussy, for his part, posits, “the customary stark division between orality and literacy must collapse, taking with it some of the traditional privileges of the human, once the transmission mechanisms of oral tradition are moved to the other side of the erstwhile line. It is not that all differences vanish, only that the relative differences that come to replace the stark antithesis of writing and nonwriting put us in a better place to describe the relations among the materials and occasions of these different types of writing” (Loc. 3604). See Haun Staussy, *The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and Its*

she seeks to not only blur the bifurcation of the oral and the literary, but the distinction between observer and participant-performer, reader and text, and Glissant assists her in elucidating these subversions.²⁵⁷ It is not only these dubious dichotomies, which Glissant's creolization, as archipelagic thinking and poetics of Relation, disrupt, however, but the fundamental Western European Root distinctions of the objective and the subjective or affective, ego and nature, humans and the world, creator and creation, song and story.²⁵⁸

Landscape, in many ways, functions as this liminal, archipelagic space for Glissant; the space of Relation and/in the creation of meaning, taking root not as exclusive and colonizing Root but as the occupation of an ever-present in-between.

Landscape is space, but as the ambience, the affect, the (culture of/cultural) feeling or vibe, which emerges in the rhythms established and expressed in oraliture, rather than a

Technologies (New York: Fordham Press, 2016). (While I appreciate the attempt to recuperate [by radicalizing] empiricism, in distinction from Spencer-Miller, I do not consider its evocation necessary, but do want to foreground its centering of sensual experience—which is indubitably affective. Unfortunately, it seems to me that empiricism, by means of the insidious Western European ideology undergirding it, is what got us into this mess in the first place. [Whether radical, in its appeal to the interplay of domains, or traditional, empiricism is a product of the Enlightenment and an imperial apparatus of classification and domination.] Rather than recuperating empiricism, as knowledge from sensory experience, I would like to expose it as empiricism...and advocate not for its revision, but for its re-membering.)

²⁵⁷ See Glissant, *L'Intention Poétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), 72. Glissant proffers, “the meaning (‘history’) of landscape or of Nature is the revealed clarity of the process by which a community, cut off from its bonds or roots” (190). Landscape is rhizomatic and, therefore, does not eradicate rooting, but precludes taking root as a unique, solitary, exclusive event/entity and involves a taking root that does not take, possess, colonize, or destroy the land, but in order to relate to and embrace its place and all others simultaneously. To exist in the world in this way, then, “is to conceive (to live) at last the world as a relation: as a compound necessity, a consented reaction” (20). Also see Ines Moatamri's reading of the resonances between the work of Tunisian poet Amina Saïd and Glissant, “‘Poetics of Relation’ Amina Saïd and Édouard Glissant,” in *Trans* Vol. 3 (2007). <https://trans.revues.org/180?lang=en>

²⁵⁸ Glissant, *L'Intention Poétique*, 62.

specific territory.²⁵⁹ In fact, for Glissant, Aimé Césaire, and other Caribbean writers and thinkers, rhythm functions as the means to memory and (rhythm in relation to repetition) enables Caribbean folk to connect with and create landscape and history.²⁶⁰ As Martin Munro highlights the way in which Césaire employed rhythm as “a palliative force, a means of catharsis, and as a dynamic way of sounding history and lost memory.” He expounds,

²⁵⁹ Landscape is “place” in the same way Plato’s *χώρα* might signify as such. Landscape, in my interpretation of Glissant, might be likened to Plato’s third-kind—and offers the possibility for the disruption of the Western European root binary as well as a new interpretation of creation in Genesis through Wisdom, which I do not have time to pursue in the current project—in which the “model” (intelligible, unchanging Form) and the “copy” (sensible, mutable Matter) meet in order to create; this is the process of *worlding*. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 48e-49a. “Our new starting-point in describing the universe must, however, be a fuller classification than we made before. We then distinguished two things; but now a third must be pointed out. For our earlier discourse the two were sufficient: one postulated as model, intelligible and always unchangingly real; second, a copy of this model, which becomes and is visible. A third we did not then distinguish, thinking that the two would suffice, but now, it seems, the argument compels us to attempt to bring to light and describe a form difficult and obscure. What nature must we, then, conceive it to possess and what part does it play? This more than anything else: that it is the Receptacle—as it were, the nurse of all Becoming.”

²⁶⁰ This relationship is often represented in Caribbean fiction. Memory in this way resonates with Morrison’s re-memory and the novels of Jamaica Kincaid are particularly pertinent in this regard. See *Annie John* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1985); *At the Bottom of the River* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1992); *The Autobiography of My Mother* (New York: Plume, 1996); *My Brother* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1997); *Lucy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2002); and *Mr. Potter* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2002). Landscape factors centrally into Kincaid’s most salient critiques of colonialism and its devastating effects on the Caribbean, *A Small Place* (New York: Virago Press, 1988) and *My Garden Book* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1999). Joseph Zobel’s, *La Rue Cases-Negres*, as Martin Munro, is another example of this utility of rhythm and repetition, creating, as it does, “circles and waves of narrative rather than linear, progressive movements” (Munro, 409). For Munro, however, Glissant’s *Le Quatrième siècle* is exemplary in this regard, as rhythm is a means of “sounding and recovering lost history and of structuring the narrative of this mnemonic process” (Munro, 410). See Martin Munro, “Rhythms, History, and Memory in *Le Quatrième siècle*,” *The Roman Review* Vol. 101, No. 3 (2010): 409-424. Also see Glissant, *Le Quatrième siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1964).

Césaire uses rhythm in his attempt to recover from the depths of time the lost African-ness, the lack of which is in his view the fundamental cause of his (and his people's) neuroses. Rhythm in this sense was used by Césaire in ways that free rhythm from the essentialist limitations that he and others have tended to impose on it as a natural and innate marker of black cultural and existential specificity...[it] is a very real force for black disalienation, and for effecting the psychological and mnemonic transformations that are the primary objectives of his entire poetic project.²⁶¹

Similarly, Glissant understands rhythm as *a lever of awareness* and “a fundamental, evolving, and multifaceted aspect of Caribbean aesthetics and historical experience.”²⁶²

Rhythm is an oralitrary device, it is integral to an Africana oralitrary aesthetic, and, therefore, it is a necessary component when approaching oraliture such as the Bible.

Practitioners of Africana epistemologies, such as Spencer-Miller, seek to flesh-out biblical interpretation oralitrary, and in terms of experiential subjectivity through oral performance, in order to move the field through and beyond strictly formal and literary analysis of the Bible as oral text (where, as Okpewho reminds us, text is still the operative term and the subject, which oral merely modifies). Little ink has been spilled, however, by biblical scholars in the intersections of form and performance, and particularly in terms of rhythm. In 2013, Richard Bauman's contribution to *A Companion to Folklore*, “Performance,” traces the emergence of research on and the theorizing of performance-oriented perspectives within folklore studies since the 1960's and 70's.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Munro, 409.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 423.

²⁶³ Richard Bauman, “Performance” in *A Companion to Folklore*, eds. Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasam-Rokem, (Maulden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 94-118. There are a host of New Testament scholars who, like Spencer-Miller, have delved into performance as it pertains to the interpretation of the scripture. Many have produced monographs and contributed to anthologies with explicit reference to both orality and performance such as Richard A. Horsley et al, eds., *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory and Mark*

However, since oral performance has been primarily explored along literary and anthropological currents, the focus has been around genre, style, context, and transmission.²⁶⁴ So while performance has been increasingly visible in the field, rhythm has not been a primary element of analysis. Jan Assman, for his part, picks up on the role of rhythm in memory (and the process of re-membering) for primary oral cultures. In fact, rhythm is one of the seven oral modalities, or “mnemotechnics,” he identifies as “processes of this stabilization that, within the flow of time, grant permanence to that which is fleeting.”²⁶⁵ In other words, these devices (which also include rhyme, meter, and alliteration) inhere in works of literature *because* they are primarily oral due to their function in the preservation of a people’s cultural communal past and communal identity, since they enable the stabilizing of collective memory.²⁶⁶ According to Assman, stabilization occurs through “form and conciseness as mnemotechnical processes,” which has interesting implications for the thrust to transcribe cultural memory.²⁶⁷

Assman’s insights highlight how integral rhythm is to the oral and literary preservation of culture and, therefore, to reading and interpreting an oral literary text such as the Bible (which, as earlier noted, might be more like relating to a song, rather than a

(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), James A. Maxey and Ernst R. Wendland, eds., *Translating Scripture for Sound and Performance: New Directions in Biblical Studies* (Eugene: Cascade, 2012), and Kelly R. Iverson, ed. *From Text to Performance: Narrative and Performance Criticisms in Dialogue and Debate* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2015). The Hebrew Bible has likewise seen a similar though not as prolific trend.

²⁶⁴ Interestingly, rhythm is not a primary player in the *Companion* and only makes minor appearances in Bauman’s chapter and the chapter pertaining to music in folklore.

²⁶⁵ Jan Assman, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Early Civilization* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 241. The list also includes rhyme, assonance, parallelism membrum, alliteration, meter, and memory.

²⁶⁶ Assman, 131. According to Assman, then, these devices are more valuable to cultures transmitting cultural memory orally.

²⁶⁷ Assman, 239-247.

book) but he still falls short. Rhythm is affective. It necessitates our embodied and interpenetrative experience of it. Rhythm affects and is affected by our experience and interpretation of it. Reading rhythm, then, requires more than structural analysis or an appreciation for its employment in the creative process of cultural construction, expression, and preservation. Rhythm resonates and transforms. If we limit ourselves to reading rhythm without experiencing its affective resonance, we are once again relying upon the Root at the expense of rhizomatic Relation and its archipelological invitation toward radical routes other-wise.

**Reading the Bible with Rhythm:
The Rhythmic Resonances of Orality and Affect Theory**

I now turn to affect theory in order to consider its rhythmic resonances with an archipelological (Africana) epistemology and particularly that of the Rastafari. In the in-between-ness of orality and affectivity, identity and divinity, that is (reading) the Bible, I reflect upon the rhythms enfleshed, encasing and exceeding the boundaries of textual and corporeal bodies and resonance functions as my conceptual, archipelological port of departure.²⁶⁸ For the Rastafarian, as represented by Bob Marley in “Rastaman Vibration,” Rastafari and reggae are positive creations, or irations, with dynamic affects, vibrations, or resonances.²⁶⁹ The movement and its rhythmic modality are rooted in archipelagic

²⁶⁸ Resonance as it appears across discourses and disciplines, in art (music), science (physics), and philosophy—and in each of its affective trajectories. Rather than rehearsing the traditional bifurcated mapping of affect, I will simply appeal to this common thread in its multiple (and multiplying) discourses. (For resonance has significance regardless of the affective family tree from which you’ve fallen...and no matter how far.)

²⁶⁹ Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, “Rastas’ Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Sombodiness,” *Chanting Down Babylon*, 37.

(cosmic) connection, self-affirmation and vitality. Resonance, through iration and vibration, is integral to Rastafarian livity.²⁷⁰ Resonance, according to Silvan Tomkins, is a central characteristic of affect, as it refers to a person's (bodily) tendency to experience the same affect in response to viewing an affectual display by another; it is a sort of *contagion*.²⁷¹ Tomkins understood *affective resonance* as the *origin of* and, therefore, foundation *for* all human communication (as embodied expression precedes verbal).²⁷² Affective resonance, however, is not simply personal or prepersonal—as Deleuze and Guattari point out—it is conceptual.²⁷³ In *What is Philosophy?* they assert that concepts (in distinction from propositions) are “centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others. This is why they all resonate rather than cohere or correspond with each other.”²⁷⁴

The bridges from one concept to another may form a wall, but, like the archipelago, “everything holds together along diverging lines,” even the traverses from one concept to another are entirely movable, “junctions, or detours, which do not define

²⁷⁰ See note 94 in the Introduction.

²⁷¹ Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness: Volume 1: The Positive Affects* (New York: Springer, 1962).

²⁷² In addition, the affects provide urgency or motivation to less powerful drives, intensifying positive and negative experiences—both Sedgwick and Berlant picked up the notion of resonance in their work.

²⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari juxtapose the notions of concept (an abstract idea) and propositions (assertions of judgment or opinion which may be deemed true or false)... “...the concept is act of thought, it is thought operating at infinite (although greater or lesser) speed” (21).

²⁷⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 22. As skeptical of totalizing transcendence as Glissant, in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize resonance in terms of a nondiscursive consistency between concepts. Concepts, in distinction from propositions (and prospects), “have only consistency or intensive ordinates outside of any coordinates, [and] freely enter into relationships of nondiscursive resonance—either because the components of one become concepts with other heterogeneous components or because there is no difference of scale between them at any level... There is no reason why concepts should cohere.”

any discursive whole.”²⁷⁵ In DeleuzoGuattarian terms, affects correspond to art, to aesthetics rather than science or philosophy, without, however, precluding their interbreeding.²⁷⁶ Affective resonance, then, as affect, is ineluctably prepersonal, prediscursive, proprioceptive,²⁷⁷ as well as peripersonal—emerging in the encounter of human and non-human bodies (with internal consistency as well as exoconsistency) and impelling a vibrancy which is both convergent and divergent.²⁷⁸ In both the Tomkinsian and DeleuzoGuattarian iterations of affect, resonance, like waves and wave frequencies in physics, is defined by the affect of one body upon another—*movement* in/of one body producing some sort of corresponding response [amplification] in another body. Resonance is *sympathetic vibration*²⁷⁹ establishing a significant or meaningful relationship in the *movement* between two or more bodies: concepts, objects, or sentient beings.²⁸⁰ As human body-beings, to state that we *resonate* is to say we relate, we

²⁷⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, 22. Also see Benitez-Rojo’s representation of the Caribbean in *The Repeating Island*, 155ff.

²⁷⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, 23.

²⁷⁷ That is, the unconscious reception of movement.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. Human, textual, conceptual, divine, etc.

²⁷⁹ Oxford online dictionary. Resonance is *sympathetic vibration*: a sound-vibration produced in one object caused by the sound-vibration of another *and* “a quality that makes *something* personally meaningful or important to someone.”

²⁸⁰ Merriam Webster, thefreedictionary.com. The ways in which the RastafarI and Reggae are resistant—particularly to dominant culture and its discursive modalities and paradigms—is prolific and well-established (especially in biblical studies). The notion of resonance, however, offers us a new way to think of and with the RastafarI, politically, philosophically and relationally. In fact, I would contend that thinking musicality with/in the Reggae rhythms of the RastafarI requires rumination on resonance—an affective term, which signifies *the quality in a sound* (especially a musical tone) *of being deep, full, and reverberating* due to its intensification, reinforcement or prolongation by reflection from a surface *or* by the synchronous, or sympathetic, vibration of a neighboring body or bodies. Resonance is, then, the reflection of bodies with a continuing effect and, I would argue, a lasting *affect*—both its literal and figurative connotations convey this point. Equally as important to affect theorists, such as Berlant, Ahmed, Cvetkovich, and even

connect, we understand; that we are in some way *moved*. This movement, this *force*, in the midst of [the] in-between-ness²⁸¹ of bodies, might even be conceptualized in terms of orality as musicality.²⁸² And while this affective quality may be present in all music, the rhythm of the Rastafari—the irie²⁸³ *island vibe*²⁸⁴ of Reggae music—unequivocally conveys the “I feel ya” vibe of resonance.²⁸⁵

Rhythm, as affect, is defined by and created in the space in-between: in order to feel or identify a rhythm, what is played is as important as what is not played. Reggae

Sedgwick are questions of why persons (and who) are drawn to or repelled by certain music, images, objects and/or affects.

²⁸¹ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

²⁸² Eric Shouse, “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>. According to Eric Shouse in his essay “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” music provides perhaps the clearest example of how the intensity of the impingement of sensations on the body can ‘mean’ more to people than meaning itself. “While it would be wrong to say that meanings do not matter, it would be just as foolish to ignore the role of biology as we try to grasp the cultural effects of music.” Appealing to the role of biology upon the cultural effects of music he argues that in many cases “the pleasure that individuals derive from music has less to do with the communication of meaning, and far more to do with the way that a particular piece of music ‘moves’ them.”

²⁸³ Irie is patois for “alright” and also signifies pleasure—nice, good, pleasing. It is also a Rastafari greeting. See Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000).

²⁸⁴ What I also consider its *aura*. Aura has elsewhere been identified as “essence.” I, however, find this attempt to associate affect with origin or static identity far too constricting not to mention inaccurate. That is, the inimitable atmosphere or quality that encompasses and emanates from Reggae *and*, as Middleton highlights, resonates around the world. Rather than examining *who* resonates with or is resistant to Reggae’s *vibe* or *why*, I would like to instead consider *how* this *vibe*—the resonance of the Rastafari—might matter/materialize otherwise for and in biblical studies now.

²⁸⁵ As human animals, we are often but not always drawn to that with which we resonate—the people, the places, the music and the stories with which we identify. While the rhythm of Reggae has an often inexplicable draw for some, it indubitably repels others. “I see ya, I hear ya, I getcha ya.” I-an-I will never forget those words, spoken to me by Althea when I was on the cusp of quitting—questioning myself and resisting my career path. What did she do (with her words) that day? She related to me, more than that...she *resonated with* me.

music is known for its rhythms, for its beats and pauses.²⁸⁶ The paradigmatic reggae beat, One Drop, is but one example of the way the breaks, pauses, or hesitations establish the rhythmic affect. Defined as much by the space between the beat as the beat itself, the space creates relationship (or a poetics of Relation) between beats, moving, *coaxing the rhythm forward*, and—in the words of Glissant—“creat[ing] a new economy of expressive forms.”²⁸⁷ In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze elucidates resonance according to the space between and the intrinsic differences between bodies, rather than their similarities, in what he deems a “reversal of Platonism.”²⁸⁸ Resemblance inheres in resonance, but it is not a fundamental likeness, or Sameness—resonance is not established between bodies because they share an origin or essence. Resonance as “resemblance then can be thought only as the product of this internal difference.”²⁸⁹

Deleuze continues,

It matters little whether the system has great external and slight internal difference, or whether the opposite is the case, provided that resemblance be produced on a curve, and that difference, whether great or small, always occupy the center of the thus decentered system.²⁹⁰

Deleuze explains this anti-colonial process, which resonates implicitly with Glissantian creolization and/as a poetics of Relation, as denying the ideas of original and copy, as well as “any privileged point of view except that of the object common to all points of

²⁸⁶ See pages 43-45 and note 105.

²⁸⁷ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 107. Take for instance the paradigmatic Reggae beat, One Drop.

²⁸⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 262.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

view.”²⁹¹ Hierarchy is confounded and the subsistence of resemblance and identity are produced as external effects contingent upon divergence, which establishes resonance.²⁹² In this subversion, “identity of the Different [is] primary power” and what previously appeared a relation of causality may be heretofore understood as a relation of expression.²⁹³

Resonance, then, emerges not in inherent similarity but out of difference and Diversity, in the space between bodies—musical, textual, conceptual, choreographic, and chirographic. Affect is itself transferred not through similarity, proximity, or Sameness. In *Transcultural Rhythms*, Julie Ann Huntington explores the ways in which rhythm, music, and drum are employed as oralitrary devices in Francophone novels from the Caribbean and West Africa. While her research is limited to novels, her contributions are entirely relevant to the biblical text, its poetry, proverbs, and folktale. Huntington avers,

²⁹¹ Ibid. Deleuze explains, “‘to reverse Platonism’ means to make the simulacra rise and to affirm their rights among icons and copies... The simulacrum is not a degraded copy. It harbors a positive power which denies the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction. At least two divergent series are internalized in the simulacrum—neither can be assigned as the original, neither as the copy... There is no longer any privileged point of view except that of the object common to all points of view. There is no possible hierarchy, no second, no third... Resemblance subsists, but it is produced as the external effect of the simulacrum, inasmuch as it is built upon divergent series and makes them resonate. Identity subsists, but it is produced as the law which complicates all the series and makes them all return to each one in the course of the forced movement. In the reversal of Platonism, resemblance is said of internalized difference, and identity of the Different as primary power” (262). Neither Glissant or Deleuze, Derrida or Bourdieu, were the first to disrupt the notion of a doer behind the deed; Friedrich Nietzsche holds this honor. And his famous quote, “there is no ‘being’ behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; the ‘doer’ is invented as an afterthought,” was Butler’s lynchpin in her critique of gender. (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 26). However, as I have argued throughout this project, while Nietzsche’s theory has been a cornerstone of the poststructuralist deconstruction of the Western European “self” (origin, author, authority, identity, text, etc.), this disruption has always already existed within non-Western societies, and particularly in Africana epistemologies.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid., 170.

‘[T]exted’ rhythmic and musical phenomena promote a transpoetic transcultural aesthetic, opening a space for communication and exchange in which identity constructs are negotiated and (re)configured on both individual and collective levels. Repeatedly performed in the space of the novel with each and every reading, rhythmic musical phenomena are effective not only in shaping the sonorous realm inhabited by its characters, but also in staging the aesthetic experience undertaken by the reader each time s/he engages with the text.²⁹⁴

Even when drums and music are not textually present, oralitrary texts have an affective dimension, which is undeniably rhythmic and is directly related to identity and creative expression in such a way that difference abounds but the dichotomous distinction between author-performer and reader-receiver is rendered obsolete. The rhythmic phenomena, both the process of reading and the performative value of rhythm within the text, affectively and “effectively activate an ongoing process of identification, [which] operates inside and outside the space of the text.”²⁹⁵ Thereby obliterating the bifurcation of space as either inside or outside and instantiating a cacophony of voices, instruments, tones, and timbres, resonating and reveling in difference. Reading is rhythmic and rhizomatic. Interpretation, then, is creative expression as identity construction, it is always already collective and/as archipelagic assemblage.

Music is an affective medium. As Eric Shouse observes, “every form of communication where facial expressions, respiration, tone of voice, and posture are

²⁹⁴ Julie Ann Huntington, *Transcultural Rhythms: An Exploration of Rhythm, Music and the Drum in a Selection of Francophone Novels from West Africa and the Caribbean* (Dissertation. Vanderbilt University, 2005), 198.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Huntington expounds upon the way in which reading is equivalent to listening to music (and how each are related to identity), she writes, “in view of questions of identity, the experience of rhythm and music in the novel, which we may also refer to as the reading experience, imitates that of a rhythmic or musical listening experience. In this respect, rather than effectuating a mode of performing a static or preexisting identity construct, rhythmic and musical phenomena effectively activate an ongoing process of identification, one that operates inside and outside the space of the text.”

perceptible” is capable of transmitting affect; music is but one.²⁹⁶ However, in Shouse’s cataloguing of the modes of mediated communication, he includes a variety of oralitrary and performative forms but overlooks reading texts. One need only look to *Africana* and archipelological interventions in their myriad oralitrary epistemological modalities, and specifically Benitez-Rojo, to understand the gravity and depravity of Shouse’s epistemic error.²⁹⁷ Among other things, *Africana* and archipelagic epistemologies reminds us that texts transmit affects and their rhythms can be felt. Unfortunately, this is a gap has yet to be occupied; well, until now. Because affect theorists, like Shouse, have primarily looked to other Western European intellects, they have limited their theoretical, anthropological, cultural-material and, therefore, epistemological scope. These scholars typically engage (primarily Western European) film, theater, or other forms of audiovisual media in their “textual” analysis and have only recently begun to mine literature for its affective possibilities. Eugenia Brinkema’s *The Forms of Affect* is one such intervention, though it remains securely within the Western literary canon.

Brinkema’s analysis is nonetheless pertinent for its exposure of affect’s allergy to textuality and subsequent solipsistic slip into sterility, as it reproduces the same sappy omphaloskeptic sentiments *ad infinitum, ad nauseum*.²⁹⁸ Her ironic antidote and argument for the resurrection of formalism as vaccine (and lever) for virility is

²⁹⁶ Eric Shouse, “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). Quoting Jeremy Gilbert Shouse asserts, ‘Music has *physical effects* which can be identified, described and discussed but which are not the same thing as it having *meanings*, and any attempt to understand how music works in culture must . . . be able to say something about those effects without trying to collapse them into meanings’.”

²⁹⁷ See my treatment of Benitez-Rojo’s elucidation of the Caribbean’s polyrhythm and/as metarhythm—“which can be arrived at through any system of signs, whether it be dance, music, language, text, or body language, etc.”—on page 191.

²⁹⁸ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of Affect* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), Loc. 31.

compelling, and particularly for biblical scholars, as she announces that “close reading” alone can save affect (from itself).²⁹⁹ Affect, then, *must be nourished by exegesis if it is to survive*. Especially “good news” for the Bible wonk, arguably the *least* sexy of all scholars(hip), who most certainly reads Brinkema’s call for close reading, hears it and *feels* it. And yet I am not sure we have *felt* the Bible.

It should come as no surprise to biblical scholars that it is entirely possible (and of absolute necessity) to read texts *so closely* that we are able to *see* them, sympathetically *and* structurally, to *hear* them, in respiration and in tone, and to *feel* them, both to reason and to resonate with their rhythm, and yet we have somehow missed out entirely on the affective form of the biblical text. The Bible’s affective intensities hold great significance for biblical studies, yet, in an effort to maintain objectivity and critical distance, we have entirely eschewed our sympathetic experience of the biblical text. We have no qualms with acknowledging and honoring the Bible’s rhythmic form but we have altogether evaded its rhythmic force. If reading, as Rebecca Coleman submits, is truly akin to listening to music, then biblical scholars are the NPR of the academic airwaves: informative and integral, yet we are almost all talk with no tunes. As a melodic mixture of voices and instruments, rhythm and lyric, text and tone, music gets us out of our minds

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Loc. 315. Brinkema writes, “The one way out for affect is via a way into its specificities. That approach will be called—unsurprisingly, for historically it was always the way to unlock potentialities—close reading. There is a perversity to this: if affect theory is what is utterly fashionable, it is answered here with the corrective of the utterly unfashionable, with what is, let us say, an *unzeitgemässe* call for the sustained interpretations of texts. This book’s insistence on the formal dimension of affect allows not only for specificity but for the wild and many fecundities of specificity: difference, change, the particular, the contingent (and) the essential, the definite, the distinct, all dense details, and—again, to return to the spirit of Deleuze—the minor, inconsequential, secret, atomic. Treating affect in such a way deforms any coherence to “affect” in the singular, general, universal and transforms it into something not given in advance, not apprehendable except through the thickets of formalist analysis.”

and into our bodies. It's time to do some channel surfing, Biblical Studies. But how does one *read* (a text) *with rhythm*? “Yuh just gotta feel it feel it.”³⁰⁰ Feel it! Yuh feel me?

In my own experience, the irration vibrations of reggae transmit affect in this way. Hearers respond to it, they resonate with it, they *feel* it and in this way participate in it time and again. In *Natural Mysticism*, Kwame Dawes explains, “reggae is as much interested in making people dance as it is in articulating ideas. In reality, though, the two are not distinct, for what reggae is about is making people recover a sense of self and identity through the act of dancing.”³⁰¹ Reggae is not merely defined by its message but by movement; reggae moves bodies to re-member...themselves. I wonder, what might be gained by approaching the Bible with the same frame through which Dawes invites us to understand reggae? Both reggae and the Bible enjoy international audiences, have been authored, performed, interpreted and engaged by innumerable people and in diverse contexts, and both are as defined by certain formal features as they are the content of their message. Due to its prominence within both and its affective resonances, I am especially interested in the way in which rhythm works on us and in us: how it moves us to *feel*.

Rhythm can be understood as the distinctive and distinguishing formal feature, which makes *this* text the Bible and not some other book and *this* music Reggae and not some other genre, but it is also affectively experienced. Human engagements with both Reggae and the Bible, while most often conscious, are typically non-conceptual and pre-

³⁰⁰ A popular phrase in patwah and around the Caribbean, the Caribbean Carnival Facebook page “bajantube” posted the exclamation, “I tell she! yuh just gotta feel it feel it” on August 23, 2012. See

<https://www.facebook.com/Bajantube/posts/10151019986376088>

³⁰¹ Kwame Dawes, *Natural Mysticism: Towards a New Reggae Aesthetic* (London: Peepal Trees Press, 1999), 139.

propositional. Common folk are moved by them, rather than being motivated to investigate them. In this way, those undomesticated by the deleterious demands of disembodied exegesis, free from the fetters of incorporeal “authoritative,” “academic” analysis, might offer us great insight into analysis other-wise, which facilitate radical and incalculable re-memberings of the biblical corpus through (and as) fleshy corpus: oralitrary interpretive communities reading the text in and as verbal carnality. Therefore, in order to more *effectively* engage the multivalence of the biblical text in all our complex diversity it would benefit us to encounter it *affectively as* verbal carnality through archipelogics, learning how to read with rhythm, both in affective form and force. Because the Bible is oral literature in sundry ways, reading it with rhythm requires us to get in touch, to see and to *feel*, with perspectives, lenses, and cultures that privilege orality (as orality studies has proven). The Rastafari, as the prime movers of Reggae music, are exemplary in this way, for their “citing up” of the Bible has incontrovertibly (re)defined, or re-membered, the Bible as a Caribbean text.³⁰² Reading the Bible, for the Rastafari, is rooted in *rhythm* and the rhythms of Relation; rhythm as the route toward the reasoning of the biblical “text” *and* the rhythm of their relational resonance with Jah and I-n-I and/as all creation-iration. To understand rhythm in this way, we must understand with the Rastafari in their overstanding of orality, as always already rooted in musicality; something undeniably akin to Glissant's *oraliture*.³⁰³

³⁰² See pages 29-31 and note 70.

³⁰³ See McFarlane and Nettleford's respective applications of “overstanding” in McFarlane, “The Epistemological Significance of ‘I-an’-I’ (108) and Nettleford, “Discourse” (312-313).

Through reggae, the Rastafari embody rhythm, or what Jeff Pressing has deemed “Black Atlantic Rhythm.”³⁰⁴ Pressing speaks to and about rhythm “that has significant links with temporal features common in the music of West Africa” and its diaspora (therefore, he uses the term interchangeably with “African and African diasporic.”)³⁰⁵ In addition to Reggae, Pressing includes jazz, hip-hop, rock, blues, cumbia, candomblé, gospel and “whatever seems to have widespread capacity to facilitate dance, engagement, social interaction, expression and catharsis.”³⁰⁶ In short,

Black Atlantic rhythm is founded on the idea of groove or feel, which forms a kinetic framework for reliable prediction of events and time pattern communication, its power cemented by repetition and engendered movement. Overlaid on this are characteristic devices that include syncopation, overlay, displacement, off-beat phrasing, polyrhythm/polymeter, hocketing, heterophony, wing, speech-based rhythms, and call-and-response...[and] nearly all of these have at their heart the establishment of perceptual multiplicity or rivalry, affecting expectation, which acts as either a message or a message enhancement technique (via increased engagement and focusing of attention) or both...and has emotion-generating power.³⁰⁷

The interactional structure of these forms is conversational, it is narrative, and through the complex adaptation of traditional Africana rhythmic techniques, performers and audiences alike share in and contribute to the moment of artistic expression. Rooted in relation, reflection, and inquiry, this process instantiates the emergence of cultural identity through the “maintenance of historical reference and accommodation to

³⁰⁴ Jeff Pressing, “Black Atlantic Rhythm: Its Computational and Transcultural Foundations,” *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Spring 2002): 285-310.

³⁰⁵ Pressing, 285.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 285, 308. Pressing argues that “perceptual rivalry creates arousal and has emotion-generating power, helping to account for [Africana] rhythm’s effectiveness in engagement in general and its capacity for facilitating impact in consciousness alteration, communal ceremonies, social cohesion, communication of emotional patterning, movement expression, and catharsis” (308).

innovation;” it is rhythm, which occupies the in-between and functions as the lacuna for the creation of something entirely new.³⁰⁸

Like orality, rhythm is more than a mnemonic device; rhythm is itself an oralituary episteme. Biblical scholars have identified rhythm’s prevalence in and the poetics of biblical texts because the Bible *is* rhythmic. The rhythmic and rhizomatic epistemologies of the archipelagos resonates in the Bible beyond (analyzing and exegeting) the structural form of the text. Biblical literature is poetic and it is narrative because it is oraliture, therefore, as responsible interpreters we need hermeneutics capable of accessing, even recovering, its bibliorality. Africana oralituary modalities such as those of the Rastafari, through their particular embodiment and enactment of an archipelogics of bibliorality, disrupt Western European epistemological methodologies, and in so doing they have the capacity to facilitate our apprehension and affective experience of the rhythmic subjectivity inhering in inscribed texts. I speak from personal experience of and with this rhythmic oralizing. And for this reason, and others I have touched upon in this project, I can speak to the necessity of engaging Africana (as archipelagic) rhythmic creative expressions as a gateway to effective-affective biblical interpretation as a relational, multisensory, intertextual and transcultural encounter and oralituary experience. In their citing up of the Bible, the bifurcation of written text and oral interpretation is rendered absurd as oral performance blends into written text and letters bleed into life.³⁰⁹ The Bible is unequivocally *oraliture* and the way in which the Rastafari “read” the Bible honors its necessary re-membering in between and amidst the

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ See Haun Saussy, *The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and its Technologies* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

rhythms and resonances of livity and language. Through their creation of an art form that is the very aesthetic expression of *the imposition of lived rhythms*, the Rastafari enact an ambient affective assemblage in/through which they are able to incorporate and remember other-wise a text that might otherwise have restrained them because previously deployed for their dehumanization or downpression.³¹⁰

For Glissant, the oral-musicality of Caribbean peoples in general, and the Rastafari in particular, is inextricably linked to their relationship to history and to landscape; to the rhythm of the islands.³¹¹ The rhythmic repetition of the undulating and unceasing waves upon the shore, surrounding as a resounding reminder of all that these waters, as rhythm, represent: enslavement and liberation, motion and inertia, order and chaos, establishment and its undoing, resonance and resistance.³¹² Rhythm is (in) the waters that connect these islands and constitute the Caribbean archipelago. Glissant understands rhythm, then, as a means of accessing (Caribbean) memory and of understanding and recuperating history.³¹³ Rhythm is “a lever of awareness,” integral to one’s understanding of herself always already in relation to other bodies—of land, water, and knowledge, human, divine, textual and other-wise; bodies comingling, converging

³¹⁰ See note 47 in chapter 3 for an explanation of this Rasta neologism. I intentionally choose not to italicize “Rasta talk,” or “Dread talk,” which would indicate that their vernacular is subordinate to the English language. Therefore, words such as downpression, overstanding, innerstand, livity, livification (i.e., dedication), etc. will appear as any other word in the English vernacular. Also see note 68.

³¹¹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 108. Reggae, Glissant writes, is “a necessary barbarian invasion [of]...the intellectual dream of the learned.” Likening it to the drum-poetry of Derek Walcott as Caribbean Discourse, which Glissant writes, “finds its expression as much in the explosion of the original cry, as in the patience of the landscape when it is recognized, as in the imposition of lived rhythms.”

³¹² As the Rastafari have reminded us through Reggae since the 70’s, rhythm can be rambunctious, raucous, and rebellious, but it can also be rigid, apathetic, and unforgiving.

³¹³ See Glissant, *La Quatrième Siècle*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1964).

and diverging, in and across time and space.³¹⁴ Rhythm is also, as Martin Munro proclaims, critical “at moments of social and personal transformation.”³¹⁵ Rhythm, then, is vital to a poetics of Relation and, therefore, to the affective aesthetics of an oralitury hermeneutic, to the oraliturhythmics of bibliorality as a biblical hermeneutic. The rhythmic oralizing of the Bible, which the Rastafari embody (“cite up”) inspires my interpretation and desire to *find expression in the imposition of lived rhythms*—rhythms which define and yet always already exceed the bindings of the (“good”-ly) book and the bounds of our flesh.³¹⁶ Rhythms lived as imposition, interstice, and interpenetrative event, whereby new identities, interpretations, and intimate encounters emerge in resonance and resistance (perpetually facing the threat of calcification). Rhythms delineating and defining, yet always already exceeding the bounds of all types of bodies

³¹⁴ Glissant, *L’Intention Poétique*, 216. Glissant conceptualizes rhythm as “*levier de conscience*.” Reggae is itself a materialization of Caribbean orality-musicality and the rhythm of the islands, even as Glissant is constructing his poetics, he is aware of the resonances between his poetics and those of the Rastafari, creating identity via rhythm in relation to their landscape, history, culture, and community.

³¹⁵ Martin Munro, “‘Fightin’ the Future’: Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean,” in Martin Munro and Celia Britton, *American Creoles: The Franco-Caribbean and the American South* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 114

³¹⁶ See note 311 of this chapter.

and body types. To be a body, writes Latour, is to learn to be moved.³¹⁷ And, according to Glissant, it is the movement, not the root, that matters.³¹⁸

Rhythm is as fixed (in the stability of its cadence) as it is fluid; it can change pace at any time.³¹⁹ It inspires choreography as much as ecstatic movement. Rhythm is rhythm because it has a fixed pattern and there are always new possibilities for new rhythms to be produced, for a quickening or retarding of an already established rhythm which permits us to enter and respond to a new rhythm altogether. Rhythm, then, may both preclude and provide new possibilities. Rhythm's potentiality is at the mercy of the multiplicity of its contingency, like all energies and life forms, rhythm is ever affecting and affected by innumerable factors or forces (which at times might include experience through awareness). While rhythm may offer and emerge in the space between, to move, to dance, to create, to express, it can also be quite dangerous—rhythm, like any affective intensity, like a wave or the tongue, holds the power of both life and death.³²⁰ I am thinking of Foucault's docile bodies, where the body is a site of regulation, lulled to

³¹⁷ Bruno Latour, "How to Talk about the Body?" *The Normative Dimension of Science Studies*, *Body and Society* Vol.2, no. 3 (2004): 205. "If the opposite of being a body is dead [and] there is no life apart from the body...[then] to have a body is to learn to be affected, meaning 'effectuated,' moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or nonhumans. If you are not engaged in this learning, you become insensitive, dumb, you drop dead." Appealing to Latour's discourse on the body, Greg Seigworth writes, "The body becomes less about its nature as bounded substance or eternal essence and more about the body [and quoting Latour] 'as an interface that becomes more and more describable when it learns to be affected by many more elements'." See Seigworth and Gregg, 11.

³¹⁸ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 14.

³¹⁹ I am grateful to Dr. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre for her tireless effort (as an intellect, a mentor, and a colleague) to emphasize the importance of honoring the symbiotic (non-binary) relationship of fixity and fluidity, particularity and universality, not only in relation to the Bible and its cultural context, but my own.

³²⁰ Proverbs 18:21. The rhythms (patterns) of Western European epistemologies have had traumatic effects upon global cultures and climate, not to mention our shared ecosystem.

dormancy and delusion through the hypnotic rhythms of the machinations (*dispositif*) of regimes of discipline, which include colonialism, capitalism, and certain forms of Christianity.³²¹ I am thinking of Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*, whereby patterns develop across time through the confluence of personal experiences, cultural traditions, and social structures.³²² I am also thinking of Henri Lefebvre's *rhythmanalysis*, where rhythms are understood to produce space, to hurt and to heal.³²³

³²¹ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 136-165. As aforementioned, Friedrich Nietzsche was an undeniable influence upon Foucault (which is most apparent in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*), as was Karl Marx (through Louis Althusser), which is, arguably, nowhere more lucid than *Discipline and Punish*.

³²² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Polity Press, 1990), 65-69. According to Bourdieu, habitus is produced by “the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence,” which are “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at end or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor” (53). Habitus is deeply ingrained and emerges in our unconscious skills, habits, and dispositions. For Bourdieu, habitus is as muscle memory in athletes. Channeling Nietzsche, but also resonating with the rhizomatic ruminations of Glissant and Deleuze, Bourdieu expounds, “[n]othing is more misleading than the illusion created by hindsight in which all the traces of a life, such as the works of an artist or the events at a biography, appear as the realization of an essence that seems to pre-exist them... The genesis of a system of works or practices generated by the same *habitus* (or homologous habitus, such as those that underlie the unity of the life-style of a group or a class) cannot be described either as the autonomous development of a unique and always self-identical essence, or as a continuous creation of novelty, because it arises from the necessary yet unpredictable confrontation between the habitus and an event that can exercise a pertinent incitement on the habitus only if the latter snatches it from the contingency of the accidental and constitutes it as a problem by applying to it the very principles of its solution; and also because the habitus, like every ‘art of inventing’, is what makes it possible to produce an infinite number of practices that are relatively unpredictable (like the corresponding situations) but also limited in their diversity” (55). His Marxist critique is also visible in that *habitus* is also “an infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional

I conclude this chapter nodally, as much an opening onto the next movement as it is a closure, re-establishing connections even as I look toward the next chapter, I return to

freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning” (55). The “deep-rooted schemes of the habitus” are evident in folktales (“which are generally fairly free variations on fundamental themes of the tradition”) and even more so in ritual practices and “at the level of discourse, riddles, sayings or proverbs” (6).

³²³ Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (New York: Continuum, 2004). Also see Kanishka Goonewardena, *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre* (New York: Routledge, 2008). “Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm,” writes Henri Lefebvre. Therefore, rhythm exists in “repetition (of movements, gestures, action, situations, differences)”; “interferences of linear processes and cyclical processes;” and in “birth, growth, peak, then decline and end” (15). According to Lefebvre, rhythmanalysis is of absolute necessity due to the “propensity of the present to simulate presence.” The present is innately temporal and can never be represented by simulacrum of the present (the present tries to pass itself off as presence but is not). Therefore, we may only through analysis of rhythm, otherwise, we are victim to the “trap of the present,” which is the present’s reliance upon false representation. Lefebvre asserts, “The everyday establishes itself, creating hourly demands, systems of transport, in short, its repetitive organization. Things matter little; the thing is only a metaphor, divulged by discourse, divulging represents that conceal the production of repetitive time and space” (7). He, too, offers a Marxist critique of the deadening rhythms of capitalism, addressing the “advocate of capital” directly: “it is not directly a question of the people. It is not their fault because there is no fault, there is *something* that functions implacably and produces its effects. The brave people, as you said, not only move alongside the monster but are inside it; they live off it. So they do not know how it works. The informational reveals only tiny details and results” (54-55). The rhythm of capital, Lefebvre contends, “is the rhythm of producing (everything: things, men, people, etc.) and destroying (through wars, through *progress*, through inventions and brutal interventions, through speculation, etc.)” (55). In order to gain any sort of objectivity—to stand outside the monster, even for a moment—Lefebvre not only advocates for the analysis of rhythm, to ascertain this process as well as those which are unhealthy (arrhythmic), but the application or “intervention of rhythm...to strengthen or re-establish eurhythmia” (68). Lefebvre, therefore, is interested not only in how rhythms involve bodies but the ways in which they *affect* or move bodies. He is invested in enlightening people to the methods and modalities through which political powers utilize and manipulate times, dates, and time-tables. Unsurprisingly, as a poststructuralist, Lefebvre understands repetition to produce difference. There is no “absolute repetition”—even when repeating the letters of the alphabet, where “the second A differs from the first by the fact that it is second” (7). Lefebvre understands rhythm to hold a broad semantic range. also engages “musical rhythm,” where rhythm is “supreme” in music due to the human species relationship to rhythm (63-65). Lefebvre states that “by and through rhythm, music becomes worldly” (65). Rhythm translates and through music, it heals (66-9).

Glissant via Patrick Manning, who in looking to the Rastafari and their radical remembering of the Bible, finds them exemplary for their exposure of “the ‘point of entanglement’ that unleashes the creolization process to its plural histories.”³²⁴ Following Glissant’s lead, Manning understands the Rastafari, like the Black Power Movement that consolidated and propelled them, to have challenged “the creole elite to acknowledge its history and confront its African heritage” *and* the very concept of creolization, while themselves being “quintessentially creole” in the Glissantian and Brathwaitian sense.³²⁵ The Rastafari, then, represent a radical and indispensable Caribbean cultural form (for both Édouard Glissant and Edward Kamau Brathwaite). As Brathwaite notes in *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, creolization, from the term *creole* and originally *creare*—itself an assemblage of Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese influence, signifying to create, suckle, or found—was originally the seed for the creation of a diverse and thriving new Caribbean society.³²⁶ The Rastafari embody and express archipelagic agency as an instrumental iteration of creolization (in a way that exceeds all prior intentions or expectations) and have done so on an international level. Through their creative appropriation of various traditions and texts, their construction and assertion of identity and authority as always already in the plural, and the oraliturrhythmic relationality of reggae music: “the highest form of self-expression...simultaneously an act of social commentary and a manifestation of deep racial memory.”³²⁷ Horace Campbell highlights the way in which reggae musicians like Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, and Peter Tosh “took

³²⁴ Taylor, “Sheba’s Song,” 75.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 74, 75.

³²⁶ Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 306-11.

³²⁷ Horace Campbell, 6.

the message of the poor around the world...contribut[ing] to a new anti-imperialist culture. Mastering the skills and technology of modern communication, spreading the anti-racist doctrines of the Jamaican movement” to “capitalist metropolises” all over the globe.³²⁸ Reggae, in this way, epitomizes an anti-Western European epistemology, it oraliturrhythmically expresses the archipelago.

In *The First Rasta*, Hélène Lee addresses the affective force of Reggae upon the world, as well as its ambivalence,

Through the medium of reggae, Rastas found new allies. The youth of the world, raised on “peace and love” clichés and reefer, were looking for new gurus. The hippies thought the Rastas were everything they wanted to be, and reggae music seemed to express their inchoate ideals. The reggae arrangement expressed its own ideals—moving straight ahead toward its vision, each musician taking his turn in a sequence punctuated by the discrete roll of the repeater. Each instrument respects the following instrument; there is always space for each musician to have his part. In this way the rock audience was seduced, and they didn’t notice the ambiguity of black rebel bulletins broadcast and propagated by white capitalist machinery.³²⁹

Lee not only acknowledges the obvious ambivalences in reggae as a popular music genre, but the hybridity of the great Bob Marley. From his family of origin and appearance, to his race and his message, Bob Marley would often assert, “I’m not on the black side, I’m not on the white side. I am on the side of God.”³³⁰ Claiming to be against all oppressors, black and white alike, Marley’s liminality, in fact, earned him the moniker

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Hélène Lee, *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003), 277.

³³⁰ Ibid., 278-9. In her heartfelt reflections on Marley, Lee posits, “[h]e never stopped working for the unification of the Rastas, presiding over stormy conferences at Tuff Gong, trying in vain to unite factions, sects, and gangs in a common line of action. He did all this while working madly on his music, giving Island Records ten faultless albums in ten years. He held the weight of two worlds, the black and the white, but it was too much for human shoulders. He developed cancer and passed away in 1981, just after the JLP had once again seized power. His death represented the tragic end of a classic era” (281).

“Mr. Brown.”³³¹ Bob Marley was, Lee contends, “spiritually above oversimplifications...[and his] message was universal.”³³² And his message relates the heartbeat, the (oralitu)rhythm, of the Rastafari, who indubitably stand in resistance to Babylon, and, yet, in the reality of their multifarious manifestations and mansions,³³³ occupy the space and crack between the establishment and its anarchic upheaval.

³³¹ See MacNeil, 3-11. In the introduction to *Bob Marley and the Bible*, MacNeil foregrounds Marley’s enigmatic character by outlining the many binaries Marley seems to bridge. Among them are City/Country, Black/White, Rasta/Christian, and Secular/Sacred. (I have intentionally subverted the tradition hierarchical ordering of these terms.)

³³² *Ibid.*, 279.

³³³ See note 82 in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3
The Oral Rhythms of the Rastafari-an-Identity:
(The) Rastafarian Movement, History & Politics (of Reading)

A Caribbean discourse finds its expression as much in the explosion of the original cry, as in the patience of the landscape when it is recognized, as in the imposition of lived rhythms.¹

No matter where you find yourself sitting, on the street corner or under a tree, the passionate reasonings of [the Rastafari] resonate, carving new niches in your mentality, perception, and imagination.²

Over the past fifty years, context critical biblical scholars have emphasized the necessity of interpreting the Bible as oral literature and, more importantly, of putting the Bible in the hands of folk whose indigenous cultures privilege or still experience orality and, therefore, resonate with the Bible, a text “originally” constructed in multiple oral cultures. In this time, (Caribbean biblical) scholars have been contemplating contextualized hermeneutics vis-à-vis Caribbean cultures, people, and music; the Rastafari and Reggae have been prominent among them. As important and influential as orality has become within the field of biblical studies, the recent impetus to bridge the *critical theoretical divide* (between “the West and the Rest”) has something equally important to offer, further facilitating the de(con)struction of traditional discursive (epistemological) barriers that have inhibited more creative and diverse dialogue between and between areas/fields. In this chapter, I look to the Rastafari as paradigmatic in their embodied integration of rhythm, relation, self-constitution, anti-colonial African epistemologies, and/in biblical interpretation. I understand Rastafarians, and the Bobo Ashanti or Boboshanti, now more formally identified as the Ethiopia Africa Black

¹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 109.

² Lee, *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism*, 276.

International Congress, in particular, to be a localized materialization of archipelagic thinking, constituted in relation to Africa and in resistance to (the collusion of colonialism and capitalism which has led to) Western European world domination.³ In the words of Ennis Edmonds and Michelle Gonzalez, “Rastafari shows us the manner in which Afro-Jamaicans sought to articulate a sense of African religion and identity while still being influenced by and struggling against the legacy of European colonialism.”⁴ While inarguably rooted in an African identity, the Rasta movement is remarkable in its transcultural and interracial appeal and accessibility, which has led to its illimitable (interethnic) iterations or iterations. As Glissant asserts of creolization, identity is rooted yet not contingent upon return to the Root but through its re-membering in Relation. By means of their inherently oraliturrhythmic, Relational, archipelagic and anti-colonial biblical hermeneutics, the Rastafari offer (us) the opportunity to personally engage and affectively experience the exegetical dialogue between the Bible and the Caribbean as a Diverse diasporic (interdepend)dance in the (poly)rhythms of Relational poetics (in resistance to Western European Sameness); an encounter with profound implications for any and all biblical interpretation.⁵ In this way, then, I consider it advantageous to engage

³ Cf. previous chapter, where I make the case. Also see John P. Homiak, “The Boboshanti: International Routes Return Reggae to Its Levitical Roots,” *Rootz, Reggae, and Kulcha* 10, no. 1 (2009): 22-3; and Michael Barnett and Adwoa Ntozake Onuora, “Rastafari as an Afrocentrically Based Discourse and Spiritual Expression,” in *Rastafari and the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, ed., Michael Barnett (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 171.

⁴ Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez. *Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010), 177.

⁵ In his introduction to *Nation Dance*, “Dancing the Nation,” Patrick Taylor describes both the physical and symbolic significance of dance in Caribbean cultures when he writes, “To dance the nation is to find oneself immersed in a liminal world where tradition informs contemporary experience and ritual takes on new meaning... The ability to invoke the emergence of a Caribbean person as a voyager in an international world, a

the Rastafari in particular in an effort to express, encounter and enact the archipelogics of bibliorality as a biblical hermeneutic other-wise.

Working with Glissant's notion of archipelagic thinking as I do, and drawing from his ruminations on creolization, carnival, and Caribbean folktale in relation to his rhizomatic poetics of Relation, the Rastafari inspire the re-membering of the Bible that I present in this project, and especially my reinterpretation of Samson in the following chapter. In the (subterranean) convergence of these rhizomatic nodes, I have reimagined the Bible as bloom space, itself an ambivalently affective assemblage, through the archipelogics of bibliorality and I will proceed likewise in the next chapter, where I re-member Samson as ambivalent affective anti-hero with surprising rhythmic resonances and repercussions with and for the Rastafari.⁶ (What might a rhythmic Rastafari re-membering of the Bible, and specifically the story of Samson—Hebrew/Israelite anti-hero with divine super-strength whose sacrificial suicide destroyed the Philistines along with their temple—do for their collective communal identity and rhetorical-political efficacy?) The political value of Samson's re-membering for the Rastafari cannot be

person who can dance the terrestrial dance with an identity that is at home with difference—this is one measure of the contribution of Caribbean religions to Caribbean and world culture” (1, 12). And, I would add, a major way in which Caribbean peoples contribute to biblical interpretation. Also see Oral Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context* (Oakville, CT: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2010).

⁶ In a previous iteration of this chapter and the next, I engaged Bakhtin's notion of chronotope (in concert with carnivalesque) in his analysis of folk (in resistance to Official) culture and, to a much lesser degree, drew from David Hart's elucidation of Caribbean chronotopes to read Judges 13-16 as Caribbean chronotope. See David Hart, "Caribbean Chronotopes: From Exile to Agency," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 2, Issue 2, (2004): 1-19. Cf. Rawson, "(Re)Membering Samson Otherwise: Resistance, Revolution, and Relationality in a Rastafari Reading of Judges 13-16," in *Human Rights, Race, and Resistance in the African Diaspora*, eds. Toyin Falola and Cacee Hoyer (New York: Routledge, 2016), see esp. 212-218.

realized, however, without a better understanding of the complex dynamics of the socio-political and theological context out of which the movement arose, which guide the Rastafarian way of living (Ital) and their own re-membering of the Bible and Samson.⁷ In this chapter, then, I will provide the necessary background(ing) for my own re-membering of Samson in Chapter Five by presenting the history, theology, onto-epistemology, philosophy, and oraliturthermytic biblical hermeneutics of the Rastafari movement, as an archipelological assemblage, where rhythm, self and communal constitution, anti-colonial Africana epistemologies, and a theopoetics of/and Relation coalesce in a subterranean convergence of creolized verbal carnage.

**Citing Up the Bible:
Relational Poetics, Roots, Reggae, and the Rhythms of Re-Membering I-an-Identity**

Poetics of Relation opens with Glissant's essay "The Open Boat" in which he urges his readers three times to "*Imagine*" particularities of the inhumane conditions to which enslaved and exiled Africans were subjected during their deportation to the Americas. Like the waves thrashing and beating against the bow/boat, Glissant unremittingly appeals to our affect/senses, in raw and graphic imagery, "but that is nothing yet."⁸ As I read, I am confronted, haunted, by the immediacy of these bodies in a moment of sheer terror, which was not only inescapable for these human beings, but was itself wavelike in its relentless repetition; their forced migration-movement became the inhabiting of this moment again and again and again in infinite forms; what the poet

⁷ Out of respect for the Movement, when I reference Rastafari I capitalize both Rastafari and Movement and I refrain from employing the misnomer "Rastafarianism"—since the Rastafari stand in direct opposition to the various "ISM's" that dominant Western ideology and superstructures.

⁸ "[B]ut that is nothing yet" is another of the refrains Glissant employs in this mesmerizing and mortifying essay. See Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 5, 6.

refers to as “so many incredible Gehennas.”⁹ I proceed and feel the hundreds of cramped bodies in the hull/hold, held captive in/by this ship, we smell the vomit and rotting flesh of death. We are dizzied by waves crashing, red cascading, bodies climbing toward a “black sun on the horizon” of never again Africa, only the abyss, “three times linked to the unknown.”¹⁰

And the open boat is the first, the “womb abyss,” which, like (yet nothing like) Plato’s *khora*, is the strange and extraordinary space for the creation of radically new be(com)ings, making sense from that which is absolutely absurd. This boat as womb abyss,

[G]enerates the clamor of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity. Although you are alone in this suffering, you share in the unknown with others whom you have yet to know. This boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death.¹¹

Glissant depicts the slave ship as matrix, holding, (trans)forming, expelling; words also used by Plato in reference to *χώρα* as the womb of becoming, which is “filled with powers that are not similar nor equivalent, she is at no part of her in even balance, but being swayed in all directions unevenly, she is herself shaken by the entering forms, and by her motion shakes them again in turn: and they, being thus stirred, are carried in different directions and separated, just as by sieves and instruments for winnowing corn the grain is shaken and sifted.”¹² The correlation, or khora-lation, here, between the slave

⁹ Glissant, *Poetics*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² 53a-c. Also see Plato, *Timaeus*, 50a-c. Following the reasoning of Derrida, many poststructuralist literary theorists have identified khora as the subterranean convergence (divergence) within Plato’s work. Khora is a subversion of Plato’s infamous “Theory of Forms” and, for some, evidence of either Plato’s inadvertent undoing, or deconstruction,

ship and Plato's depiction of *khora*, is eerily uncanny, and particularly because the abyss that is the hull of the slave ship is a matrix of death and dehumanization, but also diaspora.

Diverse bodies enter into this strange space, which is marked by an imbalance of power. These freighted figures are shaken and stirred by uncontrollable (e)motion and dispersed in diverse directions: διασπορά. These saturated somatic seeds of life are scattered from this sensitive-senseless space. Plato, the self-proclaimed anti-poet, is arguably never more opaque and archipelogically erudite than in his imaginative and enigmatic illustration of the rhythmic resonating womb of chaosmos, of poesis. Χώρα as cosmic womb is apprehensible solely through a "bastard reasoning" and, therefore, utterly unintelligible (somehow sensible) nonsense, who is also the *errant cause of the sensible*.¹³ Χώρα is ignorant. Χώρα is diaspora. Χώρα is the (Wisdom of the) other-wise.

of his own philosophical ruminations or his knowing resistance to the rigidity of this binary and its impossibility. John Caputo, in his treatment of Derrida's description of his "dream of innumerable genders as choreographies," articulates one of my own interests in reading χώρα with the Hebrew Bible or reading the bible through χώρα (i.e., Genesis 1 as chorology). I approach the text with a khoric lens for the ways in which s/he embodies and conveys "the joyful, dance-like marking off of places, multiplying the places of sexual spacing" (Caputo, 105). As John Sallis, as a host of others, has noted *Timaeus* is a text of innumerable interruptions and, therefore, beginnings which all serve Plato in the interrogation of "the question of beginning" (Sallis, 4-6). Sallis's own reading of *Timaeus* as chorology has indubitably influenced my reading of Genesis 1. I am also curious about the way this interruption of beginning by yet another beginning is implicated in the tension, which interests Derrida in *The Problem of Genesis* and Keller in *Face*; that is, the *différance* between *origins* and *becoming*. See Jacques Derrida, *On the Name* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); and John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

¹³ Ibid 48a-b.

Χώρα is the archipelago, affective assemblage, and the wayward womb of all be(com)ings (creolized).¹⁴

The second abyss, Glissant found in the depths of the sea, the cargo, the balls and chains thrown overboard, which are the signposts of the Transatlantic Slave Trade; the symbols of suffering that created the Caribbean archipelago as we know it. And the final abyss is the vanished, the unknown, the unconscious memory that is now only remembered and imagined, or re-membered. Glissant maintains that the communities that developed in the Caribbean “despite having forgotten the chasm, despite being unable to imagine the passion of those who foundered there, nonetheless wove this sail (a veil).”¹⁵ This opaque sail, however, was not employed to return to Africa, but spread out in this “land-beyond turned into land-in-itself” as “the absolute unknown, projected by the abyss and bearing into eternity the womb abyss and the infinite abyss, [which] in the end became knowledge;” the Wisdom of the other-wise.¹⁶

¹⁴ Χώρα as womb is likewise indirectly equated by Plato to the excessive desire of Woman, which leads Man astray indiscriminately, which is another reason Keller reads khora into creation and I read Wisdom as unequivocally khoric. For an insightful postcolonial treatment of Wisdom and woman’s oppositional representation in Proverbs see Mayra Rivera, “God at the Crossroads,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, eds. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010), 186-203.

¹⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8. Glissant is unabashed in his criticism of the romanticism and essentialism of Africa, and even more so in his criticism of the allure to return, near the end of *Traité du tout-monde*. Glissant warned against this idealization of Africa (which he perceived in Negritude and combated with Antillanité) which conceptualized it as “if it were a territory owed us,” a place where time had stopped since “our ascendants were forcibly taken from there, and that there will be a time when we in turn will find there a vital essence” (429). While Glissant identifies significant differences between the back to Africa movement and Zionism, it is in this impetus, wherein he finds great similarity between the two.

Caribbean peoples are affective ancestors of enslaved Africans whose enforced exile transported them across the Atlantic and into the construction of communal identity in foreign lands. “Let’s not forget,” however, Glissant reflects, “Africa was the source of all sorts of diasporas.”¹⁷ Slavery was only one, and not the first. “There was the diaspora millions of years ago that gave birth to humanity, because Africa is the source of humankind...[and until today we have] imposed diasporas by poverty, misery and emigration. Consequently, Africa has always been turned outward, conditioned to go elsewhere.”¹⁸ The manifold ways in which the African diaspora, enforced through enslavement, resonates with the exodus trope of the Israelites have been well documented.¹⁹ Likewise, there are numerous anthologies and monographs, which attend to the import of and appeal to Africa as *home*, *motherland*, and *Zion*, within the Rastafari movement and reggae music, most explicitly in *songs of freedom*.²⁰ Horace Campbell

¹⁷ Édouard Glissant, “One World in Relation.” Manthia Diawara followed Edouard Glissant on in a cross-Atlantic journey from South Hampton (UK) to Brooklyn (New York) on the Queen Mary II and then onto Martinique. “One World in Relation” documents the journey as Glissant reflects and offers his poetic ruminations on Relation and the tout-monde.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Steed V. Davidson, “Leave Babylon: The Trope of Babylon in Rastafarian Discourse.” In *Black Theology: An International Journal*. Vol. 6, Issue 1 (Jan 2008): 46-60; Mark Roncace and Dan Clanton, “Popular Music,” in *Teaching the Bible through Popular Culture and the Arts*, eds. Mark Roncace and Patrick Gray (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 25; Darren J. Middleton, “Identity and Subversion in Babylon: Strategies for ‘Resisting Against the System’ in the Music of Bob Marley and the Wailers,” in *Religion, Culture, and Tradition in the Caribbean*, eds. Hemchand Gossai and Nathaniel S. Murrell (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000), 193. Also see Janet DeCosmo, “Bob Marley: Religious Prophet?” in *Bob Marley: The Man and His Music*, eds. Eleanor Wint and Carolyn Cooper (Kingston, JM: Arawak, 2003), 59-75; and Dean MacNeil, *The Bible and Bob Marley: Half the Story Has Never Been Told* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

²⁰ See Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rooney* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987); Darren J. Middleton, *Rastafari and the Arts: An*

explains that these songs were expressions of a deep memory, “a racial memory,” and a language rooted in profound cultural and bodily trauma from a community and a people taken into captivity, seeking healing by returning “home,” *Back to Africa*.²¹

Though there were and still are Rastas whose experience has drawn them back to Africa as Root (the idealization Glissant critiqued), this has historically been the exception rather than the rule.²² Repatriation has indisputably been an ideal within the

Introduction (New York: Routledge, 2015); and H elene Lee, *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004).

²¹ Campbell, 211. Campbell points out that *Back to Africa* was “a philosophy among Africans living in the West since slavery, but while he acknowledges that the impetus to romanticize the homeland and return to the “motherland” is a real and valid (universal human) drive, he cautions those (Rastafari) who consider a call for repatriation necessary, advising them to “study the historical record” and reminding us that “in the consciousness of the British ruling class, the solution to the ‘race problem’ would be to repeat the 1786 scheme of rounding up black people and ‘repatriating’ them anywhere, as long as it was outside Britain. The lessons of unity of positive and negative ideas in the history of repatriation becomes more urgent as the struggles in Ethiopia force Rastas in Shashamane (Ethiopia) to come to terms with the realities of the search for social change.” It is no wonder, then, why the Rastafari resonate so profoundly with the story of Israel as represented in the Hebrew Bible.

²² For an incisive exposition on the interrelation of activism, identity and culture, “and their impact on the creation of new and revitalized ethno-racial identities in the African-Caribbean Diaspora,” see Simboonath Singh, “Resistance, Essentialism, and Empowerment in Black Nationalist Discourse in the African Diaspora: A Comparison of the Back to Africa, Black Power, and Rastafarian Movements,” *Journal of African American Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter 2004): 18-36. As Singh points out, “all three movements allowed their socially dispossessed and culturally displaced adherents to be active social actors and knowledgeable agents capable of making their own history. The Back to Africa Movement (the Colonization or Black Zionist Movement) influenced the Rastafari, in some cases leading to migration. See Elom Dovlo, “Rastafari, African Hebrew and Black Muslims: Return ‘Home’ Movements in Ghana,” *Exchange* Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 1, 2002): 1-22. The return had powerful symbolic valence, but did not, and sometimes could not, occur in reality. And when it did, romanticism of the return was often short-lived. (The Rastas first went to Ghana to connect with Kwame Nkrumah.) As Elom Dovlo submits, “Rastafari is seen as an alien way of life” in Ghana, so “the attitude of ordinary Ghanaians towards the Rastafari is negative” (5, 7). Due to Rasta’s “biblical culture,” it is at times understood to have more in common with Christianity than traditional African religions (6). Dovlo does, however, believe the Rasta have a great deal to impart to Ghanaians. which led to Rasta invigoration and routinization within the

movement and has proven compatible with black nationalism, Ethiopianism, Garveyism, and other humanitarian philosophies, especially in light of Western European colonial and capitalist domination, exploitation and partitioning of Africa. However, perspectives have shifted toward a re-membering of (Africana) cultural identity as rooted in Africa and always already (routed) in diaspora.²³ More and more, Rastafari want “to struggle and change” the societies in which they live; it appears that, as Campbell has advised, “the struggles in Africa [and the archipelago have encouraged] Rastas to conceptualize the problems of Pan-Africanism as forging links with social groups [and] progressive groups, so that they can break the old preoccupation with kings, empires and dynasties.”²⁴ The Rastas reality of the lived rhythms within diaspora makes a diasporic text such as the Bible, and particularly the story of Samson (as a diasporic folktale), an even more important bibliorial intertext. I will return to Samson nearer the end of the chapter and will circle back around to repatriation (shifting perspectives within the movement and in relation to routinization) within the next movement. For now, however, I would like to

Caribbean. For an evocative article on the Rastafari in Ethiopia, see Jalahni Niaah, “The Rastafari Presence in Ethiopia: A Contemporary Perspective” in *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, ed. Michael Barnett (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012), Loc. 836-1064. Niaah is working to fill the significant gap in scholarship and research on “the Jamaican Rastafari presence in Ethiopia within the context of repatriation.” He also offers an assessment of Rasta’s contribution to the advancement of “Pan-African agendas as an indicator of a commitment to African development” (Loc. 836).

²³ See Campbell, 43-65.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 212. As Campbell sees it, the Rastas absorption of imperialism has been detrimental to the movement, as history has shown in three actual repatriation experiences (which he proceeds to analyze): The Sierra Leone Experience, the Liberian Experience, and the Shashamane Experience. Campbell contends that, “Pan-Africanism, in the era of socialism and national liberation, must seek to develop an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist perspective, one that speaks to the oppression of all people. If this is not pursued, then those Rastafari who go back to Africa will find themselves beach-heads for imperialism, as happened with the Liberian project.”

reflect upon the ways in which deportation and the African diaspora have become a creative catalyst for reggae, citing up, and Rastas' re-membering of their own I-an-Identity.

Horace Campbell highlights what is implicit in Glissant's musings: enslavement and deportation from Africa (as Root)—the journey on “The Open Boat” through the trinitarian abyss—has, in fact, *birthed* Relation (as identity) within the Caribbean; the opaque and poetic errantry of creolized identities. Deportation of Africans in the Transatlantic Slave Trade (as represented in/through the “open” boat) becomes a sort of gateway into Glissant's conceptualization of creolization, orality, and, ultimately, a poetics of Relation. He writes,

African languages became deterritorialized, thus contributing to creolization in the West. This is the most completely known confrontation between the powers of the written word and the impulses of orality. The only written thing on slave ships was the account book listing the exchange value of slaves. Within the ships' space the cry of those deported was still stifled, as it would be in the realm of the Plantations. This confrontation still reverberates to this day.²⁵

Deportation forced the confrontation of “the powers of the written word and the impulses of orality,” and while the event of deportation was devastating, dehumanizing, and downright diabolical, for Glissant, it instantiated the conditions for diaspora and for revolution; the slave ship has been re-membered, by Glissant, as and in terms of Relation-ship. The Rastafari have in many ways lived into this lacuna by capitalizing upon the abyss for its generation of cosmic interRelation. Rastafari represents the impassioned

²⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 5.

release of the stifled cry in resistance to Western hegemony (*Babylon*), the confrontation of these powers, and the creative possibilities of identity as and in Relation other-wise.²⁶

“At their most philosophical,” Patrick Taylor writes, “the Rastafari are the bearers of relational thinking in its fullest.”²⁷ And Rastafari is, in the words of the Rastafarian visionary Leahcim Semaj, “one of the most viable fronts from which we can launch a cultural revolution for the liberation of Africans in the Diaspora.”²⁸ Rastafari remains “one of the most plausible and sustainable expressions of liberation” within the African diaspora because it is an embodiment of a distinctively Caribbean identity, but/and it extends illimitably and rhizomatically beyond the archipelago to peoples of diverse identities and landscapes. Glissant, for his part, considers the movement “a necessary barbarian invasion...[of] the intellectual dream of the learned,” and understands reggae to

²⁶ As Ennis Edmonds identifies, “It is the experience of suffering and alienation in the African diaspora that makes the term *Babylon* most appropriate; it recalls the experience of the forced deportation and servitude of the ancient Hebrews under the Babylonian world power. “at the sociopolitical level,” Edmonds continues, “Babylon is used in reference to the ideological and structural components of Jamaica’s social system, which institutionalizes inequity and exploitation. In this respect, Babylon is the complex of economic, political, religious, and educational institutions and values that evolved from the colonial experiment. Rastas see Jamaica as a part of an international colonial-imperialist complex. Hence, Babylon extends to the British-American alliance, which has been the benefactor of colonialism and international capitalism. These two world powers, through their domination of international politics and their exploitative relationship with the ‘Two-thirds World,’ demonstrate that they are the successors of the ancient Babylonians and Romans.” See Edmonds, “Dread ‘I’ in-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization,” *Chanting Down Babylon*, 24.

²⁷ Patrick Taylor, “Sheba’s Song,” 75.

²⁸ Leahcim T. Semaj, “Models for a Black Psychology of Liberation.” Background for the presentation “The Transformation of Black Identity.” Given at the 13th Annual Convention of the Association of Black Psychologists, Cherry Hill, New Jersey (Aug. 13-17, 1980). Semaj’s re-membering of his own name—a reversal of his Western European “Christian” name, Michael James—is a reflection of his assertion of identity as/in resistance to the Babylon system. Also see Leahcim Semaj, “Race and Identity and the Children of the African Diaspora: The Contributions of Rastafari,” *The Caribe* Vol. 4, No. 4 (1980): 17.

be “audio-visual poetry,” which challenges and even defies Western convention.²⁹

Reggae is a distinctively Caribbean discourse, an oraliturrhythmic modality that renounces prose as it announces the poetic, thereby opening avenues to new, avant-garde, archipelagic episteme.³⁰ Reggae embodies a knowledge and a knowing whereby the aural and the visual coalesce in (a) poetic interdependence; “the written becomes oral...includ[ing] in this way a ‘reality’ that seemed to restrain and limit [them...as they find expression] in the imposition of lived rhythms.”³¹ Reggae represents the rhizomatic rhythms of (an audio-visual poetics of) Relation other-wise.

Though Christianity, entrenched in Western European epistemology as it is, may find Rastas and their reasoning unintelligible, ignorant, and entirely “incomprehensible,” as Rex Nettleford observes, the Rastafari are experts in “exposition and interpretation—exegesis and hermeneutics, to the scriptural scholar.”³² (Similar to the way Creole was intentionally unintelligible to the French slavocracy.) Reggae is the oraliturrhythmic

²⁹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 108.

³⁰ Ibid., 108. A Caribbean discourse, Glissant writes, “finds its expression as much in the explosion of the original cry, as in the patience of the landscape when it is recognized, as in the imposition of lived rhythms.”

³¹ Ibid., 108-109. Glissant writes that reggae “in the realm of the ‘audio-visual’ corresponds to ‘poetry’... “Anglophone poets like Brathwaite [Barbados] or Walcott [St. Lucia] try, perhaps, to transcend [in *drum-poetry*] this opposition. Whereas I feel that Brathwaite revives thirty years late Aimé Césaire’s discourse, he places it actually in a new context: the concrete and diverse realm of lived experience. Brathwaite’s link is not as much with Césaire’s poetics as with the broken rhythms of Nicolás Guillén or Léon Gontran Damas.” acknowledges Rastafarian concretizing of the negritude movement, he lauds them for establishing equilibrium and, essentially, paving the way for the disruption of the domination of Western dualism. Their so-called barbarian invasion is/was necessary, Glissant writes, for “it is through this that values can regain their equilibrium: the true re-affirmation of equal stature for the components of a culture.” Glissant explicated the connection between the Rastafari, rhythm and orality, but did not specifically address their oraliturry interpretation of the Bible as an instantiation of this modality.

³² Rex Nettleford, “Discourse on Rastafarian Reality,” *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, 312.

manifestation of the Rasta's Relational epistemology and the way in which the Rastafari interpret, or "cite up," the Bible is exemplary of their rhythmic oralizing of the written; it instantiates the confrontation of *the powers of the written word and (the impulses) of orality*.³³ Rather than a methodology, Samuel Murrell and Lewin Williams elucidate citing up as art, an anti-colonial aesthetic form that de-emphasizes the text's context, syntax, and literary genre (Root interests), centering instead "the speaker, the setting, and the scene" (i.e., Relation).³⁴ Citing up is a manifestation of Rastafari reasoning as an interpretive modality.³⁵ Not only do Rastas recognize the reader's role in the interpretive

³³ Ibid. Also see Adrian Anthony McFarlane, "The Epistemological Significance of 'I-an-I' as a Response to Quashie and Anancyism in Jamaican Culture," in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 111. McFarlane's depiction of the Rasta's rejection of the Jamaican folklore figures of Quashie and Anancy (the trickster) represents them as refusing the either ignorant, subservient stereotype or a more opaque, ambiguous identity on the other. Instead, McFarlane proffers, "they seek to move beyond [these paradigms] to a more wholesome expression of Jah's social order" (114). The Rastas "reject what they see as the artificial means of knowing, in favor of an emphasis on the stirrings in persons to the truth conditions of Jah's inspiration" (119). Knowledge, for the Rastas, infers self-knowledge and self-knowledge is possible only through "the knowledge of Jah." While McFarlane's depiction is no doubt accurate and the Rasta are unequivocally "one of the most plausible and sustainable expressions of liberation in the African diaspora," I am not sure the Rastafarian movement, particularly in the twenty-first century, resists entirely "hybridization" and opacity, as McFarlane argues (111, 119). I understand their approach to be much more nuanced and while their counterpoising of the Lion "as alternative hero symbol to the traditional Anancy hero," the Rastafari do not disavow entirely the trickster motif (Forsythe, x). As Dennis Forsythe points out, Anancy is part of "the all-inclusiveness of the Divine," which also includes the Serpent, the Spider, the Lion and the Lamb. "These convey the thought of God as All. They symbolize the all-ness of both good and evil, of light and darkness, of sun and moon, of father, mother, and son" (65). See Dennis Forsythe's treatment in *Rastafari: For the Healing of the Nations* (Kingston: Zaika Publications, 1983).

³⁴ Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Lewin Williams, "The Black Biblical Hermeneutics of the Rastafari," *Chanting Down Babylon*, 328.

³⁵ See Edward Te Kohu Douglass and Ian Boxill, "The Lantern and the Light: Rastafari in Aotearoa (New Zealand), *Rastafari in the New Millennium*, Loc. 694ff. As Edward Te Kohu Douglass and Ian Boxill point out, reasoning sessions typically "involve reading and discussing Biblical texts to understand their meaning and intent. Many texts are committed to memory and liberally quoted" (i.e., cited up). Cannabis ("ganja" in

process, but they intentionally assert their agency in resistance to the Western European colonial, empiracist appropriation of the Bible; *the very reality that seemed to restrain and limit them.*

Citing up as an oralityrhythmic interpretive modality finds *expression in the imposition of lived rhythms*, rhythms which define and yet always already exceed the bindings of any book and the bounds of our skin (in a relationship of reciprocal resonance to [human and non-human] bodies). Rasta hermeneutics, Murrell and Williams declare, “creates something new.”³⁶ There is “no unified Rastafarian hermeneutic,” the scholars insist, “the Scripture is like an open canon, in which Rasta’s new insights are as inspired as the written text.”³⁷ (A perspective that implicitly and explicitly challenges Western European sensibilities which, to this day [poststructuralists included], continue to center the text as book and literary methodologies rather than human, sensual and affective experience.)³⁸ Dean MacNeil, for his part, devoted an entire monograph to the Bible in

Jamaica) is often incorporated into these sessions, but not of necessity. Marijuana, or herb, is utilized, as one brethren put it, in order to “make peace with yourself as well as creation and others around you.” In the words of Sister Rachel, herb “brings us to a point of reason; where we are not yelling and screaming and we are not fighting; where we can sit down and we can talk. That’s how we use it, for that feeling. That’s the healing of the nations. Because it is used worldwide you can go right around the world and everywhere you go they use it” (700).

³⁶ Murrell and Williams, 327. My use of the the plural and singular here is intentional, which I believe is evinced in the sentences that follow.

³⁷ Murrell and Williams, 328.

³⁸ In addition to the work of Nathaniel Murrell and Lewin Williams, Steed Davidson, Darren Middleton, and J. Richard Middleton are among the intellectuals who have explored Rastafarian biblical interpretations (both in and beyond reggae), from academic, aesthetic, and activist angles. Each has attested to and evinced the creativity and theology manifest in Rasta’s innovative biblical interpretation, which is always already integral to the construction and consolidation of communal identity in resistance to the Western Root identity and its ideology. Both Davidson and Middleton are working with Rastafarian representations of Babylon and/in biblical passages from Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, and Revelations. While Davidson’s approach is rooted in biblical scholarship and

the life and lyrics of Bob Marley, his relationship to and interpretation of the sacred text.³⁹ Though the Rastafarians' history with the Bible is complex and even convoluted, the text and its radical (re)interpretation remains central to their cultural-communal identity.⁴⁰ The Bible is a Caribbean text and, as MacNeil posits, "the most commonly quoted book in the Caribbean."⁴¹ For, as Ennis Edmonds reminds us, an education in Jamaica within the first half of the twentieth century (akin to Africa) was available primarily through the Christian church, which meant it was rooted in the Bible and "resulted in a kind of 'biblicalism' in which the Bible became the source of authority in all discussions and disputations," regardless of socioeconomic status or political persuasion.⁴²

The Rastafari engage the Bible as a core sacred text, like many Caribbean folk, but they do so without absorbing the Western European Christian metanarrative, at least

exegesis, Middleton is coming from a more aesthetic, artistic, and even political angle. Also see Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, "Dangerous Memories, Underdevelopment and the Bible in Colonial Caribbean Experience," in *Religion, Culture, and Tradition in the Caribbean*, eds. Hemchand Gossai and Nathaniel S. Murrell (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 181-205.

³⁹ See Dan MacNeil, *The Bible and Bob Marley: Half the Story Has Never Been Told* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

⁴⁰ Rastafarian appropriations, like the movement itself, are not unproblematic—especially for feminists both within and outside Rastafari. The voices of Rastafari women such as Imani Tarafari-Ama, (who represents a more conservative approach), critique the patriarchal hegemony that has dominated the movement. Ironically, the Rastafari movement, while notorious for its (gender) hierarchy, is radically epistemologically democratic, even anarchic (Johannes Fabian, 212). And one need only look to the roots of Reggae through the Rastafarian incorporation of Nyabingi rhythm to unearth its matriarchal origins. See Maureen Rowe, "Gender and Family Relations in Rastafari: A Personal Perspective" (72-88) and Tafari-Ama, "Rastawoman as Rebel: Case Studies in Jamaica" (89-106) in *Chanting Down Babylon*.

⁴¹ MacNeil, 11.

⁴² Ennis B. Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

not entirely.⁴³ The Rastafari, as well as their oraliturrhythmic reasoning, resonates with the Hebrew Bible as oraliture and, as Steed Davidson has argued, in the plight of Israel (and the Jews) in their resistance against Babylon, archetype of Western cultural imperialism.⁴⁴ Because the Rastafari are rooted in both their biblical (Hebrew) and African heritage, their hermeneutics irrupt from a theology (and psychology) of Blackness in resistance to empire and specifically empiricism.⁴⁵ Rastas identify with Israel's representation as God's people, their narrative and experience as an enslaved people, deported to a foreign land, seeking to embrace and establish their unique relationship with/to the divine, creation, and history. The correlation the Rastafari have drawn between Africa and Israel as well as their affirmation of the Black presence within the Bible is axial to their identity and their hermeneutics. This is, in fact, one of the central reasons Samson appeals to the Rastafari. While exiguous, Samson is certainly not insignificant due to his identity as a (dread)lock wearing Nazirite judge over Israel, who

⁴³ In fact, Rex Nettleford asserts, “[w]resting the Christian message from the Messenger [w]as a strategy of demarginalization [that] helped bring slaves and the free peasantry nearer a perceived mainstream as ‘children of God.’” The Rastafari then extended this “by proclaiming selves as ‘pieces of God’” (Nettleford, “Discourse,” 315). The Rastafari also consider *The Kebra Nagast* (1922), Robert Athlyi Rogers’ proto-Rastafarian work, *The Holy Piby: The Blackman’s Bible* (1924), as well as Leonard Howell’s midrash *The Promised Key* (written under his pen name G. G. Maragh and first published in 1935) to be sacred texts. See Robert Athlyi Rogers, *The Holy Piby: The Blackman’s Bible* (NuVision Publications, 1924); Leonard Percival Howell, *The Promised Key* (1935).

⁴⁴ In the words of Rastafarian intellectual Dennis Forsythe, “Babylon is the psychic image sustained by real life experiences, busted hopes, broken dreams, the blues of broken homes and of disjointed tribes of people trapped by history. It is an image of fire and blood, of being on the edge, in limbo, in the wilderness, in concrete jungles... It is a desolation in which man feels disjointed and out of line with the plans of creation.” Dennis Forsythe, *Rastafari: For the Healing of the Nation* (Kingston: Zaika Publications, 1983), 96.

⁴⁵ See Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, “Rastas’ Psychology of Blackness” in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 36-54. Hutton and Murrell are also dealing with the way in which the Bible factors centrally into the development of the Rasta’s psychology of blackness, starting with Genesis.

defiantly resisted (Philistine) domination. His relationship to the Philistines is, of course, more complicated than such a summary permits, but we will attend to his complexity and liminality in the next chapter. For the Rastafari, Samson is a core biblical figure who functions primarily as a representative of Black resistance to empire through his connection to Jah; and his locks are, like those of the Rastas, the corporeal signifier of Samson's strength, the integrity of his relationship *to* and deep resonance *with* Jah, and his radical rejection of the conventions, imperial apparatus and the (empi)racism of the Babylon system.

As David Jobling conjectures, the Philistines would have signified *the Other* for the Israelite viewer-hearer-participant, likewise, the Rastafari reason them as another rhetorical representation of Babylon.⁴⁶ The final scene of Judges 16 has traditionally (and understandably) been interpreted as the most significant materialization of Samson's resistance to and subversion of Philistine oppression, or what the Rastafari identify as

⁴⁶ David Jobling, in *Berit Olam: 1 Samuel*, ed. David W. Cotter (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998): 275-7. Also David Gunn, *Judges Through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 237-8; Also see David Jobling, "The Text's World of Meaning," in *Judges and Method*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007), 90-114. While I have found this to be true in most of my personal conversations with Rastafarians, the most prevalent example in Reggae is Bob Marley's "Rastaman Live Up"—where the Philistines are a repeated threat which the Rastaman must overcome. Due to their enslavement of Samson in Judges 16, the Philistines can easily be equated with the Babylonian enslavement and deportation of "Israel" and, likewise, the West's enslavement and deportation of Africans, for Babylon is, as Joseph Owens posits, "the whole complex of institutions which conspire to keep the black man enslaved in the Western world and which attempt to subjugate colored people throughout the world" (Owens, 74-80). See Joseph Owens, *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica* (Kingston: Sangster's Book Stores, 1976). While there is no officially transcribed interpretation of this text, in light of the correlation, a Rasta reading of a pericope such as Judges 15:11-12—where Judah hands Samson over to the Philistines (Babylon)—might be interpreted in conversation with and compared to (the still contested involvement of) Africans selling other Africans into slave trade.

“downpression.”⁴⁷ This scene, however, and Samson’s choice to destroy the Philistines and himself along with them, is much more ambivalently affective than such an interpretation allows. (It does not occlude Relational resonance, but, in fact, emanates it.) To understand the overstanding that inheres within Samson’s last stand, we must innerstand the resonance of the oraliturrhythmic reasoning of the RastafarI-an-Identity and especially in relation to Babylon.⁴⁸ In other words, becoming acquainted with the Rasta’s archipelogics of I-an-I and their ambivalently affective relationship to the West profoundly inflects the re-membering of Samson, particularly the power and (Relational) poetics of the final scene.

In addition to its faithfulness to a theology of Blackness, Rastafari biblical hermeneutics are incontrovertibly animated by their intimate and empowering

⁴⁷ Nettleford, “Discourse,” 315. Western European is unquestionably the source of the downpression, a Rasta neologism that is a revision (creolization or re-membering) of “oppression,” which speaks to the subjugation, the psychic-symbolic and quite literal pushing down of black people. As Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell elucidate, Rastas “brought awareness of this ‘psychological downpression’ to the forefront in the 1960s and 1970s by forcing the Jamaican government and the society at large to take seriously the African consciousness in the diaspora on issues of race, class, and political and economic oppression. In a society where lightness of skin color determined status and the value of persons, Rastas propounded an Africanist psychology which contended that absolutely nothing is wrong with black people and that, contrary to the negative Eurocentric feelings about Africans, everything is right with them.” See Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, “Rastas’ Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Sombodiness,” *Chanting Down Babylon*, 49. The Rastafari are Babylon defying deviants, who cite up the Bible as they see fit according to the context in which they are reading. They are an interpretive body that has in some sense picked up on the typology of Samson as a Christ-like figure (Judges 13:5), who serves not only as a symbol but as an exemplar of resistance to Western European, epistemology, ideology and culture. Accordingly, the Rastafari utilize Samson not just as a symbol of strength and power, but also as a model Rastafarian. Folktale and its re-membering, then, are critical to Rastafari biblical hermeneutics as their appropriation and deployment—the(ir) re-membering—of Samson evinces. For another incisive treatment of downpression see Adrian McFarlane, “The Epistemological Significance of ‘I-an-I,’” esp. 114-116.

⁴⁸ “Innerstand” is yet another Rasta re-membering of understanding, which relates deep insight, critical reflection, and (self) awareness in the Wisdom and Relation of I-an-I.

relationship to Jah and creation, in terms of agency and aesthetics, vis-à-vis the archipelogics and (theo)poetics of I-an-I. In fact, Rasta I-an-I locution, in the words of Adrian McFarlane, is

[A]n avenue through which Rastas show their total rejection of the values of Babylon while demonstrating their ability to create a new language medium for the liberation of ‘Jah people’ within Western Babylon culture. Out of this I-an-I locution and other I-words comes a new sense of self that leads to a new vision of values, inclusive of art and beauty as well as power.⁴⁹

Though he does not explicitly reference Glissant, it is as if McFarlane is unwittingly channeling the Martinican poet in his exposition on the power of the I, which lies “in its ability to command the self; its reflexiveness is its strength, and its purpose is to create a new identity and meaning for the speaker.”⁵⁰ I-an-I is the archipelagic Wisdom of creative expression and self-actualization, the assertion of agency always already in community.⁵¹ Rather than employing Jamaican “mi” (me), which Becky Mulvaney avers, “makes persons into objects not subjects, [I-an-I] expresses the dignity of the individual.”⁵² I-an-I, Ennis Edmonds adds, “is a bold statement of self-assertion, which becomes a ‘high-caliber weapon’ in the struggle against the system.”⁵³ The capacity for

⁴⁹ McFarlane, 107.

⁵⁰ McFarlane, 108.

⁵¹ See Nettleford, “Discourse,” 311-25. Also see Nettleford, *Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race, and Protest in Jamaica* (William Collins & Sangster, 1970), 53-100.

⁵² Ennis B. Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 64. (Heretofore, *Rastafari*.) Also see Becky Mulvaney, “Rhythms of Resistance: On Rhetoric and Reggae Music,” Ph.D. diss., (University of Iowa, 1985), 74. It bears noting that this understanding is very contestable and highly contested, both in terms of the affect of the word “mi” and the reasoning behind the Rasta’s rejection of it.

⁵³ Edmonds, 64. Edmonds is himself quoting and expounding on Mulvaney. Instead of acquiescing to the notion of a Western European self, Edmonds writes, I-an-I “connotes a rejection of subservience in Babylon culture and an affirmation of self as an active agent

the uncompromising affirmation of self and a new identity, McFarlane asserts, inheres in I-an-I locution as “the creation of a ‘counter order’,”⁵⁴ which I understand as an embodiment of Glissant’s creolized Caribbean discourse; creative self-determination, or “livity,” as a poetics of Relation.⁵⁵

As “bearers of relational thinking in its fullest,”⁵⁶ Rasta philosophy and/as a Relational-archipelagic epistemology reflects the knowledge which Glissant identifies in Caribbean peoples, which is “not just a specific knowledge, appetite, suffering, and delight of one particular people, not only that, but knowledge of the Whole, greater from having been at the abyss and freeing knowledge of Relation within the Whole.”⁵⁷ Of the

in the creation of one’s own reality and identity... indicat[ing] that all people are active, creative agents and not passive objects.” Edmonds, “Dread,” 33.

⁵⁴ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 165.

⁵⁵ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 168-170. Rupert Lewis asserts, “Rastafari needs to be seen in the context of these social and racial struggles over a Jamaican identity that is heir to both British and African cultures. Rastafari is therefore the continuation of efforts toward black self-determination on the collective as well as the individual level, and in this respect, it parallels the efforts of the Garvey movement. Self-determination, in this context, is not restricted to political nationalism but extends to what Rastafarians have called ‘livity,’ which covers the totality of one’s being in the world” (Lewis, 155). Livity also signifies the Rastas commitment to “natural living,” also known as “Ital.” Ennis Edmonds expounds on natural living, which signifies “the use of natural rather than manufactured and especially artificial products. This is based on the Rastafarian conviction that health and longevity emanate from the organic properties with which Jah has imbued the natural environment. Altering the dynamics of nature with chemicals and manufacturing techniques leads to human ill-health and environmental degradation. Rastas declare that ‘Ital is vital—the natural is life-giving’” (Edmonds, *Introduction*, 47).

⁵⁶ Patrick Taylor, “Sheba’s Song,” 75. In his conclusion of “Sheba’s Song,” Taylor identifies the I-an-I “logic of Rastafari discourse” as reflected in other discourses—particularly Buber’s “I-Thou” and Kierkegaard’s “God-relationship.” While he gives a nod to poststructuralism, he only refers to Derrida to acknowledge that I-an-I is a supplement to “a European Judeo-Christian tradition told in accordance with the doctrine of ‘the One’.” He is not actually identifying the ways in which I-an-I might be understood in terms of poststructuralism—or at least by means of identifying their resonances. I would also point to Catherine Keller’s “Manyone” as an expression of the divine (*Elohim*) as bursting with life in diverse embodiments and expressions. See page 359.

⁵⁷ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 8.

numerous French words that signify “knowledge,” the one Glissant employs here is *connassance*, which represents knowledge as cognizance, acquaintance, expertise, and/or familiarity; the type of knowledge that is intrinsically Relational and what I identify as Wisdom (in Chapter Two). For the Rastafari, this *knowledge of Relation within the Whole*, or Wisdom, is expressed most saliently as and through I-an-I. I-an-I exemplifies the way in which Rastafarian argot, or “dread talk,” protests the English language, its epistemology and anthropology. Like Creole, Rastafarian speech encapsulates and articulates “loaded and sophisticated concepts in simple expressions, which outsiders experience as linguistic crudities but which convey a whole range of meanings to the initiated.”⁵⁸ Rastafarians are, Nettleford comments, “inventing a language, using existing elements to be sure, but creating a means of communication that would faithfully reflect the specificities of their experience and perception of self, life and the world.”⁵⁹

Incorporating the reality-divinity of Jah, a radical livication (dedication) to self (created in-and-through Relation) knowledge, assertion, and expression, as well as an acknowledgement of Pan-Divinity, I-an-I is “indicative of the divine essence in all people” and represents the oneness of God alive in all human beings, which is a major part of its universal appeal.⁶⁰ I-an-I is the poetic expression of consciousness (in

⁵⁸ Edmonds, *Rastafari*, 64. Also see Edmonds, “Dread” in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 32-3. Dread talk is a creolized Caribbean discourse. Velma Pollard addresses the unnecessary fear in Jamaica of Dread Talk (DT) replacing English among Jamaican youth and problematizes the view that English was ever their language. For Pollard’s treatment of the way DT “steps up” Jamaican Creole (JC) see Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of the Rastafari* (Kingston: Canoe Press UWI, 1994).

⁵⁹ Joseph Owens, *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica* (Kingston: Sangster’s book Stores, 1976), iv.

⁶⁰ Edmonds, 64. In his Introduction to *Rastafari*, Ennis Edmonds explains, “Though Rastafari has traveled far from its roots in Jamaica and has attracted followers who do not share the same ethnic heritage and social history as the people of African descent who

resistance to its prosaic colonization). Noel Erskine elucidates this as, “the result of a new awakening of the self, result[ing] in a high anthropology” that stands in absolute defiance of the “anthropological poverty” of the Babylon (i.e., colonial and neo-colonial, capitalist) system which is characterized by “the need to look to authorities outside of self, the tendency to deprecate self...and associate blackness and African-ness with bondage, psychological dependency, and the spirit of victimization.”⁶¹ The Rasta claim, “we are Gods,” is their personal-collective empowerment as subject rather than object.⁶² God abides in all, therefore, truth resides in all. There is no need for external validation or authorization; “The authority to act and to be comes from within.”⁶³ I-an-I consciousness “breaks [the] cycle of anthropological poverty as through the process of ‘intersubjectivity’ a new collective self emerges—a new self in terms of collaboration

first forged the movement, the essential core of Rastafari as consciousness of one’s divine identity still remains.” (3). Ennis B. Edmonds, *Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). (Heretofore, *Introduction*.) Rex Nettleford, for his part, proclaims, “the divinity of all black people—in fact, of all human beings—here becomes the basis for the equality, liberty, dignity, mutual respect, and equity in terms of access to economic resources, and all the values claimed by civil or democratic society but yet to be achieved in what, to exiles from Africa, is Babylon.” See Nettleford, “Discourse,” 315, 316. Also see Adrian Anthony McFarlane, “The Epistemological Significance of ‘I-an-I’ as a Response to Quashie and Anancyism in Jamaican Culture” in *Chanting Down Babylon*, pp. 107-121. The contingency of identity (of Rastafarian cultural and communal construction and co-constitution) is but one reason why the Rastafari re-membling of Samson, which I proffer in chapter 5, might also be read in conversation with the experience of the Yehudim.

⁶¹ Noel Leo Erskine, *From Garvey to Marley: Rastafari Theology* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007), 90.

⁶² In his Introduction to Rastafari, Ennis Edmonds explains, “Since ‘I’ indicates their consciousness of the ‘godness’ that inheres in the self, they boldly affirm their physical characteristics, African past, and creative ability to fashion their own culture to mirror their sense of self” (2). Ennis B. Edmonds, *Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). (Heretofore, *Introduction*)

⁶³ Erskine, 90.

and cooperation.”⁶⁴ I-an-I is the one exploding into the many, much like Glissant’s vision of the creolized archipelago.⁶⁵ I-an-I signifies agency, livity, and divinity and, in light of Glissant’s later articulation of a poetics of Relation, as a globalized Caribbean discourse, I understand the movement’s central philosophy and its global resonance and reach to provide an illustration of Glissant’s poetics and rhizomatic theorizing of Relation identity.⁶⁶

What’s in a Name: Rastafarian Routinization as Rootinization?

The origins of the Rastafarian movement are often traced back to the 1930’s and depicted as the cultural and political response of Caribbean folks to Western European (predominantly French) domination and oppression of African peoples. Under the charismatic leadership of Leonard Howell and the influence of Marcus Garvey, the movement grew in the 50’s and 60’s, invigorated by the Pan-African, Pan-Caribbean Marxist, as well as the reggae rhythms of Bob Marley, and was later energized through intellectual intervention and activism of Walter Rodney.⁶⁷ As we just saw, Rasta is rooted

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 33. “The Caribbean, as far as I am concerned, may be held up as one of the places in the world where Relation presents itself most visibly, one of the explosive regions where it seems to be gathering strength.”

⁶⁶ There are distinct differences politically, culturally, and socio-economically between Jamaica, Rastafarian movement technically began and Martinique, therefore, I would not want to conflate the two islands nor represent the entire Caribbean as a uniform collective. As Glissant emphasizes, the Caribbean is a creolized archipelago, which is united in its difference and Diversity.

⁶⁷ The history of Rastafarian poets and prophets is of course much more complex and convoluted. The Barbadian poet George Lamming, for instance, has also been credited with influencing the movement in the 50s and 60s. His most notable work, *In the Castle of My Skin* (its title taken from Derek Walcott’s 1949 poem “Epitaphs for the Young: XII Cantos”) was first published in 1953 and through the depiction of a young man’s coming-of-age narrative, Lamming tells the story of the Caribbean. It is poetically and politically

in Africa (*Zion*) and the struggle of its peoples for identity and empowerment in the wake of slavery and a world mystified and stupefied by the Babylon system, as well as its relationship to the Bible. Likewise, integral to the movement is the claim of the Messiahship of Haile Selassie I, King of Ethiopia; a notion which, in fact, arose from Garvey's biblical interpretation, his prophecy of a black king, and understanding of Ethiopia's divine providence.⁶⁸ In this movement, I further engage the roots of the Rastafari through some of its major influences, its philosophy and practice, and consider whether the thrust toward routinization betrays Root infiltration. In the next node, I will

revolutionary. Lamming also offered his own re-membering of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," which he published in *The Pleasures of Exile*. Interestingly, Lamming identifies the "discovery of the novel by West Indians as a way of projecting the inner experiences of the West Indian community" to be the third most important event in West Indian history; the first being Columbus's discovery of the region and the second the end of slavery and migration of Indian and Chinese laborers that resulted (37). See George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1953) and *The Pleasures of Exile* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960).

⁶⁸ To be clear, Garvey's prophecy has never been confirmed through any of his speeches. His only recorded reference to the Bible as foretelling the coronation of an African King is in the Psalms and his statement, which he published in his Jamaican newspaper, *The Blackman*, is as follows: "The Psalmist prophesied that Princes would come out of Egypt and Ethiopia would stretch forth her hands unto God. We have no doubt that the time is now come. Ethiopia is now really stretching forth her hands. This great kingdom of the East has been hidden for many centuries, but gradually she is rising to take a leading place in the world and it is for us of the Negro race to assist in every way to hold up the hand of Emperor Ras Tafari." See Rupert Lewis, "Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians: Continuity and Discontinuity," in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 145-58. For Garvey's full speech on African's mental emancipation, see Marcus Mosiah Garvey, speech at Menelik Hall, Nova Scotia, 1937, quoted by Ken Jones, "The Black in the Flag," *Daily Gleaner*, April 4, 1996. For other interpretations of and reflections upon Garvey's deployment of the biblical prophecy in support of Emperor Selassie's divine authority, see Ahuma Bosco, "Rastafari! How Relevant?" *Horizon* (November 8, 1995). Dovo also quotes Garvey ("The day a King will be crowned in African will herald the dawn of Africa's awakening") in his essay. For more on Rodney's perspective on the Rastas, see Walter Rodney, *The Groundings With My Brothers* (Newark: Frontline, 2001). Originally published in 1969. As such, Walter Rodney and others saw within the Rastafari the capacity to protect the Antilles from further foreign domination (Campbell, 6)

turn once again to the Bible and Rastafarian reading strategies. Now, let us consider the ostensible “origins” of the movement and various depictions of the communities and peoples who represent the Rastafari.

Scholars of the movement often identify a sea change in popular perceptions of Rastafarian culture in the 1970s.⁶⁹ Prior to the 70s, Rastafarians were often associated with criminal activity and seen as unsanitary, ganja-smoking “Natty Dreads.”⁷⁰ As the movement gained steam and appeal through the reggae music of Bob Marley in particular, however, it has become “one of the most popular Afro-Caribbean religions of the late twentieth century...[and] one of the leading cultural trends in the world.”⁷¹ Rasta scholars typically understand the emergence of Rastafari to have been influenced by two concurrent events: the coronation (and subsequent divinizing) of Emperor Haile Selassie I (*Ras Tafari*) of Ethiopia and “a rise in black consciousness and black activism throughout the Americas (as well as Africa) after World War I.”⁷² The movement, Ennis

⁶⁹ Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, et al. eds., *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 2, 9. According to Leonard Barrett in *Soul-Force*, the five most influential events in this shift during the 1950s and 60s were the Ethiopian World Fellowship’s (EWF) “increased activity in Jamaica in 1953; the Rastafarians’ 1958 convention; Rastaleader national emergencies in 1959 and 1960; the University of the West Indies’ interest in the movement in 1960; and Jamaican delegations to African countries in 1961 and 1962” (7)—in addition, in 1966 Emperor Selassie visited Kingston (8).

⁷² Ennis B. Edmonds, *Introduction*, 7. Also see Murrell, “Introduction,” 2. Leonard Howell, an early founder of the movement, is credited with having attached the prefixal *Jah* to the honorific *Ras Tafari*. Selassie was then, and even still by many Rastas, regarded as “Christ, the black Messiah whose promised return or ‘second coming’ the emperor fulfills” (6). Quoting Sistren Barbara Blake Hannah, who contends that Rastas are in fact Christians and a direct link to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Murrell points out, “the words Ras (Tafari) means head = Christ, and, therefore, any man who claims he is a Ras, must identify himself with Christ.” Not only so, but “Haile Selassie means: Power of the Trinity, which Trinity is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” See

Edmonds illuminates, is “part of the same cultural wave of the 1920s and 1930s that produced the Harlem Renaissance, the *Indigenist* and *Noirist* movements in Haiti, *Afro-Cubanismo* in Cuba, *Consciência Negra* among black Brazilians, *Negritude* in the French Antilles, Paris, and West Africa, and a host of liberation and independence movements across Africa.”⁷³ The Rastafarian movement, however, is undeniably a localized (particular) iteration of resistance to (the domination of) Western capitalist ideology (*Babylon*) with global (universal) ramifications, a result of its transnational manifestations. The “true Rasta,” Murrell writes, holds Selassie as deity, Marcus Garvey as his prophet, follows the way, grows dreadlocks, rejects Babylon society’s customs, and “looks on his [*sic*] blackness and sees that it is good and struggles to preserve it.”⁷⁴ Considered a religion for legal purposes (*and* derived from both Christian and African traditional religions) Murrell avers, Rastafari is more accurately understood as “a *tertium quid*, a different kind or religious species among New World (if not New Age) or nontraditional religions, one that is distinctly Caribbean.”⁷⁵

Rather than a religion, Murrell submits, Rastafari is

a cultural movement, “a system of beliefs and a state of consciousness,” that advances a view of economic survival and political organization and structure that challenges the dominant cultural political “narrative” (ideology) in the “politics of Babylon”...“a constellation of ambiguous

Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, “Introduction,” *Chanting Down Babylon*, 3. Also see Barbara Blake Hannah, “Misunderstanding Rastafari,” *Sunday Herald* (April 4, 1993): 5A.

⁷³ Edmonds, *Introduction*, 7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2. Murrell is actually quoting Seretha Rycenssa here.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4. Murrell elucidates the “Africanisms” within Jamaican culture that have influenced Rastafari “beliefs and practices...[which are] Myalism, convince cult, revivalism (Zion), Bedwardism, Pocomania, and Burru (all Afro-Jamaican religious and cultural traditions).”

symbols which today has the power to focalize and even mediate certain socio-cultural tensions that have developed on a global scale.”⁷⁶

Murrell’s perspective is no doubt highly influenced by his own conservative evangelical Christian views, but his representation of Rasta as third kind rather than religion is an opening rather than a foreclosure; not to mention it bears resonances with χώρα, Plato’s τρίτος γένος. Rasta’s African-centered ideology exposes the ways African history, like History and the Bible, has been manipulated and distorted in Western representations, obscuring Africa’s “contribution to the origin of Western civilization” and to the world.⁷⁷ This intention is evinced not only in reggae and Rastafari reasoning and their rememberingings of history, folktale, and biblical stories, but by the numerous, primarily diasporic African and Afro-Caribbean, intellectuals who have and continue to work toward producing histories and scholarship on the movement in order to educate and raise awareness about Rastafari’s roots, epistemology, politics, and diverse global representations. Darren Middleton, in *Rastafari and the Arts*, attempts to study Rastafari as religion but the caveats, disclaimers, and intellectual acrobatics required to do so only prove the movement’s singularity and evasion of such categorization, which permit its study as a discrete religion.⁷⁸ Rastafari, like khora, is a third kind; a diverse (creolized) archipelagic communal body, a poetic, affective assemblage, and a new thing altogether. Rasta is an other-wise that must be engaged as such.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Murrell is citing Carole Yawney (“Rasta Mek a Trod,” 161) in the closing quotation.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 5. He continues, “Long before the term Afrocentricity came into popular use in the United States, Jamaican Rastafarians had embraced the concept as the most important recipe for naming their reality and reclaiming their black heritage in the African diaspora.”

⁷⁸ See Darren J. Middleton, *Rastafari and the Arts: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

In the introduction to *Rastafari in the New Millennium*, Michael Barnett maps the trajectory of the movement and makes some conjectures about where the Rastafari are (headed) “in the New Millennium.”⁷⁹ Barnett offers a timeline of the Rastafari Movement and adumbrates five epochs, from 1930 to the first quarter of the twenty-first century.⁸⁰ The scholar emphasizes the way in which Rastafari, from its inception, “has always been characterized by its heterogeneity and has never really been a homogenous entity, even in the very early days of its existence in Jamaica.”⁸¹ The heterogeneity that inheres in the movement is most often what Rastafarian scholars like Murrell, Edmonds, Barnett, and Barry Chevannes seek to foreground, most likely for the ways in which the Rastafari have all too often been misinterpreted and misrepresented through broad generalizations and inaccurate, minimalist stereotypes. In fact, with the exception of its having a singular (messianic) figurehead, His Imperial Majesty (H.I.M.) Haile Selassie I, the movement has always been radically polyvocal, encouraging diversity through its multiple leaders, prophets, and groundings, its houses and mansions.⁸²

⁷⁹ Michael Barnett, ed. *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Reader* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Loc. 136-144. The First is from November 1930, marked by the coronation of “His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I,” to 1948; the Second was from 1948 to April 1966; the Third, July 1966 to 1981; the Fourth lasted from 1981 to September 2007; and the Fifth, September 2007 to the present day.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Loc. 134.

⁸² As Eleanor Wint posits, “there is no unanimity on the biblical point of view relative to His Imperial Majesty,” some see H.I.M. as a great man, others as a prophet, and still others as the Son of God” (Wint 159). See Eleanor Wint (in consultation with members of the Nyabingi Order), “Who is Haile Selassie? His Imperial Majesty in Rasta Voices,” in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 159-165. Order(s), mansion(s) and house(s) are all monikers used to indicate Rastafari groundings, which are communities of like-minded Rastafari. My omission of the various Rasta communities within the history of the movement is in no way meant to disregard their importance but they are many and some, such as the Coptic Rastafari, have diluted. Unfortunately, due to the scope of this project I am unable

Contrary to assumptions and pronouncements of a romantic past or unified origin, there has never even been one Rasta theology and this is, in fact, one of the most important points Barnett makes through his outlining of the epochs. The other is the evidence of the movement's routinization.⁸³ A Weberian notion, routinization signifies "the process by which an emergent charismatic movement institutionalizes itself and secures a permanent existence."⁸⁴ (It is in no way surprising that a German sociologist would develop such a definitively Root paradigm.) Often catalyzed by the death of a charismatic leader, according to Max Weber, routinization typically occurs when a nascent group is able, through "routine," to establish itself in a society rather than smolder and die out. While Barnett lauds the movement for its historical and consistent diversity, he, like Barrett and Chevannes, considers routinization to be the key to the Rastafarian's future success and endurance.⁸⁵ According to Barnett, now that the movement is in its fifth epoch, it is either headed toward "further fragmentation and dilution of its potential potency or toward greater unification, in which case it will be able to achieve many of its goals and objectives."⁸⁶ For these scholars, then, in order for the Rastas to maintain power and promise as a revolutionary movement, they must unite

to give them each they time and respect they deserve. For a brief but comprehensive overview of the various Rasta houses and mansions, see Edmonds, *Introduction*, 62-70.

⁸³ Ibid., Loc. 224. The most salient "convincing" example for Barnett (and Chevannes, whose research he's appealing to here) is their shifting views on death. Originally, Rastawo/men were to "have nothing to do with the dead in any capacity whatsoever. This, of course, comes directly from Nazirite law and prohibitions in Numbers 6:1-21.

⁸⁴ Ennis B. Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*. New York: Oxford University Press (2003): 3. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 3 vols., eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster, 1968), 1, 246.

⁸⁵ See Barrett, 146-166. According to Barrett, the Rasta's routinization up to the 60's was ambivalent. In the 1960s, the Back to Africa ideology shifted to "liberation before migration," which led to routinization (160). In the updated version of *The Rastafarians*,

⁸⁶ Ibid., Loc. 223.

through the development of a more routine and cohesive and coherent way of life. Is this, however, oxymoronic? Is it possible for the Rastafari to maintain radical diversity and/in resistance to Western convention while seeking greater unity and acceptance within society? A question, as we shall see in this node, which has no uncomplicated answer, but instead opens up ever more opportunity for engagement.

Long before Murrell and Barnett, Leonard E. Barrett and Barry Chevannes were writing about the Rastafari. In *The Rastafarians*, originally published in 1977, Barrett identifies the movement as a cult rather than a religion or cultural movement, which reflects more the times, the state of the movement in the 70s and Barrett's own positionality at the time.⁸⁷ While Barrett's efforts to provide a succinct answer to the question "Who are the Rastafarians?" in some ways occludes recognition and representation of the movements diversity (a point which precedes even an introductory elucidation of their belief system in most scholarly representations), his research was groundbreaking and his goal, to raise awareness about the movement, was achieved. In the introduction, Barrett is unambiguous,

⁸⁷ Leonard E. Barrett, Sr. *The Rastafarians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 1. To be clear, however, Barrett is unequivocal about the way in which Rastafari is a Jamaican materialization of African religious traditions within the Caribbean. According to Barrett, there is an "African religious mold, firmly rooted during slavery, [which] has not been dislodged by missionary religions for many reasons." He continues, "African religious traditions take into consideration not only one's intellect, but also one's emotions, the mental and the visceral. African religion is not a Sunday-go-to-church religion, but one that participates with all of nature—both the living and the dead. An awareness is found not only of the gods and spirits, but also of demons and powers who can harm the living. The majority of Jamaicans retain this level of belief" and the Rastafari are no exception. Rastafari is a Rastas religion and religion is "a total involvement for them, not a mental exercise...[where] one lives, moves, and has one's being" (27). In the words of Anthony McFarlane, Rastas "see no difference between being, knowing, and doing. This ontology underpins Rasta theory of knowledge and sense of responsibility. For one to know, one must be; and for one to do anything (efficaciously), one must know" (McFarlane, 117).

The Rastafarian cult is a messianic movement unique to Jamaica. Its members believe that Haile Selassie, former Emperor of Ethiopia, is the Black Messiah who appeared in the flesh for the redemption of all Blacks exiled in the world of White oppressors. The movement views Ethiopia as the promised land, the place where Black people will be repatriated through a wholesale exodus from all Western countries where they have been in exile (slavery). Repatriation is inevitable, and the time awaits only the decision of Haile Selassie.⁸⁸

An original contribution to Caribbean studies, as one of the first major publications on the Rastafari, Barrett's work highlights the paradox of the Rastafari's integration of Jamaican native religions even as they explicitly reject many aspects of Jamaican culture (including Jamaican nationality), due to Western European influence.⁸⁹ One of Barrett's more outstanding interventions is his exposure of the catastrophic repercussions of Jamaican cultural deprivation at the hands of colonialism and capitalism and his ideas on the necessary conditions for cultural (re)invigoration.

The Rastafari are, for Barrett (who is himself a Rasta man), a paragon of the creative struggle for survival and cultural persistence within the Caribbean. Invested in "the nature and dynamics of [Rastafari as] a millenarian-messianic movement and its function and impact on a typical Caribbean community," Barrett submits, that messianism and millenarianism are *only* beneficial as tools for the revitalization of a community and cannot be sustained as belief systems.⁹⁰ Like the scholars named above, Barrett contends that the Rastafari must move beyond the rhetoric phase in order to establish themselves as a viable and discrete religion and that this establishment is contingent upon the Rastafari incorporating the very thing they have historically and

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸⁹ A paradox that mirrors the Rastafari's explicit rejection of the Babylon system and implicit absorption of its heteropatriarchal paradigm.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xi, 264.

notoriously rejected: routinization.⁹¹ As a counterculture movement that will “not easily submit to any organization whose attitudes remind them of aspects against which they have developed psychic resistance,” however, Barrett argues that at this moment in history, the Rastafari need to organize.⁹² As he sees it, they necessitate a structure that can “provide for them a framework in which they can feel at home,” while also ensuring their survival and perpetuity.⁹³ As a Rastafarian, Barrett is deeply invested in their structural unification in order that their message and vision might facilitate socio-economic and political transformation, on a global scale. They “point the way to new patterns of society...[with] clear visions of where society should be going...[and] a dynamic, which if given the right channeling, can create possibilities beyond expectations.”⁹⁴ While Barrett’s panegyric proposition may seem idyllic, it is not a prevarication, nor is Barrett alone in his sentiments. Other Rasta scholars and intellectuals have sincerely believed in the strength and promise of the movement, which has emerged

⁹¹ Sociologists and Religion scholars of the Rastafari movement such as Barrett, Chevannes, and Barnett, are working with Max Weber’s theory of routinization, which submits that a charismatic movement cannot be sustained without social organization. See Weber’s *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations* (New York: The Free Press, 1947) and *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963). While his reductionist views may be an occupational hazard and a sign of the times (most likely a combination of both), Barrett’s work has had great influence upon the field. In spite of its limitations, *The Rastafarians* addresses the emergence, ideology, societal interactions, and impact of Rastafarians in Jamaica and the Western world. He has received more notoriety, however, for his other publications on African religious traditions and/in the Americas, *Soul-Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1974) and *The Sun and the Drum: African Roots in Jamaican Folk Tradition* (Kingston: Sangster’s Book Stores, 1976). Murrell, as a Rastafarian, seems to have been seeking legitimacy for the movement as he aged, for in his 1997 edition, he understands routinization to have been successful for he concedes that the Rastafarian movement had become “Jamaica’s newest religion” (Murrell, 270).

⁹² Barrett, 260.

⁹³ Ibid., 260-261.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 263.

in the intersections and interstices of discourse and power and always with the purpose of communal and self-formation and/as creative expression.

The late Barry Chevannes, ostensibly the foremost Jamaican scholar of the Rastafari, understood the movement to have developed out of Revivalism and in resistance to Babylon.⁹⁵ Chevannes considers the Rasta resonant with Revivalism “the worldview of the Jamaican peasantry, the direct descendants of ‘those who came’ after Columbus, the Africans forced into slavery” and argues that “the driving force in its formation was their determination to make the best of this new situation in their own terms, which meant resistance to European slavery and colonialism, both physical and mental.”⁹⁶ Since the rise of the movement, Rastafari have considered themselves and all diasporic Africans to be *exiles* in Babylon, “destined to be delivered out of captivity by a return to ‘Zion,’ that is, Africa, the land of our ancestors, or Ethiopia, the seat of Jah, Ras Tafari himself.”⁹⁷ Africans were taken captive, shackled, and deported and dissolved “in the belly of [a] boat...precipitat[ing them] into a nonworld,” transporting them across the Atlantic and into the so-called New World.⁹⁸ One-third of them reached the islands of the Caribbean, just under 700,000 went to Jamaica.⁹⁹ Jamaican society, Chevannes asserts, was formed and functioned through class and “color” stratification and while

⁹⁵ Barry Chevannes. *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994). (Particularly relevant are chapters 1-3 and 8-10) Chevannes not only traces the cultural roots and history of the movement but presents his extensive fieldwork. The book incorporates his fieldwork from 1974 and ‘75 while Chevannes was dissertating at Columbia University.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1. Chevannes wanted to locate the movement’s origin in the enslavement of over 10 million Africans between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, exhibiting the complex reality in which he was operating as he researched and wrote, for his work betrays the influence of the Western European Root in his own intellectual development.

⁹⁸ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 6.

⁹⁹ Chevannes, *Rastafari*, 2.

emancipation in 1834 brought the opportunity for social transformation and “the consolidation of the coloreds [*sic*] as a political force,” racial prejudice prevailed among all the practices and behaviors that originated under slavery.¹⁰⁰ Chevannes also notes that while black slaves became free peasants this transformation did not promise social or financial success nor preclude further impoverishment; “No matter how industrious and socially differentiated the slave descendants in Jamaica were, very few were able to move up the ranks of the social order to the top, for color provided the principal stumbling block.”¹⁰¹

Chevannes presents an extensive exposition on the history of Jamaican society and religion as well as the resistance, rebellion and cultural reconstruction efforts of “the Jamaican peasantry,” highlighting the dehumanization of diasporic Africans through the virulent Western European colonial systems of slavery, racism, and capitalism *as well as* their creativity and resilience. Each factor (and their insidious imbrication) was in its own way evidence of the omnipresence of the white colonial oppressor and influenced all African resistance movements, but the Rastafarian movement, has been a particularly radical and generative iteration.¹⁰² Influenced by the Maroons and Myalism, the Rastafari

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰² For the Rastafari, then, the Babylon system is resident within Jamaican society and can be seen in the government, economy, and larger culture. For instance, while Glissant himself and Walcott have embraced the spirit of Carnavalesque, the Rasta movement has publically decried Carnival. Rastafarians distinguish themselves not only in their rejection of Official social mores, but by refusing traditions which began in and are performed by Caribbean folk—since both represent, according to a Rastafarian epistemology, an acquiescence to the rules and roles of the Master’s House and to “Babylon.” (Ironically, Glissant himself turns to William Faulkner’s deployment of Grottesque as exemplary in its exposure of the hypocrisy, racism, and paradoxical prejudices so rampant in the White Plantation South. See Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.)

were (in)famous for their refusal to conform or contribute to modern society, “the labor market world of ‘Babylon’.”¹⁰³ At times residing in communal compounds in the hills, like the Marooners, who defied their colonial captors, and also exhibiting the Revivalism of the African religion, Myal, through dancing, singing, ecstatic prayer, and periods of vigorous drumming, the Rastafari are themselves an embodiment of creolité.¹⁰⁴ The very divinity of Emperor Selassie and his status as Messiah, Chevannes asserts, “gives Black people a sense of being one with, of sharing in an attribute of God”—an existential statement about God’s blackness that has defined the movement from the 1930s.¹⁰⁵ Of course, related to this point (but secondary to the influence of rebellion and religion), the anthropologist also acknowledges the grave significance of the idealization of Africa (as Zion), the “Back to Africa” ideas of Marcus Garvey as well as the role of conversion.¹⁰⁶ While repatriation was still relatively prevalent in the 70s (when Chevannes interviewed the Rastafari he represents in his monograph), over time, returning to Africa has become more a spiritual symbol than a literal event as the Rastafari have routinized. In many ways, then, while the Rastafari remain rooted in Africa, it is always in (rhizomatic) Relation to the world, and specifically to their diasporic context.

¹⁰³ Chevannes, *Rastafari*, 76.

¹⁰⁴ See Chevannes, 11-15, 17-23. Chevannes (who was himself highly influenced by the Western rootedness of historiography) contends that though the Rastafari may not identify themselves as a religion (a Western European concept), the movement inhabits the intersections of rebellion and religion.

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence O. Bamikole, “Rastafari in Philosophy and Praxis,” in *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, Loc. 1674. The biblical text often cited to support God’s existential and ontological blackness is Jeremiah 8:21: “For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt; I am black; as astonishment hath taken hold of me.” This, however, is but one of many biblical texts to which Rastas appeal in support of Jah’s prioritizing of Ethiopia, Africa, and Africana peoples.

¹⁰⁶ On Africa’s idealization see Chevannes, *Rastafari*, 33, 87; on Garveyism see pp. 41, 91, 94-8; 99-110 (Garvey myths and not what they tell us about Garvey but about the Jamaican people); and on Forms of Conversion see 110-118.

Like Barrett, in his more recent interventions, Chevannes explicated the ways in which the evolution of Rastafarian views toward repatriation and efforts toward the sort of organization Barnett and Barrett anticipated are evidence of its successful routinization.¹⁰⁷ In the case of the Rastafari, in 1975 Emperor Selassie died and only six years later the movement's most formative early leader Leonard Howell and the legendary Bob Marley passed away, leading the fledgling movement to grow and even gain momentum, in Jamaica, the Caribbean, and ultimately throughout the world. Edmonds title says it all, from the 1970s to the twenty-first century, the Rastafari went from being Jamaica's *outcasts to culture bearers*, influencing its creative cultural (self) expression. Edmonds employs the terms *routinization* and *entrenchment* interchangeably and credits Bob Marley, and the almost universal appeal of Reggae music, with influencing a sea-change/transformation in popular consensus on the Rastafari.¹⁰⁸ He warns, however, that the charisma of individual Rastafari leaders such as Howell and Marley must not eclipse charisma as a "collective social phenomenon...generated by convergences of social and historical forces."¹⁰⁹

Like Chevannes, Edmonds seeks a more practical/pragmatic approach to the Rasta's routinization as a gradual progression. According to Chevannes, there are two processes through which routinization is achieved: "the creation of an administration of roles and functions to replace the effectiveness of the personality of the founder, and the

¹⁰⁷ Chevannes, "Rastafari and the Coming of Age: The Routinization of the Rastafari Movement in Jamaica" in *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, Loc. 232-462. Henceforth "Routinization."

¹⁰⁸ Edmonds, *Rastafari*, 2. Edmonds actually prefers entrenchment, his appropriation of the concept according to its identification with secure, firm, or solid establishment.

¹⁰⁹ Edmonds, 117, 118.

internal adjustments aimed at finding a *modus vivendi* with the rest of society.”¹¹⁰

Edmonds separates these two into three: the movement’s development of a unitive ethos, its capacity to find harmony with society more broadly, and the Rastafari’s influence on “the evolution of Jamaica’s indigenous popular culture.”¹¹¹ Though the Rastafari are unabashedly counter-culture, in their sundry iterations, Rastafarians in Jamaica and around the world have found ways in which to function within society (even when “outside” its walls), while still maintaining a peaceful relationship with the state. In fact, as “the recognized voice of the poor and dispossessed and the creative edge of Jamaica’s indigenous culture,” the Rasta’s ideological rejection of the social conventions of modern society in no way precludes their acceptance by and cultural influence upon Jamaican society.¹¹²

Both Edmonds and Chevannes identify Rastafari as a revitalization movement, drawing from Anthony Wallace’s influential 1956 article in which he defines the term as “a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of society to construct a more satisfying culture.”¹¹³ Chevannes expands upon the impetus, which “arises from a disjuncture between people’s mazeway and the social reality they confront.” The mazeway is “the mental image that everyone has of the society, the culture, and the self” and altering the mazeway entails revitalization or “changing the total Gestalt of [an individual or communal] image of self, society and culture, of nature and body, and ways

¹¹⁰ Chevannes, “Routinization,” Loc. 232.

¹¹¹ Edmonds, *Rastafari*, 3.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹³ See Anthony Wallace, “Revitalization Movements,” *American Anthropologist* 58 (Apr. 1956): 265.

of action.”¹¹⁴ Babylon society was inimical to the well-being of Black people in the Caribbean, who “became sandwiched between their maligned African ways, which came naturally, and the European ways, which were held out as the best of human civilization,” a tension which, Edmonds contends, “gave rise to the question of identity.”¹¹⁵ Even years after emancipation, the Rastafari deliberately and continually cho(o)se to defy and overcome colonialism, “beating down Babylon” through the assertion and expression of their African ancestry and selfhood and the refusal to operate according to its norms, values, and mores.¹¹⁶

Routinization does not signal assimilation and both scholars are explicit in their affirmation that Rastafarians continue to be skeptical of “politriks” or “polytricks” and with rare exception seem to steer clear of governmental offices.¹¹⁷ Chevannes contends that in order to adapt to their cultural milieu while still maintaining their identity as counter-culture, the Rastafari have actively shifted their communal views on repatriation.¹¹⁸ The people of Jamaica took on the “children of Israel” trope with which

¹¹⁴ Chevannes, “Routinization,” 236.

¹¹⁵ Edmonds, 53.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41, 42. As Edmonds, notes repeatedly throughout the study, even Rastafarian routinization is not characterized by the traditional Weberian features, leading Edmonds to appeal to the Rastafari as not just an anomaly but as a corrective to Weber’s theory. (See pp. 119ff.)

¹¹⁷ See Edmonds, 49; Chevannes, “Routinization” 441. Edmonds writes, “it is not the art of statecraft, but the art of deception, machination, and manipulation” and later asserts it is not only deceptive but divisive (50). Chevannes references the junior minister of national security in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as well as the Rastafari in New Zealand elected to parliament, but oddly does not offer their names. Neither are still in office, but the latter is Green Party list MP Nándor Tánzacs. For an exposition on the Rasta movement in New Zealand see W. G. Hawkeswood’s Master’s thesis, “I’n’I Ras Tafari: Identity and the Rasta Movement in Auckland New Zealand,” University of Auckland, 1983.

¹¹⁸ Chevannes, “Routinization,” 370. One of its cornerstones, Rastafarian repatriation is deeply indebted to Garvey’s vision for the Back-to-Africa movement, which held that the

enslaved Africans identified, understanding their true home not to be Jamaica, which they equated with slavery and suffering, but Africa.¹¹⁹ However, Chevannes deftly asserts, “repatriation was not the ideal for everyone. As far back as the eighteenth century, the struggle against slavery was not aimed at returning to the homeland, but at freedom.”¹²⁰ While repatriation holds a central place in his earlier monograph, like the transition within the movement, Chevannes ascribes to a different view in later work. Still asserting that repatriation was, from its inception, a cornerstone of the Rastafari movement, he elucidates its sidelining by “the more important imperative of convincing an incredulous populace that a Black man, recently crowned King of Kings in a ceremony attended by the British crown, was the Messiah, the Son of God, and therefore one of the persons of the Holy Trinity.”¹²¹ In “Rastafari,” Chevannes presents Rastafari in the twenty-first century as focusing more upon a spiritual understanding of repatriation rather than a miraculous event.¹²² He expounds, “there is strong evidence to suggest that the movement is trending toward reconciling the hope of return with a life in Jamaica made more meaningful by its realization of a spiritual connectedness with Africa.”¹²³ Chevannes contends that the spiritual trend regarding repatriation “will grow, because Rastafari has in large measure succeeded in forcing a change in the mazeway of Blacks.”¹²⁴ A Rasta, in

descendants of former slaves would return to and rebuild the continent, building Africa “into a powerful empire capable of commanding the respect of the rest of the world.” He also highlights the transition in their views on handling the dead as evincing this shift.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 357.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 364.

¹²¹ Ibid., 378.

¹²² Ibid., 449.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 466. While always incisive, Chevannes essay in *Chanting Down Babylon* is not as pertinent to the foci of the current exam. The volume’s two essays on Rastafari resistance and identity: Ennis B. Edmonds’ “Dread ‘I’ In-a-Babylon: Ideological

fact, became a Member of Parliament in the last term of the People's National Party in Jamaica.¹²⁵ And the movement has not only transformed the mazeway of Blacks. One of the Rastafarian parliamentarians to which Chevannes alludes is none other than Nándor Tánzacs, an influential social ecologist, researcher, activist and active member of parliament as a Green Party representative from 1999-2008. Though Tánzacs is no longer in office, he is but one representative of the diverse identities and political approaches that constitute the Rastafarian community globally.

In a recent blog thread, The Guardian (UK) posed the question, "Can white people become Rastafarians?" While there were replies from all over the world, one response in particular provided a more nuanced perspective on the "white persons" connection to Africa and Rastafari. It was written by Simon Grady, also a New Zealander, who hails from Christchurch, but does not identify as Rasta. Grady's blog read,

This is such an interesting topic. I'm a white male living in New Zealand, born in 1968. But I am African as all people are African. The white person's ancestors left Africa 50,000 years ago. Northern latitudes favoured paler skin, and harsher climate favoured technological development. Eventually technology separated these people from nature (and God) to the degree that Babylon was born. Then our ancestors returned to Africa, thought themselves superior (partly due to technological achievement, and partly due to religion) and enslaved their own ancestors! This is my take. And so it was Bob Marley who reawakened in me the deep roots of ancestral African-ness. Now the true nature of Babylon becomes apparent. The heart stirs for an ancient

Resistance and Cultural Revitalization" (23-35) and Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Murrell's, "Rastas' Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Somebodieness" (36-54). Other relevant essays from the volume: Neil J. Savishinsky's "African Dimensions of the Jamaican Rastafarian Movement" (125-144); Rupert Lewis' "Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians: Continuity and Discontinuity" (145-158); Randal Hepner's "Chanting Down Babylon in the Belly of the Beast: The Rastafarian Movement in the Metropolitan Unity States" (199-216); and Roger Steffens' "Bob Marley: Rasta Warrior" (253-65).

¹²⁵ See jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20111230/lead/lead2.html

homeland. I am not a rasta. Though I might become one. The deity of HIM was a stumbling block. But all else in the philosophy is deeply beautiful. So this post speaks of the question about how a white person such as myself shall be relieved at the gates. Welcomed or shunned. This is humanities' moment.¹²⁶

Grady provides a brief synopsis of an idea that has gained traction within the movement, but has been present since its inception. Africa was deemed the “cradle of humankind” by UNESCO in 1999 after paleoanthropologists found the skeletal remains of the oldest known humans, but the Rastafari have no need for (Western European) scientific corroboration that “Africa is the mother of all nations.”¹²⁷ The Western European assertion of cultural and racial dominance through slavery and colonialism, which Grady represents, is exemplary of the technologies and/or apparatus developed by Western European racist hetero-patriarchy to legitimate dehumanization under the guises of divine appointment and authority. The Rastafari announce liberation for all from the dogmatic, dehumanizing, and disenfranchising structures of Western European episteme through the assertion of a common identity and humanity (and origin in Africa) with diverse and infinite expressions; where all peoples are in diaspora. Is this not, however, a claim to Root identity?

While the unifying force of the Rastafari movement is indisputably rooted in its appeal to Africa as origin and (as Chevannes and other have argued) the routinization of

¹²⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-1115,00.html> Accessed March 2, 2017. According to Grady's logic, the Western European assertion of cultural and racial dominance through slavery and colonialism and other racist apparatus/technologies might be likened to the legislating and authorizing of male domination over (and therefore appropriation of) female reproduction in Genesis 3:16. For more on Rastafari in New Zealand, see Edward Te Kohu Douglas and Ian Boxill, “The Lantern and the Light: Rastafari in Aotearoa (New Zealand), in *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, Loc. 470-835.

¹²⁷ van Dijk, “Twelve Tribes of Israel,” 2.

the Rastafari movement is contingent upon a symbolic return to Africa, the expansion, engagement, interest, and influence of the movement beyond Afro-Jamaicans and the Caribbean, illuminates the way in which two seemingly paradoxical identities within Rastafari, Root and Relation, do not exist in binary opposition, but are entirely compatible, and even complimentary. In fact, their entanglement seems a necessary ingredient in the growth, vitality and perpetuity of the Rastafarian movement, as they are to all archipelagic peoples. In this way, the Rastafarian movement, articulates and embodies Caribbean discourse as a poetics of Relation, where the centrality and recovery of African roots and heritage is revitalized by the constant challenge to reconceptualize those roots, not as single Root but as rhizome routes in Relation to the all-world, and especially in order to relate to the complex realities of life in diaspora.¹²⁸

Upon closer consideration, it appears the Rastafari find significance in inhabiting space, both in and beyond the Caribbean, through a common identity with manifold manifestations all in rhizomatic Relation to one another; and rhythm has been an integral part of this process. As the movement has developed so have ideas about the poetic and cultural force of reggae, its rhythmic intensities and affective resonance have in many ways displaced the desire for systematization, organization, and routinization. Therefore, in an effort to authentically engage the Rastafari as a political movement, a people, and a sacred/spiritual way of life, it behooves us to identify, honor and seek to understand the epistemological and philosophical roots that ground the movement, its diverse routes and various materializations and implicit commitment to multiplicity (within this unity), as

¹²⁸ See Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 14-26. Glissant addresses this entanglement in his essay "Reversion and Diversion." Reversion, according to Glissant, is "the obsession with a single origin...to consecrate permanence, to negate contact" (16).

well as the diversion (and a major discrepancy) resident within the movement: the gender hierarchical binary. In the next and final movement of this chapter, I will explore this divide, recent efforts to occupy the gap, and the way in which Samson's story illustrates this deleterious dichotomy. By way of introduction, however, I would like to briefly return to Rasta I-an-I philosophy as anti-colonial/Western European paradigm for creative self-determination and its import to the discourse on gender within the movement.

**Resistance, R(asta)evolution, and Re(ve)lation Within and Without:
The (Theo)Poetics of Relation I(-an-I)dentify and RastaWomanism**

Even as there has been a surge in Glissantian scholarship over the past two decades, the same holds true for the Rastafari, and the most recent trend for the latter has been in an effort to challenge the movement to embody the philosophical principles it professes. (Barnett, Chevannes, and even Edmonds work might be considered examples of this development.) A particularly evocative intervention, which brings continental philosophy and Rastafarian epistemologies into conversation, is Lawrence Bamikole's "Rastafari as Philosophy and Praxis," in which he interrogates and explores the West's (monopoly upon the) definition of philosophy and Rastafari as a practical and philosophical corrective. Taking a somewhat surprising direction, Bamikole does not argue that the Western definition of philosophy should be challenged, but instead finds a sort of middle-ground. Highlighting the "African intellectual positivists" argument that "the African thought system cannot pass for philosophy until it undergoes the rigorous and critical testing that Western philosophy endured," Bamikole, like Reiland Rabaka of African Diasporic Critical Theory, laments that distinctively "Caribbean Philosophy" has

not been respected or “recognized within the space as constituting a respectable philosophy in the academic sense.”¹²⁹ Bamikole does not, however, despise the (Western) standards by which philosophy has historically been determined, he soberly attends to the questions: “What is philosophy? Are there universal (normative) features of philosophy? Can Rastafari qualify as philosophy in the technical and academic senses of the word?” Then the historian inquires if it is possible to reconstruct Rastafari thought in order to “make it philosophical?”¹³⁰ He then proceeds *ad libitum* and quite convincingly to do just that.¹³¹

Bamikole first identifies the definition of philosophy to be contested, since the ancient Greeks first attempted to do so. While etymologically it means “the love of wisdom,” the implication of a fundamental, unchanging law was soon attached to it.¹³²

The definition has, as anything over time-space, undergone many changes and the old version is “almost entirely lost” but the “intuitive element” still exists, such that philosophy is “a kind of reflective thinking, not based on brute facts but requiring a systematic thought process, making use of human reason to bear upon such facts.”¹³³

While philosophy can obviously be defined in a “narrow more technical sense...one that

¹²⁹ Lawrence O. Bamikole, “Rastafari in Philosophy and Praxis,” in *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, Loc. 1482.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Loc. 1490.

¹³¹ While Bamikole’s approach may raise concerns, in that he is attempting to legitimate Rastafarian philosophy through a Eurocentric lens, his argument is, like Reiland Rabaka’s scholarship, nonetheless instructive and important in order to provoke deeper engagements between Africana, Afro-Caribbean, and continental philosophies.

¹³² *Ibid.*, Loc. 1497. Wisdom for the ancient Greeks, he writes, was “the knowledge of fundamental principles and laws, an awareness of that which was basic and unchanging, as opposed to those things which are transitory and changing.”

¹³³ *Ibid.*, Loc. 1503.

is critical, logical, analytical, systematic.”¹³⁴ Bamikole adopts both broad (worldview conception of philosophy) and the narrow senses of the word in explicating Rastafari as philosophy. The linchpin for Bamikole, however, is his utility of ethnophilosophy, or philosophy as a hermeneutics.¹³⁵ Applying “the hermeneutics method of philosophy to reflect upon Rastafari beliefs and practices, thereby fulfilling the primary task that Rastafari can be reconstructed to constitute a philosophy in the technical and academic senses.”¹³⁶ While Bamikole’s could be considered an assimilationist or even apologetic approach, it becomes apparent that his intention is an analytic intervention into the traditional methods of continental philosophy. The philosopher is unequivocally invested in challenging Western European philosophy and/through the Rastafari as the effective remedy to the West’s epistemological hegemony.

Juxtaposing the two forms of the personal pronoun, Bamikole sets the African/Rastafari notion of the “I” in contradistinction to the Western Cartesian self and proceeds thusly: if Descartes proposed, “I think therefore I am,” the Rasta “I” might best

¹³⁴ Ibid., Loc. 1511. The narrow sense is “used to indicate a particular methodology or specialized way of investigating and organizing ideas.”

¹³⁵ Ibid., Loc. 1539. “Rastafari do have identifiable commonalities that define them as a group,” which Bamikole classifies within ethnophilosophy.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Loc. 1561-1567. Philosophy as a hermeneutics, Bamikole expounds, “stakes traditional beliefs of a culture as ingredients or data for philosophical reflection” (1553). He, then, elucidates the three major features of philosophical hermeneutics, according to Smith and Blasé (1991): (1) “hermeneutics argues that there is no absolute ‘bottom line’ upon which to justify knowledge claims; hence, there is no possibility of certitude;” (2) “hermeneutics does not accept the idea that social reality is reality that exists independently of our interests and purposes. Reality is a social and, therefore, multiple construction;” and (3) “the goal of hermeneutics is not prediction and control, but rather to realize an interpretive understanding of the meanings people give to their own situations and their interactions with others” (1553-1561). Bamikole concedes that he is not the first African scholar to understand philosophical hermeneutics as the canon of African philosophy; his unique intervention, however, is the application of this framework to the Rastafari (1557, 1564).

be “encapsulated in John Mbiti's view that ‘I am because we are and because we are therefore I am.’”¹³⁷ As *bearers of relational thinking in its fullest*, in resistance to (the divisions of self and other dictated by) Babylon, the Rastafari replace the English first person pronoun with I-an-I; an expression which, in the words of Adrian McFarlane, “does not function simply as a protocol for all I-words; it is the means by which Rastas make all informed utterances related to their principles, cultic practices, and self-affirmation.”¹³⁸ It is how Rastas “communicate their basic philosophy or concept of themselves, their community, and the world.”¹³⁹ Not to mention the Rastafari belief in the divinity of all beings and, for this reason, Ennis Edmonds emphasizes,

Everyone is potentially a Rasta, because everyone is born with the divine essence. The true Rastas are those people who have discovered the divine principle or the God within. In Rastafarian terms, they are the ones who have ‘come into consciousness’ of Rastafari or their divine essence. I and I also connotes the oneness of all things. Since ‘I,’ in Rastafarian thought, signifies the divine principle, which is in all humanity, I and I is an expression of the oneness between two (or more) persons and between the speakers and God (whether Selassie or the God principle that rules in all creation).¹⁴⁰

As such, I-an-I becomes the fulcrum upon which Bamikole’s critique of and challenge to the movement hinges. Bamikole considers I-an-I to be a profoundly revolutionary philosophy, which is not often lived in reality—at least not in the Rastafari’s

¹³⁷ Ibid., Loc. 1590. Tackling the complex issues of identity and “self,” Bamikole presents the positions of the individualist school—in which the “self is robbed of identity by clinging to the norms of the community”—versus the collectivist school, where “the self realizes its identity by participating in communal norms” (Boedecker 2001), where the Rastafari would fall into the latter category (1582).

¹³⁸ McFarlane, 107.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Edmonds, 64.

contemporary pluralistic Caribbean context.¹⁴¹ The Caribbean is, Bamikole observes, “made up of different people divided along racial, social, cultural, and political lines,” which the Rastafari houses and mansions have heretofore left relatively undisturbed.¹⁴² The movement’s global expansion has had little influence upon the Rastafari’s worldview, which, Bamikole reasons, must shift with the shared world in which they reside; rather than exclusivism, Rasta’s must embrace multiculturalism as apposite to the survival and growth of their communal self.¹⁴³ Bamikole’s challenge to the Rastafari to unite and cooperate with other diverse peoples is in an effort to establish and secure their own identity for, he contends, “identity construction requires the recognition of our commonality with and difference from other human beings.”¹⁴⁴ Bamikole exhorts the Rastafari to embody their radically relational philosophical paradigm as “advocates for the principle of recognition,” rather than primordial identity.¹⁴⁵ In essence, they must be champions of Relation, in rhizomatic root, rather than Root identity.

¹⁴¹ Bamikole labels the Rastafari “fundamentalist,” and while there are indubitably fundamentalist houses, the movement’s scopious Diversity bespeaks otherwise. I do, however, resonate with his interrogation of the efficacy of Rastafari praxis; a critique that inheres in every Rastawomanist, womanist, and feminist critique of the movement. (See my exposition below.) For while it may be an influential cultural ideology, it is dubious how often it’s more radically inclusive ideas are lived. As his title suggests, Bamikole’s interrogation of and intent to enable Rastafari philosophy as praxis. Bamikole queries, “Has Rastafari lived to these ideals in practice?” Are they effective practitioners of their “alternative philosophy” (1650)?

¹⁴² Bamikole, 1658, 1665. It is hard to even place Bob Marley and the influence of Reggae music within this analysis, since it seems in so many ways to be an outlier—particularly in Bamikole’s analyses and conjectures.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 1597. Bamikole and his endorsement of “African personalism” rather than physical repatriation is rooted in his contention that Rastafari should “appeal to the spirit behind the traditional norms in Africa, their homeland” (1605) influenced as they are by Garvey, who rallied the people behind the idea of Africa—“Africa for Africans at home and abroad” (1613).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 1679.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 1620.

Ironically, Bamikole appeals to Chevannes' (1998) and Barnett's (2006) view that diversity within the Rastafarian houses and mansions (the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, the Nyabinghi, and the Twelve Tribes most prominently) have inhibited the movement's greater social impact upon Jamaica and the Caribbean. Bamikole submits that there is "strength in unity" and the one goal that unifies all Rastafarian orders is that of "reconnecting the Caribbean with its African roots."¹⁴⁶ He argues, therefore, that in order to effectively transmit their message, the movement should "put its own house in order," using this goal as a rally cry "to effect the necessary change in their spaces."¹⁴⁷ Then, once their unity is "secured," they may effectively reach out to "other racial groups to press for an alternative philosophy for their spaces."¹⁴⁸ While Bamikole exposes the destructive duplicity within the movement and proffers a practical solution, is the sort of organization and collective strategizing he advises a panacea or even a possibility for the Rastafari, who have thrived in diaspora and dispersion? While the reconnection of Rastafarians with their African roots is unequivocally a unifying goal, is it a necessary precursor to the movement offering "other racial groups" an alternative epistemology for "their spaces"? Does their diversity and diffusion and ostensible lack of unity preclude the Rastafarian's profoundly revolutionary influence upon peoples and communities both within and beyond Jamaica and the Caribbean? I believe history, as this dissertation, attest to the strength and validity of Bamikole's reasoning, and also signal other-wise. The profound potency of the Rastafarian movement and their message is through reconnection with their African roots

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1650, 1658.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 1658.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 1658.

offers a new epistemological route through the dissolution, or re-membering, of Root (identity) into Relation (identity) through an archipelagic epistemology, which actively and intentionally extends outward, reaching toward others in the recognition of the divine Oneness that is I-an-I. In other words, that the profound potency of the Rastafarian movement and their message as archipelological route to re-membering epistemology other-wise is the profound reverence for the divine dignity of all humanity and for the creative construction and expression of identity as always already a communal process.

Non-Western systems of thought, such as the Rastafari, reject the modern Western European notion of a human person as an atomic individual, who understands and operates in relationship as in a market economy. The alternative perspective, which the Rastafari represent, conceives of “persons as social beings who are closely knitted together in virtue of their personhood.”¹⁴⁹ The Rastafarian movement, in the words of Kwame Dawes, “is one of the most complex and insightful reactions to colonialism and the oppression of blacks that has emerged in the last hundred years.”¹⁵⁰ And through its assertion of the divinity that inheres in all people as children of Jah, it has become a universally accessible vehicle for resistance and Relation. As Ennis Edmonds observes, “Many people of all ethnic stripes, who find themselves marginalized by what they perceive as the oppressive and homogenizing values and institutions of their society, have found in Rastafari a means of resisting those values and institutions, and returning home to a sense of self, rooted in a divine relationship with Jah.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 1665.

¹⁵⁰ Edmonds, *Rastafari*, viii.

¹⁵¹ Edmonds, *Introduction*, 3. Edmonds suggests that with this power, “women who have paying jobs are likely to exert more influence over the mend in their households and to have more freedom to operate independently within the movement and the society.”

Regardless of the efficacy and plausibility of his recommendation Bamikole's exhortation for the expansion and embodiment of their philosophy as practice is poignant. Even as the Rastafari articulate and at times embody such a radical oralitutory and archipelogical epistemology, they are not immune to the epistemic entrapments or prejudices propagated by Western European cultures and institutionalized religions. As one Rastafari sistren put it, "Rastas can be as dogmatic, divisive, and exclusionary as Christians, Muslims, and the plethora of 'isms' which sire schisms."¹⁵² And another recently shared with me the paradox in which she exists, feeling honored and elevated on the one hand and devalued and diminished on the other.¹⁵³ Her sentiments evince one of the most problematic manifestations of the Rasta's detrimental duplicity within its groundings, their historically sexist approach to rhetoric, gender roles, and reasoning. Ironically, however, as Ennis Edmonds asseverates, women in Jamaica, including Rasta households, hold "the power of the purse" and "[i]n many instances, women are the only members of a Rastafarian household who are gainfully employed on a regular basis."¹⁵⁴ A factor which has no doubt led to the increase of women organizing Rasta events.¹⁵⁵

Obiagele Lake, Sylvia Wynter, Imani M. Tafari-Ama, Maureen Rowe, Carolyn Cooper, and Jeanne Christensen are some of the intellectuals who have taken on misogyny and misrepresentation within the movement from historical-anthropological and gender-critical approaches, Lake, Wynter, Cooper, and Christensen from outside,

¹⁵² McFarlane, 117. McFarlane cites Sister E. in their conversation in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, July 25, 1995.

¹⁵³ The author's conversation with Sister J. in Newark, New Jersey, U.S.A., June 3, 2017.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

Rowe and Tafari-Ama from within.¹⁵⁶ The work of the late Jeanne Christensen and the emerging analysis of Tafari-Ama, , represent the most recent developments in scholarly discourse on RastaWomen and serve as a pivotal link between Africana studies and religion, Afro-Caribbean philosophy, gender theory and feminism, what Christensen has deemed *RastaWomanism*.¹⁵⁷ Lake, for her part, addresses the doubly oppressive subject position of Rastafari women and, therefore, the double imperative to apply Rastafarian revolutionary politics, within the walls of the community as much as to (breaking down the walls of) Babylon.¹⁵⁸ Lake tackles head-on the hypocrisy within the Rastafari movement as it champions liberation while authorizing the subjugation of women. The anthropologist's interests are threefold: (1) interrogating the pre-colonial African hierarchical systems sanctioning the continued oppression of African and diasporic African Women like the RastaWomen, (2) exposing of the often unwitting collusion of Western feminism to this tyranny due to their ignorance and complicity and (3) educating feminists, the academy, and the general public about African and diasporic African "female/male relations" existing within and beyond the Rastafarian community.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Though the Rasta movement is undeniably one built upon patriarchy and mine is not an explicitly gender critical analysis or exegesis, I foreground women's bodies in honor of the work of Rastawomen such as Imani Tafari-Ama and, therefore, capitalize the "W" in RastaWoman like Jeanne Christensen.

¹⁵⁷ Jeanne Christensen, *Rastafarian Reasoning and the Rastawoman: Gender Constructions in the Shaping of the Rastafari Livivity* (Plymouth, UK: Lanham Books, 2014), 140.

¹⁵⁸ Obiagele Lake. *Rastafari Women: Subordination in the Midst of Liberation Theology* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1998). Lake, like Tafari-Ama, also has an essay in *Rastafari in the New Millenium*. In fact, her contribution, "Cultural Ideology and Rastafari Women," is an updated expansion on the monograph.

¹⁵⁹ See Lake, 8-13. Lake evokes Black feminists' contributions, particularly those of Collins (1990) and Giddings (1992), to address the necessity for "calling attention to the interlocking features of class, sexism, and racism" (9).

Attempting to evade further mystification or trivialization of the movement, Lake presents her work as “an exegesis of Rasta women that explicates the articulation between material and cultural power.”¹⁶⁰ Her main contention, then, is the paradoxical conditions in which RastaWomen must survive and thrive. Both revered and feared for their life-giving prowess in birth and pollution in menstruation, RastaWomen are honored and respected only “if they maintain the [very] rules that suppress them.”¹⁶¹ While RastaWomen are not without confidence or self-assertion, the presumption of their inferiority to men is an ever-present reality, as, Lake avers, “many Rastafarian women in Jamaica have internalized their own oppression.”¹⁶² Lake confronts slavery, capitalism, politics, and sexism within Jamaican society and their impact upon the Rastafari, but her ultimate aim is that her work with RastaWomen will contribute to the empowerment, coalition building and consciousness raising of women in the African diaspora and beyond.¹⁶³ The anthropologist concludes with these bold words spoken by one Rasta woman she encountered: “The Rasta woman is going to have to find a path which links her with all of her sisters in genuine sisterhood and relates more to the brothers as brothers and co-travelers and not the dominated and the dominator.”¹⁶⁴

Sylvia Wynter, for her part, inquires whether the concept of “One Love,” axial to the “politico-religious movement,” is rhetoric or reality.¹⁶⁵ Wynter is renowned for her

¹⁶⁰ Lake, 5.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 4, 7.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁶⁵ Wynter’s query is part of her review of *One Love*, a collection of poems and essays edited by Audvil King (including work by Althea Helps, Pam Wint, and Frank Hasfal). In a fashion for which the writer-philosopher has come to be known, she highlights the anthology (and King’s work in particular) as the convergence of critical and cultural

critical examination and theoretical interventions regarding the myriad ways in which colonialism and neo-colonialism has wreaked havoc upon Jamaica, its local industries, agriculture, governance, education, arts, etc. through “the indoctrination of western culture.”¹⁶⁶ Through “two alternate Governments,” the “progressive” sector was stimulated while the “traditional” sector (consisting primarily of the working class poor) was neglected, leading to a rapid “growth rate” and gross inequality. Wynter recounts,

The intervention of foreign corporations in all areas of industry meant that both before and after independence a substantial part of growth benefits accrued to foreign interests. In a supposedly expanding economy the rate of unemployment and underemployment grew; the increased costs of foodstuffs and necessities, all lead to a heightened consciousness of the growing separation in the society between the have-gots and the have-nots, the powerful and the powerless. Since the black majority remained the powerless have-nots, and entered an increasing dispossession, the imported slogan of ‘black Power’ fused with its imperative necessity.¹⁶⁷

Inspired by the ideology and teachings of Marcus Garvey, Rastafarians gave popular expression, through rhythm in Relation, to the daily collective struggle of middle and working class Jamaicans in resistance to their alienation, disempowerment, and extortion by the elite whites (honorary and otherwise).

In “Rastawoman as Rebel,” Imani Tafari-Ama, like Lake, presents case studies from Jamaica in the 80s and 90s. It bears noting, however, that unlike Lake—who stands

revolutions in Jamaica, where aesthetic, artistic expression is about cultural politics, and specifically African cultural survival, more than merit (93). Sylvia Wynter, “One Love—Rhetoric or Reality? Aspects of Afro-Jamaicanism.” *Caribbean Studies* 12, no. 3 (1972): 64-97. Also see Audvil King, ed., *One Love* (London: Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications, 1971).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 69. For a more detailed analysis of this process see Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 68.

as outsider to the Rastafari community—Tafari-Ama is herself a RastaWoman and their perspectives and interpretations undeniably reflect their positionality. In a conversation I had with Sister Imani at the United Theological College of the West Indies in Summer of 2014, she addressed the queries many “cynics” ask her as a scholar and a RastaWoman, which she poses in the essay: “How do you remain committed to a movement where male domination is so strong? Don’t you pose a serious threat to patriarchy within Rastafari?”¹⁶⁸ She shared her usual, not to mention profoundly insightful, response,

I-an-I remain committed to Rastafari because it is more than having a relationship with a man; it is about having an identity, seeing the Almighty in oneself and experiencing a fusion with that One. It is about sharing a cosmic consciousness, exploring spirituality, and finding my holistic self-realization, which is at once a creative and re-creative process. It is the authentication of myself as a black queen, with no apologies to the norms and ideology of Babylon.¹⁶⁹

While other feminist scholars consider the relationship of Rastafari doctrines and the Hebrew Bible to ensure androcentric interpretations of gender and male/female roles in the family, the movement, and society, Tafari-Ama’s research and philosophical reflections challenge such a presumption. Tafari-Ama admits whole heartedly that Rastafari is a patriarchal movement, but chooses to focus upon the way in which Rastafari, like all social systems, “has, over the years, experienced dynamic shifts in gender power relations as a result of females revisiting their own self-definition, juxtaposed against designations ascribed by males who created the movement.”¹⁷⁰

Though older sistren might continue to support rigid conformity to such roles, this is in

¹⁶⁸ A conversation between the author and Imani Tafari-Ama at UTC in Mona, Jamaica, June 2, 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Tafari-Ama, “Rastawoman as Rebel,” in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, 89.

¹⁷⁰ Tafari-Ama, “Rastawoman,” 89; “Resistance Without & Within,” in *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, Loc. 2219.

no way a forgone conclusion.¹⁷¹ In fact, Tafari-Ama appeals to strong female examples within Rastafari and Rebel Woman tradition and history, or *herstory*; Maureen Rowe, or “Sista P,” a pioneer in the interrogation of gender relations in Rastafari, being the most recent RastaWoman.¹⁷² Tafari-Ama is explicit, “a shift in the balance of power between the genders is being precipitated by sistrens’ challenging of role determinations that are male-constructed” and it is in no way a recent trend.¹⁷³

Tafari-Ama concedes, that the greater independence and self-determination of sistren has elicited some male backlash, including domestic violence and (heightened) restraints on issues surrounding sex and menstruation, as brethren attempt to maintain control of their queens “through the reinforcement of a hierarchy of ‘man as head’.”¹⁷⁴ However, this RastaWoman, rebellious in her own right, is emphatic in her overstanding of the institution as transient, stressing that it does not often reflect the lived reality of Rastafarian homes that, like “the social organization of Jamaican households...[are] heavily biased toward female headship, which militates against the enforcement of certain male ideological norms.”¹⁷⁵ In a bold manifesto and charge to the rebel Rastawoman and/in her reader, Tafari-Ama concludes,

Some women are determined to point the way to full consciousness, which will eventually lead to the oppressed throwing off the remaining shackles. As a rebel with a cause, these Rastawoman [*sic*] defend woman’s autonomy as a vital ingredient for the maintenance of one’s family and integrity. Certainly, the debate is ongoing, these reasonings

¹⁷¹ Tafari-Ama, “Rastawoman,” 90.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 89-91, 93-95; “Resistance,” Loc. 2246. Other examples are, of course, Nanny the Ashanti Maroon, Queen Sheba, Carole Yawney (and even Nefertiti). See Rowe 1980, 1989; Also see Rowe, “Gender and Family Relations in Rastafari,” in *Chanting Down Babylon*, 72-88 (and chapter 9 of *Rastafari in the New Millennium*).

¹⁷³ Tafari-Ama, “Rastawoman,” 97.

¹⁷⁴ Tafari-Ama, 104.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

have merely touched the tip of the iceberg of Rastawoman as rebel with a cause. While the sistren are oppressed in society, we must fight to beat down Babylon. As Judy Mowatt sings so sweetly, ‘I-an-I’ struggle through the pressure, dance through the fire but we never get weary yet.’ The revel sistren will overcome Babylon and patriarchy with faith in Jah.¹⁷⁶

In Tafari-Ama’s more recent intervention, “Resistance Without & Within” (whose title inspired my appellation for the current movement), she addresses both the existential concerns of preservation, perpetuation, and negotiation of Rastafari identity and culture voiced by Chevannes, Edmonds, Barnett, and Bamikole, to name a few, but also analyzes more critically gender relations through a gender and development framework.¹⁷⁷ Tafari-Ama even more audaciously pronounces that the quondam patriarchal model that formerly reigned no longer “defines how brethren and sistren relate to each other.”¹⁷⁸ In fact, she even quotes a brethren in his 40s in support of her argument, who admits,

I initially thought that Rastafari was hyper-patriarchal in a non-reformable way. Now with more experience and knowledge, I realize that actually there has always been significant progressive spaces (more than is [sic] provided in most western practices) for balance of values and self-determination of all. But my instinct is to say that these spaces can only be expanded and overstood when Rastafari is recognized to have emerged out of a whole constellation of practices and cosmologies many if not most of which do not have Christian roots. The Bible is not (ital.) enough.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 105

¹⁷⁷ Imani M. Tafari-Ama, “Resistance Without & Within” in *Rastafari in the New Millennium*, Loc. 2178. “Resistance” is her incorporation of interviews and research published only in her dissertation. As such, the gender analyst reflects upon the significant gap between where the world was and where she was twenty-five years ago. She admits she was steeped in womanist ethics, entirely committed to Garvey’s notion of “Africa for Africans here and abroad,” and “straddle[ing] the academic and activist works and was far removed from the ‘traditional’ image of a Rastafari woman” (Loc. 2331).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., “Resistance,” Loc. 2171.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Tafari-Ama endorses the exploration and integration of the “gamut of cosmological viewpoints and vistas available to children of the Diaspora” rather than the tendency to rely on the Bible and traditional biblical interpretation for their “frame of religious reference.”¹⁸⁰ Tafari-Ama herself not only employs a gender development framework, but draws from the work of the likes of poststructuralist theorists such as Derrida and Nussbaum to disrupt the gender binary and resist oppositional stereotypes.¹⁸¹ While patriarchy has traditionally had a stronghold in the Rastafari movement, Tafari-Ama does not consider this framework inherent to the movement. Rather, the Rastafari’s ideological cornerstone, its resistance to “the hegemony of mainstream identity discourses that regulate self concepts in the images of the colonizing regimes,” functions to disrupt not only the binary hierarchies of race and class legitimizing dehumanization, but also those of gender.¹⁸² Ironically, Tafari-Ama announces, it is actually the Rastafarian’s assimilation of Western liberalism, Christianity, and Judaism, in their “belief in the livity that women have less authority than their male counterparts,” which has permitted and perpetuated RastaWomen’s oppression.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., Loc. 2178.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., Loc. 2186. “The concept of gender Tafari-Ama enlists then “defines the socially constructed values ascribed to the roles that women and men should play in individual pursuits as well as in wider social contexts. Gender also provides a cross-cutting concept for analyzing power relations in both hierarchical and discursive applications. Gender is therefore an appropriate tool of analysis for understanding the contradictions inherent to a wide range of issues, including the political economy, class, race, color, sexuality, sexual preference, social geography, and the sexual division of labor, and as such it facilitates the development of a comprehensive analysis of a wide range of social phenomena” (2178)

¹⁸² Ibid., Loc. 2192.

¹⁸³ Ibid. Tafari-Ama holds a viewpoint similar to that which Kwame Nkrumah presents in *Consciencism*. That is, that African society is essentially egalitarian, but through the influence of Euro-Christianity primarily (but also Islam in the African context), the Rastafari, like Africans, lost touch with their egalitarian sensibilities. Both Tafari-Ama

The RastaWoman appeals to the highly influential work of both Filomina Steady and bell hooks, proclaiming that Rastafari women are, in fact, in triple jeopardy in/at the intersecting of oppressions.¹⁸⁴ African-style patriarchy, where “the Kingman” functions as head of household and male dominance is emphasized “has been an attempt to reinstate the authority that African men lost during enslavement” with particularly detrimental effects and affects for RastaWomen.¹⁸⁵ Womanist resistance by sistren within the livity and the consciencism of brethren, however, has instantiated a shift in this system, heretofore enabled and fortified by the Bible.¹⁸⁶ With no “book of rules” particular to the movement, Rastafari have “never really arrived at consensus about images of collective representation that apply to all our aspirations for ourselves and our progeny.”¹⁸⁷ Tafari-Ama acknowledges her personal conundrum with such obeisance to archaic sanctions and norms that seem to have petrified over/in time, confessing, “I personally feel as if I am in somewhat of a time warp.”¹⁸⁸

Though Rastafari has historically taken an apolitical stance Tafari-Ama insists, as Bamikole and other scholars, that if transformation is to occur, organization and political action is “inevitable.”¹⁸⁹ Elucidating the strengths of the movement to foreground the

and Nkrumah understand revolution to be the resolution to this communal crisis of identity.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., Loc. 2199.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., Loc. 2212. “Nowadays the classist and sexist construction of gender role divisions in the household (hooks 1981) reinscribe the subordination of women across the board in society and, therefore in the livity of Rastafari” (Loc. 2212-2219).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., Loc. 2219, 2246. She writes, “men and women not always operations opposition-ally. On the contrary, some brethren recognize the value of women's liberation, not only as an inalienable human right but also in the interest of their own liberation, that of the family, the community, the nation-state, the world.”

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., Loc. 2239-2246.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Loc. 2246.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., Loc. 2483.

possibility for consciencism and communal metamorphosis, she identifies racial pride, the operationalizing of discourse on peace and love, the organization and formation of houses and mansions, its health consciousness as resistance through ital, and the most salient, “Rastafari's elaboration of the oppressive role played by the embeddedness of European ideology in prevailing institutions in postcolonial societies like Jamaica.”¹⁹⁰

Providing a more nuanced intervention to Bamikole's directive, Tafari-Ama understands these shared perspectives to be a gateway to transformation, even of gender constructs, and “an indicator of the basis for a politicospiritual and psychosocial revolution” both inside and outside the Rastafarian livity; the inherent I-an-Identity of all.¹⁹¹

Beyond Binaries:

Rastafarian Hermeneutics, RastaWombanism and the Rastafari Re-Membering of Samson

I begin the final movement of this chapter reflecting upon the Rastafari's own ambivalent affective resonance with the Western European worldview and specifically the dualism, which “allowed Christian missionaries to save souls without challenging the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., Loc. 2287, 2293. Ital, a Rastafari re-membering of “vital,” represents the Rastafari diet (in line with dietary restrictions laid out in the biblical books of Genesis, Leviticus and Deuteronomy) and signifies their unity with nature. Food that is ital (also Ital or I-tal) is not prepared with salt and, therefore, natural. Rastafari, Barry Chevannes remarks, “rejects, as much as possible, all artificial things and celebrates the use of the natural: manure instead of artificial fertilizers and sprays; herbs and barks instead of pharmaceuticals. Rastafari life is centered on Africa. Every Rasta home is adorned with photographs of Haile Selassie, sometimes referred to as ‘King Alpha’, his wife, known as ‘Queen Omega’, maps of Africa and posters with African themes and the Ethiopian colours. Every Rasta man possesses an array of decorative buttons with replicas of Emperor Haile Selassie or some other African leader, which he proudly wears in public” (Loc. 468). While Chevannes speaks of Rastafari universally, it is important to note that the practices he illuminates are not ubiquitously endorsed, but are observed by the Boboshanti in particular. See Chevannes, ed. *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

¹⁹¹ Ibid., Loc. 2293.

enslavement of bodies,” considering its import for the Rastafari and, therefore, to the remembering of Samson I present in the next chapter.¹⁹² Both Carolyn Cooper and Jeanne Christensen are among the scholars who examine the way in which the Rastafarian movement has resisted the Babylon system for its racial supremacy, while simultaneously leaving its masculinist patriarchal bias and gender binary firmly intact. Each intellectual illuminates the devastating effects and affects of this dubious Eurocentric paradigm as well as its disruption by RastaWomen. Cooper’s intervention pertains to Rasta ideology promoted through reggae, and in particular the lyrics of Bob Marley’s songs. Cooper addresses the historic bifurcation of woman within Rastafari, which is “an extreme manifestation of the duplicitous gender ideology that pervades Jamaican society, [and] is ultimately derived, via Victorian England, from Judaeo-Christian theology.”¹⁹³ Cooper, like Maureen Rowe before her, critiques the Rastafari’s uncritical absorption of the misogyny, gynophobia, and phallo(go)centrism that have historically dominated Western European cultures and directed the colonial project, which they explicitly resist. As well as their assumption of the patriarchal bias promoted in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament through the ambivalent and oppositional caricature of women as either virtue or vice. In this way, women become one-dimensional, flat characters, entirely disconnected from the lives and realities of actual women, whose complexity, creativity, agency, and experience is therein (ab)negated. An ironic inheritance from the Babylon system and its binary hierarchical Root structure, this trope was prevalent throughout the ancient Mediterranean and can be found in material culture, particularly in Roman friezes

¹⁹² Christensen, *Rastafari Reasoning and the RastaWoman*, 140.

¹⁹³ Cooper, *Noises*, 10.

and drinking vessels, where the virtues as well as the *ethné* of the conquered foreign nations were represented by the female body.¹⁹⁴

In an effort to illustrate the tension resident in the Rastafari movement, Cooper cites Rowe's oral critique of the "double standard" for men and women as well as the bifurcation (and oversimplification) of women,

Once redeemed, the Rastawoman becomes Queen/Empress, occupying a pedestal which precludes sexuality. She is separated from her sexual nature and becomes almost a religious icon and cultural role model. This makes it possible for the Rastaman to have at least two women, one fulfilling bodily/sexual needs and the other cultural/spiritual. The rigid dress code prescribed for the Queen contrasts radically with the flexibility allowed the Other Woman.¹⁹⁵

Babylon itself is represented as a whore in the book of Revelation and the Rastafari have certainly exploited this imagery. In her groundbreaking essay, "The Woman in Rastafari," Rowe addresses the way in which the biblical characterization of women, from Eve in Genesis to Babylon in Revelation, has been highly influential within the movement. Addressing both the sympathetic and judgmental interpretations of biblical women, as either vulnerable to evil or its origin, Rowe points out that either view has perpetuated a negative perception of all women; which has in turn produced fear (of control) among Rastamen and self-hatred in RastaWomen and resulted in a suspicion of female empowerment or any sort of connection and collaboration among women.¹⁹⁶ (The validity of Rowe's insights are visible in traditional Rastafari interpretations of Samson in relation to Delilah, as I touch upon below.)

¹⁹⁴ For an illuminating exposition on and analysis of the depiction of the "defeated and feminized" nations, see Davina C. Lopez, *The Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 37-49.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Maureen Rowe, "The Women in Rastafari." *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*, 177-189.

Through the rise of Womanist-Feminist consciousness within the movement, RastaWomen's creative "self-conscious expressions of agency" are only increasing and intensifying, contributing to the movement's strength and its global influence.¹⁹⁷ In her monograph, *Rastafari Reasoning and the RastaWoman*, historian Jeanne Christensen ruminates on the revolutionary potential of RastaWomanism, a discourse of which Rowe and Tafari-Ama are representative, which

not only challenge[s] female subordination within the movement but [has begun] to expose ways hegemonic powers in plantation and colonial society [have] used gender to enslave female *and* male. RastaWomanism challenge[s] patriarchy within Christianity and extend[s] curiosity about Africa to the exploration of sexual politics, gender roles, and family structures in providing new models for moving forward. [Though] not a dominant discourse within Rastafari. Nevertheless, it is vocal, visible, and committed to self-examination.¹⁹⁸

In fact, it would appear from the growth of scholarship on the movement from RastaWoman scholars over the past few decades, as well as the interest in and research on RastaWomen from scholars such as Lake, Christensen, and even Dianne Stewart, that consciencism is erupting within the Rastafarian movement and that the contributions of RastaWomen in particular are integral to the Rastafari imagining and embodying new routes toward effective communal mobilization and political action. Women, historically subjugated by the Root and the Rastafari, have become the very bloom space, the womb, of revitalization and revolution, for their liberation and livity births the force of the divine I-an-Identity of all humanity.

Christensen, in fact, created the neologism RastaWomanism, illuminating the coalescence of the radical reasoning of the Rastafari found in the resistance to Western European episteme, the assertion of their African roots, and the dignity, humanity, and of

¹⁹⁷ Tafari-Ama, Loc. 2467.

¹⁹⁸ Jeanne Christensen, *Rastafari Reasoning and the RastaWoman*, 140.

RastaWomen. Much like Glissant, Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, Patrick Manning, Paget Henry, Oyeroké Oyewumi, and numerous others (many of whom we heard from in Chapter 3), Christensen points to the devastating effects of Enlightenment discourse upon African and diasporic African conceptualizations of humanity and the cosmos. The hierarchical bifurcation of mind over body (where mind is equated with rationality, literacy, divinity, masculinity, and, therefore, power, and the body with ignorance, orality, evil, femininity, and, therefore, weakness), however, is only one of the more recent iterations of the Western Root's historical *modus operandi* of "divide and conquer." Christensen, for her part, highlights the West's disrespect for and devaluation of traditional African cosmologies and epistemologies, its amnesia, as well as the Rastafari's ambivalent philosophical and political response to the West. For even as the Rasta's resist the West and its intention to colonize and dominate through racialized white supremacist constructs, which infantilize and demonize Africans and peoples of the African diaspora, they have perpetuated the very Babylon system they reject by denying RastaWomen full participation at the table of fellowship.

This insidious dualism has been especially beguiling for the Rastafari, who, in their reclamation of the biblical text in unambiguous defiance of Babylon and passionate assertion of the divinity of all, unwittingly undermined themselves by embracing another of the West's most dehumanizing ideologies: patriarchal misogyny. Christensen lauds the Rastafari for their subversion of the white man's colonization of the divine through the assertion of God's blackness, but evokes RastaWomanism as restoring the necessary balance not only within the Rastafari movement but on a global scale. The subordination of women, and specifically Black women, has its roots in anxieties about the creative

process, as can be ascertained from Genesis through the Western European colonial project and even to this day in the neocolonial capitalist market with its privileging of a particular brand of productive bodies to the rejection and abjection of those illegitimately creative or “non-productive” others.¹⁹⁹ Much as second-wave feminists neglected to acknowledge race (and sexuality) in their critique of sexism, so Rastafarian’s initial response to traditional Western European Christian images of God excluded gender and sexuality in their analysis. In *RastaWoman*, Christensen does not confront sexuality and/or homo- or transphobia within the movement, but, like Tafari-Ama, she identifies the ways in which RastaWomen are challenging the movement to authentically embody the Rasta’s commitment to radical livification in its defiance of the Babylon system and to do so comprehensively—a goal to which many if not all of the scholars represented in this chapter aspire.

Even as the Rastafari movement has suffered due to the exclusion and subordination of RastaWomen, biblical studies has been impaired by its virtual omission of Rastafarian interpretation in histories of reception, biblical commentaries, and surveys such as these. One of the more recent and comprehensive commentaries on the book of Judges is that of David Gunn, who maps interpretations of Samson throughout Jewish and Christian history and in popular (i.e., Western European) culture.²⁰⁰ Gunn presents

¹⁹⁹ For a more comprehensive elucidation of this critique see Dianne Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁰⁰ David Gunn, *Judges Through the Centuries* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005). Gunn himself also proffers a relevant intervention in his essay “Samson of Sorrows.” In the essay, Gunn recognizes the potency of this myth/motif for Israel, (Judaism[s] and later on Christianity) in his intertextual reading (228), but does not address the “How?” or “Why?” of Samson’s power. In other words, he does not speculate about how this myth has translated cross-culturally and transhistorically. I would argue that it is not the details

sundry depictions of Samson as Hero, Christ, Satan, Devil, Trickster, Sun God, Lustful Idolater, and exemplar of faith (Hebrews 11:32-38) to name a few but entirely overlooks Rastafarian renderings.²⁰¹ For the Rasta, Samson's locks and his lore are deployed as an axial symbol of power against Western hegemony and toward the consolidation of their own Caribbean counter-cultural identity.²⁰² The story of Samson is retold in *The Kebra Nagast*, one of the limited sacred texts within Rastafari tradition, and his is the only story in its section entitled "Power."²⁰³ Due to his obligation to the Nazirite vow Samson wore locks (and is the first and only Israelite to be identified as such in the Hebrew Bible) which were, along with his vow to abstain from worldly pleasures, the source of his unparalleled physical prowess. It is primarily for this reason that though Samson is not a

of the story—because the story itself shifts according to context. What is re-membered and reiterated over and over again is the root metaphor or the major movements of the myth/story... (Gunn himself draws parallels between Samson and Jacob, Israel, Joshua, etc.) Judges 13-16 it is, in fact, YHWH/GOD whose actions are arbitrary and unpredictable; If, as Gunn argues, YHWH is the "bully" in this narrative and, therefore, to blame for Samson's violent actions and we do read Samson as Israel... Might this be Israel's argument against God? "You, YHWH GOD, are the reckless perpetrator who we have served and look what *you* have done to us!"

²⁰¹ Ironically, contemporary Christian interpretations of Samson differ very little from many Rastafari re-memberings, where Samson becomes Christ figure and Delilah, the diabolical antagonist, plays Judas to Samson's Jesus. However, while Christian and Pop Culture depict Samson as a strong man weakened and/or destroyed by his own desire, most often the Rastafari re-member Samson as unequivocally achieving God's will. (See the program entitled "The Bible" on The History Channel for the most recent Hollywood representation of Samson, played by Nonsa Anosie. <http://youtu.be/Qa586edMiQc>)

²⁰² Other inquiries I have pursued but do not have the space to explore here are: How, if at all, is the Nazirite vow deployed in Rastafarian ritual and praxis? How does Samson's title as "judge," his secrecy-strength (16.9), & his ecstatic experiences (15.13-15; 16.28-30) figure into Rastafarian appropriation of the Samson myth? What is the significance, the power, of dread/locks? What about the place of the arts, orality, and Reggae (a la Bob Marley)? If Reggae is (as has been proposed) an oral Wisdom tradition set to music, how might Reggae be an embodied-ecstatic Oral Wisdom tradition (for communal survival)?

²⁰³ *The Kebra Nagast*, "Power" (43-52). The other two texts of importance to my research are *The Holy Piby*, and *Wisdom of Rastafari*.

central figure for the movement, he holds at least some significance for the Rastafari.²⁰⁴ Samson is a topos of resistance to Babylon, but he also represents the perennial patriarchal (Root) struggle of Man to overcome Woman as seductress (Babylon and vice); as Delilah bears a striking resemblance to the Wayward and Wondering Woman (Wisdom?) of Proverbs 7.²⁰⁵ (The rhizomatic routes of Relation are recognizable.)

For certain Rastafari, Samson functions as a *symbol* of resistance to White (Western European) Culture and their oraliturrhythmic citing up of the Bible serves as a *strategy* of resistance; which explains the limited Rastafari re-memberings of Samson

²⁰⁴ The most recent iteration of the Samson narrative in Rastafari literature that I have come across is actually a children's book written and illustrated by Malahkee Jeanba entitled *Rastafari Nazarite Warrior Samson: A Rasta Story*. Though the story of Samson is also retold in the *Kebra Nagast*—one of a handful of Sacred Rastafari texts, which supplement the Bible—it is the re-membering of Samson in children's literature that is just as telling (if not more so), for I understand it to epitomize the cultural valence of a story such as Samson's in the performance and (re)production of communal identity. For while Samson indubitably stands as a political symbol of power for the Rastafari movement, it is the way in which the story is re-membered from childhood, which I believe ensures its affective potency in the larger community. While the biblical story of Samson is not itself a Children's Bible—only a children's book—it may be for this reason even more indicative of the particular strategies of re-membrance that I am seeking to highlight. What Caroline Vander Stichele and Hugh S. Pyper assert of Children's Bibles in the Introduction to their edited volume *Text, Image, and Otherness in Children's Bibles*, I proffer is equally true of children's books about biblical stories and characters—especially in communities who appeal to the Bible but for which it is not the sole religious text. Children's Bibles, they write are “often the first contact people have with the Bible, and as such they can shape their perceptions of its stories and characters at an early age” (1). Not to mention how they remember these characters *later in life*. What children hear and do not hear, see and do not see in these stories has a profound impact on what stories are remembered and how these particular stories are re-membered within the larger community generation after generation. See Caroline Vander Stichele and Hugh S. Pyper, eds., *Text, Image, and Otherness in Children's Bibles: What is in the Picture?* (Atlanta: SBL, 2012).

²⁰⁵ In a very personal and productive conversation I had with Brother M. in New Orleans (on December 30, 2016), when I shared my own re-membering of the Samson story (through I-an-I archipelogics) he was quick to remind me that Samson's is a story with a definitive moral: “a warning against the temptation that can lead to sin and self-destruction if we are not vigilant.” He interprets the tale in the vein of Proverbs 7; that is, as unequivocally about Samson allowing himself to be seduced by his desire for Delilah.

that have been transcribed and published for public consumption.²⁰⁶ Though there is no explicit textual record of a Rastafarian re-membering of Samson, there are oral recordings in the reggae, ska, and dancehall songs of Bob Marley, Eric “Monty” Morris, and Mavado respectively. There are a few YouTube videos on Samson and the Rastafari, however, the most pertinent is “True story of Rastafari Samson” offered by Brother Wendim Yadon, Ras Iadonis Tafari, OHIM, of the Lion of Judah Society.²⁰⁷ While Samson is for Marley, an icon of strength, the representations of Morris, Mavado, and Brother Yadon are characteristic of the most prevalent Rastafari reasoning of Samson,

²⁰⁶ In the future, I would like to consider more deeply the ways in which Samson is represented in Rastafarian art. Jeanba’s book actually depicts Samson and his parents as black, but Delilah and the Philistines are white. Vander Stichele and Pyper emphasize the importance of pictures in cultural formation—for they “play an important role in how certain characters and events are remembered later in life.” Of course, what they do not state, but what is implicit in their assertions is that these biblical stories are read aloud and the tales of their characters are viewed through artistic representation. In other words, before children read biblical stories themselves, they are orally/aurally and visually exposed to and affected by them. What is central to the overall aim of *Text, Image, and Otherness* is “the relationship and even tension between text and image.” The balance of the two, they state, “is not always the same...but can shift in one or other direction, sometimes giving precedence to the text, sometimes to the image.” Which is an interesting dialectic to consider when reading Jeanba’s re-membering of Samson.

²⁰⁷ Bob Marley references both David and Samson in “Rastaman Live Up” as exemplary in their physical resistance to and overcoming of the Philistines/Babylon. He sings, “David slew Goliath with a sling and a stone, Samson slew the Philistines with a donkey jaw bone. Iyaman, live up; Rastaman, don’t give up!” In “Strongman Sampson,” Morris proclaims, “Strongest of man, stronger than beast. Sampson was the strongest man in the days of olden until a woman take it from him. Woman and man was here since the world began. Woman tempted man, it’s so plain to understand.” Finally, Brother Wendim Yadon presents Rastafari fundamentalism in his interpretation of the story. He also detects a correlation between the story of Samson and the life of Bob Marley, in his teaching video (which resembles a bible study) introducing his ideas on Samson and mentioning a future “series” on the story. Interestingly, he twice mentions Oprah (“Obrah”), but somewhat ambivalently, because while he agrees with her tweet about Delilah’s seduction of Samson (“Oprah said it best”) he quickly identifies her as “deceived.” See “The True Story of Rastafari Samson: Bob Marley Israelite Judge, JA’s Civil War, and Mavado’s Delilah Song,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSpqS_1eNms, published on August 4, 2013. Originally accessed March 7, 2017.

which inadvertently echoes the traditional (and popular) Western European Christian interpretation: that Samson (who represents Man) was duped, emasculated, and ultimately destroyed by (weakness through his desire for) Delilah (Woman). Brother Yadon, in fact, endorses Mavado's lyrical representation as "biblically accurate." Similar to Morris' "Strongman Sampson," Delilah is a temptress who the singer derides, denounces, and holds culpable for his downfall. Proclaiming,

See Delilah is a girl, she wanna gain the world. Understand yourself, back up on shell. She seh gi yuh love to nobody else. I woulda keep you for myself. Cyan keep you pull a next man girl. I love you, yuh love wealth. Nobody knows the pain I felt, so burn in hell and melt.

After service in the tabernacle on Bobo Hill at Bull Bay, we fellowshipped with the Boboshanti elders and I inquired about their interpretation of Samson's story. The reading the elders related to me reflected the same Proverbs 7 perspective on Samson, always in relation to Delilah: Samson represents man and his vulnerability to woman, who is perpetually a figure of affective ambivalence.²⁰⁸

Such a Rasta re-membering of Samson is susceptible to the very critique Christensen, Bamikole, and Carolyn Cooper before them, have levelled: that the Rastafari are acquiescing to the very Babylon system they seek to resist through the assimilation and perpetuation of Western European patriarchy and gynophobia. In this way, then, they

²⁰⁸ Berry Chevannes represents this viewpoint (and in relation to the Bible) succinctly when he writes, "Humanity as a whole is sinful, but in the Revival worldview woman represents a particularly serious danger to man, even as she also represents a particularly delightful pleasure. The Adam and Eve myth tells the tale of what lies in store for man if woman is allowed to control him. Woman is therefore not to be trusted, even when she is loved. Eve and Delilah are prototypes of the female. Man is vulnerable during woman's menstrual flow, and to avoid all possibilities of contamination female underwear is strictly segregated from the laundry. Indeed, only a woman herself may wash her own underwear. Menstruating and pregnant women are also thought to have a malignant effect on certain crops" (Chevannes, *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews*, Loc. 541)

stand in direct opposition to Rastafarian livity and the divine wisdom of I-an-I. Not only so, but the preoccupation with Delilah evident in such fundamentalist Rastafari interpretations as those above not only perpetuates division and dissension, but it ignores relevant details of the story and forecloses any and all alternative re-memberings. When one considers Samson's symbolic valence for the Rastafari in resistance to Western culture—a dissidence which must include rejection of heteropatriarchy, misogyny, as well as homo- and transphobia—and regards the movement as a creolized manifestation of Glissant's poetics of Relation, another way to read and re-member the story of Samson emerges. The current lack, then, becomes a lacuna, a womb and a bloom space from which Samson might be re-membered otherwise, yet still with the Rastafari.²⁰⁹

Through their appropriation of the Bible, intimate entanglement with Israel, and inherently oraliturrhythmic biblical hermeneutics, not to mention the most recent interventions of RastaWomen, the Rastafari live the diasporic interdependence of the Bible and the archipelago *as* Relational poetics with implications for biblical interpretation far beyond the Caribbean.²¹⁰ Citing up reads the rhythms that relate and

²⁰⁹ From Leonard Howell's *The Promised Key* as represented in William David Spencer's commentary in *Chanting Down Babylon*. The interpretation understands Delilah as White Culture (and the female) trying to emasculate Samson as African culture. While Howell's is a patriarchal, not to mention misogynistic rendering, it is nonetheless extremely important to recognize how profoundly such a framework has influenced and, therefore, reflects Rastafarian's understanding of White Culture and the privileging of male authority to female.

²¹⁰ In his introduction to *Nation Dance*, "Dancing the Nation," Patrick Taylor describes both the physical and symbolic significance of dance in Caribbean cultures when he writes, "To dance the nation is to find oneself immersed in a liminal world where tradition informs contemporary experience and ritual takes on new meaning... The ability to invoke the emergence of a Caribbean person as a voyager in an international world, a person who can dance the terrestrial dance with an identity that is at home with difference—this is one measure of the contribution of Caribbean religions to Caribbean and world culture" (1, 12). And, I would add, a major way in which Caribbean peoples

resonate between the lines. For even as Western European society has prided itself on its intellectual and interpretive prowess, non-Western oral cultures, and particularly those who have migrated from Africa, have historically taken pride in their lack of dependence upon written texts and in the remembering of tales and traditions inscribed upon permeable human bodies not a literary corpus. While it would be easy to read either in opposition to the other, let us likewise resist the urge toward this bifurcation, linking one to homeostasis and the other to movement. Rather than simply perpetuating and thereby reinstating the violent hierarchal dichotomies of the West's Root identity (West/Other, mind/body, male/female, literacy/orality, culture/nature, civilized/barbarian, white/black, master/slave, etc.) let us trouble even the dichotomy of print and performance through an appeal to Samson's ambi(val)ent affective resonance for the Rastafari in a re-membering beyond the binaries, radically immersed in the text, profoundly susceptible to Relation because inextricably entangled in the divine love and livity of I-an-I.²¹¹

contribute to biblical interpretation. Also see Oral Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context* (Oakville, CT: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2010).

²¹¹ See Steven Weitzman, *Surviving Sacrilege: Cultural Persistence in Jewish Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 7-8. I would simply add to Weitzman's strategies for survival relationality (vis-à-vis Glissant). Weitzman offers his own interpretive interventions in "The Samson Story as Border Fiction." *BibInt* 10 (2002): 158-74. Also see Weitzman, *Song and Story in Biblical Narrative: The History of a Literary Convention in Ancient Israel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

Chapter 4:
Reading (with) Rhythm for the Sake of the I-n-I(slands):
A Rastafarian Interpretation of Samson (as Ambient Affective Assemblage)

Yes, as the (eye)land plays with itself, the sea, the horizon, and a vast beyond, should you pursue the pull, another (eye)land appears. How playful, how curious, how Creole, how (eye) is land? The drum beats a ready rhythm, the (eye)land transmoots its undulating seaing, w(e)aving.¹

Chaos is the norm in Carnavalesque-Grotesque.²

The enigma is the structure of the veil suspended between contraries.³

The conception of politics at work here is centrally concerned with the question of survival, of how to create a world in which those who understand their gender and their desire to be non-normative can live and thrive not only without the threat of violence from the outside but without the pervasive sense of their own unreality, which can lead to suicide or a suicidal life. Lastly, I would ask what place the thinking of the possible has within political theorizing...there is a normative aspiration here, and it has to do with the ability to live and breathe and move and would no doubt belong somewhere in what is called a philosophy of freedom. The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity.⁴

Samson is Israel. Samson is folktale. Samson is Rasta. Samson is strong, subversive, strange, and entirely susceptible to God, or Jah, and to others. Samson is “better known, and more widely appealed to, than almost any other biblical figure” and certainly among the most ambivalent.⁵ It is from this precarious place and within the various (rhythmic) resonances addressed in the preceding pages, that we re-member

¹ Althea Spencer Miller, “Creolizing Hermeneutics: A Caribbean Invitation” in *Islands, Islanders, and the Bible: RumInations*, eds. Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed Vernyl Davidson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2015), 77-95, 92.

² E.T.A. Davidson, *Intricacy, Design, and Cunning in the Book of Judges* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2008), 98.

³ Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 284.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 219.

⁵ David Gunn, *Judges Through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 188.

Samson other-wise. Thinking with and through the archipelago, we honor the various conceptual, and entirely movable, bridges between Africana, bibliorality, and affect as we approach Judges 13-16. We occupy the in-between, where biblical studies rescues and is rescued by (affect through) Africana epistemologies, and rhythm is both felt and formally exegeted. Multiple and diverse texts, bodies, voices, identities and interpretive lenses always already converge in and as we approach the Bible—a text defined by its *in-between-ness*, inhabiting and inhabited by profoundly human, non-human and divine affective intensities and resonances, throughout history and around the world.⁶ And so, in this concrescence, I *move* into my own “close reading” of Judges 16: the story of Samson and the Philistines. First, however, I will provide a very brief description of Samson and some of the basic elements of his oral narrative and will engage germane biblical scholarship en route to my Rastafari re-membering of Samson other-wise; as archipelagic assemblage.

Samson is a Nazirite, a holy man in ancient Israel, due to a vow (of purity), which forbids the cutting of his hair, so he wears seven locks.⁷ The significance of his locks cannot be overstated with regard to the overall storyline, or his appeal to the Rastafari. The other element fundamental to Samson’s story is the vow by and to which he is bound, for it was not by choice, at least not his. Imposed upon him by his mother (who, previously barren, cut a deal with an angel in order to give birth), the vow announces at

⁶ To be clear, the biblical canon does not exist as an original or organic singularity but was constructed through systematically enforced segregation, as its books, chapters, verses, (in some cases) sentences, and even its “testaments” were separated into discrete bodies and named in a process much like colonization.

⁷ In Judges 16:13, when Samson shares with Delilah the source of his strength (but just before he reveals how she might disempower him) he states, “If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and make it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak, and be like anyone else.”

and from the beginning that Samson is essentially, constitutionally, and hopelessly bound. Samson's locks, the vow and, finally, his transgression of it, are arguably the three most integral elements as we approach the story.⁸ As a Nazirite, akin to Rastafari Ital, there are a number of things Samson is supposed to refrain from to remain "pure." Samson's perpetual failure to do so, however, is so extreme and inopportune that it is

⁸ That Samson was born into a vow made by his mother may appear cultural and, therefore, incidental. Samson's mother, her symbolic significance, and her vow, however, become central to interpretations of Judges 13-16 after Mieke Bal's psychoanalytic reading of the story. See *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). By 1992, the importance of Samson's mother (and the trope of barrenness) is presumed. Cf. David Gunn, "Samson of Sorrows" An Isaianic Gloss on Judges 13-16" in *Reading Between the Texts*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 225-253. Of course, his mother becomes one of many women instrumental to Samson's narrative; a story and plot in and over which he has little subjectivity or agency. According to Gunn, Samson being subjected to a vow which was "not of his making" is simply the foreshadowing of a life lived in obsequiousness to the will of others, beginning with YHWH/Jah (240). "YHWH gave Samson to the barren Danite woman, to bring the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines (13:5). YHWH propelled Samson into the arms of the Timnite woman 'for he was seeking a quarrel with the Philistines' (14:4); it was YHWH's spirit that came mightily upon him so that he went down to Ashkelon and slew thirty men of the town, YHWH who enabled the slaughter at Lehi (with the freshly pilfered—doubly polluting—jaw bone to take place. Yet," Gunn concedes, "It was not just YHWH who instigated (paradoxically) the vow-breaking. Samson on his own account disregarded the nazirite conventions from the outset" (239). Ultimately, Gunn's YHWH is the story and Samson's antagonist, positing, "his God-granted suicide is not a sign of psychological or spiritual collapse but a final affirmation of his personal worth and what he tried to find, despite God" (246). The irony is Samson's simultaneous comfort and angst around to whom, how, and when he will submit. Reading Judges 13-16 with the so-called servant songs of Isaiah 40-55 as intertext, Gunn interprets this text as unequivocally about Israel, stating, "Samson's story is the story of the people and their god: 'And yet again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of YHWH and YHWH gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years' (13:1). YHWH defeats his own people, giving them into the power of their enemies. YHWH, if he chooses, can turn such defeat into victory. The burning question for the god, however, is whether his people *recognize* that he controls their destiny" (248). Samson offers YHWH "a rather convenient arrangement" and is, for David Gunn, suffering servant par excellence; "or, as Isaiah might have put it, 'Here am I, send Samson'" (251).

comical.⁹ I will address other pertinent details as I proceed. For now, however, the other main currents with which you need to be familiar are that his (dread)locks are (ostensibly) the source of his divine strength, that he is purportedly one of Israel's judges (hence his inclusion in the book), *and* that his life is characterized by *in-between-ness* (and especially in relation to and entangled with the Philistine-Other). Samson's in-between identity is represented in the text as geographical, philosophical, psychic, and relational. For example, he does not choose to reside with his family or community of origin, but is always depicted as inhabiting territory between Israel and the Philistines-Others. For this and other reasons, I read Samson as suffering from major ambivalent affective resonance and dissonance throughout the story, but it comes to a head in chapter 16, which is where my primary exegetical interests lie. I will explore these interpretive possibilities and, through the Rastafari's deep resonance with Israel and their rhythmic approach to oralitrary re-remembering of the Bible, I will engage Samson (as Israel) in relation to the Philistine-Other, not in terms of exile but errantry in an archipelagic, or rhizomatic, poetics of Relation.¹⁰ Ultimately, I proffer an archipelagic, or archipelological, biblical hermeneutic and speculate about how such a rhythmic reinterpretation of Samson's queer (or creolized) failure might produce a Rastafari remembering other-wise and what its implications might be for biblical interpretation.

The Secret Life of Bees?

Folktale, Samson's (Subversive) Wisdom & Afro-Israelite Roots?

So Samson and his father and mother went down to Timnah. When he came to the vineyards of Timnah [for the first time], a full-grown lion

⁹ Unfortunately, the story's hyperbole has often been mistaken for tragedy, which misses its comedic and, therefore, implicitly transgressive potential.

¹⁰ Which entails interpretation through the experience of *a sustained period of severance and suffering, followed by continuing psychic exile, alienation, and anomie.*

came roaring at him. The spirit of the Lord gripped him, and he tore him asunder with his bare hands as one might tear a kid asunder, but he did not tell his father and mother what he had done. Then he went down and spoke to the woman and she pleased Samson. Returning the following year to marry her, he turned aside to look at the remains of the lion; and in the lion's skeleton he found a swarm of bees, and honey. He scooped it into his palms and ate it as he went along. When he rejoined his father and mother, he gave them some and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scooped the honey out of a lion's skeleton.¹¹

Cultural allusions to Samson in Western European pop art are copious. His story has inspired countless songs, plays, paintings, poems, and other sorts of literary fiction. However, as reggae representations bespeak, his illicit, or at least ambivalent, affair with Delilah has in many ways dominated re-memberings of the tale. It bears noting that his race/ethnicity has also been a contentious issue. The most recent example being The History Channel's depiction of Samson as a lock-bearing African, played by the British actor (and professed Christian) Nonzo Anozie, in its mini-series "The Bible." Their depiction of Samson as a black man incited outrage and elicited inquiry into the historical accuracy of a black Samson. (Betraying the racist presumptions about biblical characters, who were indigenous to a region that spanned from Turkey through Syria, Lebanon, and Israel-Palestine, into Egypt and possibly elsewhere in Africa. A perspective rooted in the Western European monopoly over the biblical text and its interpretation.) Ironically, as the Rastafari are quick to advert, Samson bore seven locks upon his head, and while this does not necessarily indicate African ancestry (since the locking of hair has been a practice common to many global cultures for centuries), it cannot be entirely precluded.¹² As interesting as his innumerable intertextual interpretations and cultural representations, I am not concerned with analyzing the specific content (the *what*) of these "texts," but

¹¹ Judges 14:5-9.

¹² See Judges 16:13.

how they have been interpreted and *how* we might continue to re-member them otherwise.

The Samson tale as well as its central characters and their interpretation exemplify the way in which biblical texts and their characters provide interpretive liberty, wherein multiple interpretations, or re-memberings, are readily available and always already contingent upon the reader and interpretive community's context (which includes presumptions, perspectives and priorities according to individual and collective history and experience). I consider Samson in terms of his valence as interpretive archetype, one biblical protagonist, amidst a host of folktales, who has been appropriated by the multiple oral cultures and communities that produced the biblical corpus.¹³ In conjunction with the greater intention of and impetus for my dissertation, to displace the West as Root, rather than rehearse the history of scholarship on Samson, I will attend to those interventions pertinent to my re-membering of Samson's folktale as creolized ambivalent affective assemblage through an archipelagic hermeneutic of bibliorality. I will, then give particular attention to those characteristics, themes, and discourses which resonate with Africana, oralitrary biblical interpretation and the Rastafari en route to a re-membering of Samson other-wise (i.e., as an alternative to those previously proposed). Suffice it to say, the fact that Samson—a marginal character in the scope of the biblical corpus—has garnered popular attention at all, corroborates his (cross)cultural relevance, but it is the

¹³ Due to scholarly agreement on the genre and oralitrary "origins" of the Samson cycle, Judges 13-16 can be interpreted as folktale. See, especially Robert Alter, "Samson Without Folklore," in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed. Niditch (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 47-56. Also see Albert B. Lord, "Patters of the Lives of Patriarchs from Abraham to Samson and Samuel," in *ibid.*, 7-18; David Bynum "Samson as a Biblical φηρ ορεσκως," in *ibid.*, 57-73; and Everett Fox, "The Samson Cycle in an Oral Setting," *Alcheringa: Ethnopoetics* 4 (1978): 52.

way in which he is most often remembered, to which I will now turn (most often through Western European biblical scholars as hero, fool, or trickster), which indicates the importance of re-membering him other-wise.

In 1978, David Bynum published *The Daemon in the Wood*, a publication of the Center for the Study of Oral Literature at Harvard University and arguably the first monograph treating the resonances between ancient Near Eastern folklore and African folk traditions.¹⁴ The Samson tale is included in Bynum's exposition. In fact, he understands the episodes within the Samson tale to be "a multiform of a narrative pattern well-represented in Africa, featuring motifs of honey-finding, exogamous marriage, and tricksterism."¹⁵ Bynum highlights these features in particular for their symbolic relevance to the various tribes and cultures in Africa. Bees found in unlikely places and unconventional spaces, which are then consumed, according to Bynum, symbolizes tricksterism, the unnatural, and magic. Still Bynum queries, why are these bees necessary at all? Why would "the Hebrews" include such a fabulous element as these honey bees, why did they, as the Africans who have constructed and transmitted the Lambda tale, "tolerate such a blatant aberration from plausible fact?"¹⁶ Bynum's awareness of the symbolic tone of folklore and his exposure of the fundamental similarities and shared tropes of biblical and African folklore is noteworthy, particularly in the late '70's. His insistence on interrogating these motifs according to their deviation from plausibility or facticity, however, bespeaks the very entrenched Eurocentric epistemology that guides

¹⁴ David Bynum, *The Daemon in the Wood* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1978), 42-64.

¹⁵ Susan Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 52 (1990): 608.

¹⁶ Bynum, *The Daemon in the Wood*, 45.

his interpretation and prevents him from adequately apprehending or truly appreciating *oraliture*. The presumption of a narrative's value according to its literal veracity or plausibility, particularly one that bears all the characteristics of (carnavalesque-grotesque) folktale, is a direct by-product of Western European Root logic and necessitates the rhizomatic creolized Wisdom of (a poetics of) Relation in order to think archipelogically. Reading Samson as trickster, something he holds in common with Africana and creole folktale, bears great relevance for the story's archipelogic interpretation and Rasta remembering.

In the same year *Daemon in the Woods* was put in print, James Crenshaw published *Samson: A Secret Betrayed, a Vow Ignored*, which likewise considered the biblical tale in terms of the trickster trope.¹⁷ Engaging Judges 13-16 through what he deemed "aesthetic criticism," Crenshaw's work was groundbreaking in that he was negotiating the delicate balance between approaching the Bible as History while applying literary critical techniques. Books such as Crenshaw's, and Bynum's, were a part of a much larger sea change in biblical studies, wherein scholars attempted to identify common stylistic features and/or motifs in order to draw conclusions about the text and its function (in relation to others).¹⁸ Crenshaw's work initiated (and at least appeared to elicit) an avalanche of interest in the folkloric, even legendary, narrative and its tormented

¹⁷ James Crenshaw, *Samson: A Secret Betrayed, a Vow Ignored* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978).

¹⁸ Among the stylistic elements Crenshaw identifies are rhetoric, semantic field, "pregnant" terms, anticipation, repetition, retardation and restraint, humor, hyperbole, and suspense.

protagonist, among Western European and North American academics in particular.¹⁹ Susan Niditch's *Underdogs and Tricksters* was among these sorts of projects. Niditch was but one feminist biblical scholar, many of whom have written extensively on Wisdom, among the assortment of intelligentsia intrigued by the trickster topos, as well as the comical carnivalesque quality of the Samson story. (Niditch, like Cheryl Exum before her, interpreted Samson's subjugation as rendering him "a sexually subdued woman;"²⁰ a point Susan Ackerman also highlights, due to Samson's being "forced to grind grain like a woman in a Philistine prison in Gaza."²¹) Carole Fontaine and Colleen Camp tackled the Samson in their 1990 essay, "The Words of the Wise and Their Riddles."²² Again, the fact that Hebrew Bible scholars whose work is primarily in Wisdom Literature are also

¹⁹ See Othniel Margalith, "Samson's Foxes," *VT* 35 (1985): 224-29; "Samson's Riddles and Samson's Magic Locks," *VT* 36 (1986): 225-34; "More Samson Legends," *VT* 36 (1986): 397-405.

²⁰ Susan Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero," 608-24; esp. 616-7.

²¹ Cheryl Exum. "Promise and Fulfillment: Narrative Art in Judges 13," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 1 (1980): 43-59. Exum's primary interest was in the birth narrative, promise and fulfillment cycle; Susan Niditch. "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 608-24; Susan Ackerman, "What if Judges had been Written by a Philistine?" *BI* 8, No. 1 (2000): 34.

²² Carole R. Fontaine and Claudia V. Camp. "The Words of the Wise and Their Riddles," in *Text and Tradition: the Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed., Susan Niditch (Atlanta: Scholars Academic Press, 1990), 127-151. In her chapter on Judges in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, Danna Nolan Fewell submits that Samson's "propensity to 'break rules'" becomes the driving force in the plot, that along with Delilah's desire. See Danna Nolan Fewell. "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 73-83. Also see Exum, "Judges: Encoded Messages to Women," in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, eds., Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 112-127; Adele Reinhartz, "Feminist Criticism and Biblical Studies on the Verge of the Twenty-First Century," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods, and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

drawn to Samson's folktale bespeaks the implicit resonance between these two genres, which were constructed and so should be interpreted through poetics.²³

The notion of Samson as trickster, which both Bynum and Crenshaw highlighted, has been particularly generative for Susan Niditch, who further explored the ways in which the Samson tale resonates with the trickster trope cross-culturally. Critical of Crenshaw, Niditch's interest in Samson lay in his function as hero, trickster, and bandit.²⁴ Niditch understands the bandit to be "a variety of hero and trickster whose tale involves a challenge to the power of the establishment by weaker or oppressed elements in society."²⁵ Here Niditch emphasizes the "thematic pairs" contrasted in Judges 13-16: "nature vs. culture; 'us' vs. 'them'; marginal status vs. centrality; Israelite vs. Philistine."²⁶ All of which, she posits, "might be placed under the larger headings, the confrontation with authority and the issue of empowerment."²⁷ It is no wonder, then, that Samson's story resonates with the Rastafari. Niditch's Samson as bandit indubitably evokes Bob Marley's epic hit, "I Shot the Sheriff." And particularly when one considers the centrality of Samson's strength residing in his hair, a motif "found in numerous nonbiblical works all over the world," and what enables him to survive repeated Philistine attacks.²⁸ While the Rastafari are notoriously antagonistic toward trickster

²³ See page 114

²⁴ In her essay, "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," Crenshaw's work serves as a foil for Niditch. For Niditch's elucidation of the structure of such tales, see Susan Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco and New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

²⁵ Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 609.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 610.

²⁸ Niditch, 612. Niditch here disagrees with Crenshaw, who sees Samson's hair and his nazirite status as "hardly" functioning in the story (Crenshaw, 73, 74). She instead cites

figures within creole folktale, their undeniable affective pull toward a bandit (and trickster) such as Samson bespeaks a much more complicated relationship to the institutions from which they explicitly distance themselves, yet another ambivalent affective force they cannot evade.

Niditch saw Samson as mediator and “a bridge between what humans have transformed, neatened, shaped, institutionalized, and socialized and what is found in nature.”²⁹ Samson’s strength is his capacity as a “wild man” to move “between both worlds;” he is “a permanent challenge to a particular kind of civilization represented by the Philistines,” what they would have considered a barbarian.³⁰ Samson is hero, trickster, and bandit, but he even evades containment in any one of these categories. Ultimately, Niditch asseverates, Samson exhibits enough of each, and particularly in his death, to ensure that his is a tale, which “emphasize[s] the victory of the weak over seemingly implacable forces.”³¹

Niditch’s re-membering of Samson, reflects the “limbo imagination” that Wilson Harris, and Heather Russell after him, understand to have emerged “as a consequence of [the] Trans-Atlantic de-formation and re-formation of identity [which became] the mechanism by which New World subjects negotiate the ‘violations of slavery and indenture and conquest.’”³² Samson is the conquering Lion, as the Rasta’s reason;

Stith Thompson’s work to support the way in which Samson’s hair signifies the strength to overcome. See Stith Thompson, *The Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1955).

²⁹ Ibid., 613.

³⁰ Niditch, 613, 614.

³¹ Niditch, 624.

³² Wilson Harris and Selwyn Cudjoe, *History, Fable, and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas* (Wellesley, MA: Calaloux Publishing: 1970), 160. Cited in Heather Russell, *Legba’s Crossing*, Loc. 121. Russell expounds upon Harris’s work while also explaining

however, rather than unequivocally representing the “King of the Jungle,” Samson is creolized, therefore, he is Anansi, and/or even something more akin to the Legba. Legba is a trickster and his purpose as god of the crossroads, Russell posits, “is to remind us that power is derived from a simultaneous affirmation and subversion of discursive codes. It is not so much, then, that he shifts his own shape (though he does so at times); it is that he shifts the *shape* of received knowledge.”³³ For this reason, Adoleye Ogundipe does not consider Legba a trickster but a tempter.³⁴ Russell summarizes the definitive difference for Ogundipe as lying not in his/her “act of trickery” nor even with “his/her *hermeneutical prowess*, but rather with the *hermeneutical process*, and most centrally, *lessons* to be gleaned by the subject from his/her dialectical engagement with the gods who are the repository of knowledge.³⁵ Blessed with “the power to ‘make all things happen and multiply [àshe],’” Legba opens the pathways between “divine purpose and

her own project: “In other words, like their physically confined predecessors, cramped in Middle Passage spaces determinedly resisting and innovatively navigating the literal containment of their bodies, their New World descendants also developed strategies for moving against and under the hegemonic strictures of slavery, colonialism, and their aftermaths. What I am keenly interested in, though, which regard to Harris’s formulation, is the juxtaposition of the linear, phallogocentric limbo pole metaphorically pressing down upon the moving, resisting, and multilimbed African Atlantic body. Such dexterous subversion seems an apt metaphor to capture the resistance to linearity, the fissuring of Literature/History that frequently attends African Atlantic discourse. The successful limbo dancer, in the end, glides untouched (though not unscathed) under the encroaching pole” (Loc. 121). Limbo, like Haitian vodun, “breaks the tribal monolith of the past and re-assembles an inter-tribal or cross-cultural community of families” (33, 162). Also see Robert D. Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (University of California Press, 1980), 25-163.

³³ Russell, Loc. 146.

³⁴ Adoleye Ogundipe, *Esu Elegbara, the Yoruba God of Chance and Uncertainty: A Study in Yoruba Mythology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 197. In her larger project, Ogundipe looks at the connections between the Devil, or Lucifer, and Esu Elegbara (Ogundipe, 3). Her argument is compelling (and convincing), particularly the correlations she draws between Esu and Satan in the book of Job. (See especially pp. 180-198.)

³⁵ Ibid. Cited in Russell, Loc. 146-156.

human meaning;” for in West African philosophy, àshe is “the highest achievement of art...transcend[ing] all prescribed boundaries of form.”³⁶ Russell submits,

As a consequence, art that achieves àshe would naturally defy conventional dictates; it would break down familiar/conventional/generic constructs, such as those governing fact, fiction, truth, reality, myth, history, [literature,] nation, imagination, and narratology. It would fall ‘beyond a boundary’ of Eurocentric epistemology and aesthetics. The power of àshe, then, lies in its transcendent ability to cross the borders and boundaries of fixed constructs regarding knowledge, interpretation, and apprehension as well as the formal structures framing such hermeneutical engagement. If àshe is, thus, the sign of formal ideology, Esu-Elegbara is the conduit through which communities of participation and critical analysts *apprehend* the ideology of form.³⁷

And here creolization comes into focus as boundaries get blur and bleed all the more, ultimately even the distinction between Samson’s folly and Wisdom begins to break open, for Samson’s “final” statement in the story is a creative expression/production that is simultaneously a destruction. At the end of the narrative, Samson kills both himself and the Philistines. The meaning of his death, and its symbolic significance, has been particularly generative for feminist literary critic Mieke Bal, who published three works dealing with Judges, its purported preoccupation with death and murder, and the semiotic slippages and patriarchal subversions, which seemingly abound in the text.³⁸ Bal’s psychoanalytic (Kristevan?) interpretation of Samson in *Death and Dissymmetry* was the first of its kind, wherein she sees Samson’s mother in Delilah and their game of bondage is but a variation on one of the central themes in Samson’s life, repeated over and again in

³⁶ Russell, Loc. 156.

³⁷ Ibid., Loc. 156-165.

³⁸ See Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); idem, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); and idem, *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera’s Death* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

almost every one of his relationships. In an effort to liberate himself from his mother, Samson “goes through symbolic death and rebirth in the arms of the Philistine other/mother.”³⁹ After Niditch and Bal’s influential intervention, Hebrew Bible scholars began engaging Samson more directly through poststructuralist theoretical lenses, capitalizing on Samson’s crossings or boundary blurring and tapping Judges as a resource for reading against the grain. In 2005, David Gunn published a commentary on the book wherein he maps the trajectory of Samson’s ambivalent reception history and history of interpretation, as well as the character’s (primarily Western European) cultural representations. Gunn highlights Samson’s depiction as hero, pillar of faith (in Hebrews

³⁹ Bal, *Death*, 225ff. Also see Landy, 265-269. Landy is himself drawing from Kristeva’s notion of abjection as he analyzes the scene between Samson and Delilah. He writes, “If, in Israelite terms, the ideal warrior fights against the mother/other, the Canaanite matrix, and thus ensures the mother’s abjection (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, esp. 90-112), this warrior surrenders himself to the mother/other. For the rabbis, the true warrior is the one who conquers his own *yesser*, who is a master of repression (Ab. 4.1). Samson is the paradigmatic instance of the warrior who is overcome by himself, his wish to know his own secret, the riddle he sets himself, and to share it with the other. Thereby he loosens his own bonds. But what about Delilah?” Landy conjectures. While sagacious and autonomous, she too seems fated to *différance*. “She creates the play-space into which Samson projects the metaphors of his life, but she does not contribute to it. Delilah is one of the most autonomous women in the Bible, without patronymic, without family ties, and wealthy enough to command an enormous price from the Philistines (Bal, *Lethal Love*, 50). She is not one to be bought easily if at all. What motivates her is not clear: the money is not convincing, or at least is not the whole answer. Perhaps she hates Samson, perhaps she is taking revenge for all the murdered daughters in Judges, as Mieke Bal suggest (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 224). Perhaps she too is trapped in her own game” (269). Landy is specifically concerned with the obstinacy of the metaphorical woman and particularly such representations of women in the Hebrew Bible. He is “troubled by the ordinary language syndrome that makes, for instance, Deborah and Jael into metaphorical women warriors when they are *actual* women warriors.” Delilah is another example of this pernicious and pervasive tendency, which has prevailed in Mediterranean cultures and continues to affect/effect Western European society; where women represent (conquered) bodies of land and entire people groups (not to mention the use of the feminine pronoun when referencing property such as cars, boats, or motorcycles). See note 130 in Chapter 3.

11), and saint.⁴⁰ Yet his choice to live near, mingle with and even marry “a Philistine unbeliever” has been interpreted as a disavowal of God.⁴¹ Samson’s ambivalent reception may be most salient in his depiction as the devil on the one hand and prefiguring Christ on the other.⁴² His association and equation with the lion also bespeaks the ambivalence resident in Samson, as Israel, for the Lion signifies the tribe of Judah (and Christ) as well as Satan; a particularly important equivalence for the Rastafari, who see H.I.M. as “Lion of Judah, the Root of David.”⁴³

Traditional Western European (Judeo-Christian) interpretations of Samson’s death are, according to David Gunn, “decidedly mixed” as readers wonder, was it vengeance, purely selfish and a sign of his ultimate demise, a reckoning, righteous indignation, (divine) retribution, a redemption, or simply suicide?⁴⁴ Readings of his violent use of force are equally vacillatory and inconclusive. Luther opposed individual acts of violence but conceded Samson as an exception according to God’s (prevenient) grace, since he was merely acting as any “ruler doing their Christian duty.”⁴⁵ Milton invoked him as a justification for war against tyrannical rulers, and Calvinist Joseph Hall commended the Philistines as it was “the same hand of God which ‘wrought Samson to revenge [and] restrained them from it.’”⁴⁶ Hall’s commentary in particular underscores not only the ambivalence surrounding interpretations of Samson but also those of the Philistines, who have historically been interpreted as sacrilegious, blaspheming, unclean, anti-Israel

⁴⁰ Gunn, *Judges*, 170-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 196, 197.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 200-201. See Revelation 5:5.

⁴⁴ Gunn, *Judges*, 224ff.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* See Joseph Hall, *Contemplations* (1615), x.4, 132.

pagans (and at times problematically linked with Palestinian Muslims), but have elicited sympathetic readings like Hall's and those of Susan Ackerman and Pnina Galpaz-Feller.⁴⁷ Much ink has been spilled, however, attempting to interpret and re-member one notorious "Philistine" in particular, who may not have been a Philistine at all: Delilah.⁴⁸ Delilah has received a tremendous amount of attention since the 70's, and is a trickster-tempter in her own right. In the past 50 years, she has been vilified and vituperated, reproached and reappropriated, recovered and re-presented, primarily in feminist and queer readings, though never absolutely absolved of her guilt.⁴⁹ Delilah, as Danna Nolan Fewell

⁴⁷ Ackerman, "What if Judges Had Been Written by a Philistine?" *Biblical Interpretation* 8, Issue 1 (2000): 33-41. Susan Ackerman puts the hyperbolic representation of the Philistines as barbaric and the epitome of evil (which has led readers to celebrate any biblical violence against them and to condone actual warfare as a result) into perspective as she queries, "what if Judges had been written by a Philistine?" Also see Pnina Galpaz-Feller, "'Let My Soul Die with the Philistines,' (Judges 16.30)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30 (2006): 315-25.

⁴⁸ See Francis Landy, *Beauty and the Enigma* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 268. "Incidentally," Landy casually comments in a footnote, "nowhere does it say that Delilah was a Philistine." Ironically, however, the affective association with the Philistines is so intense, that Delilah's status as a Philistine is as calcified as her reputation as temptress and source of Samson's fall. Cf. Gunn, "Samson of Sorrows," 239.

⁴⁹ For a feminist reading sympathetic to Delilah see Lillian Klein, "The Book of Judges: Paradigm and Deviation in Images of Women," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (The Feminist Companion to the Bible, 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 55-71. Adrien Bledstein read the story as satire that was ostensibly written by a woman. Cheryl Exum, however, (like Mieke Bal) wonders if this story can and/or should be reparatively read by feminists when Delilah's "power over Samson ultimately is appropriated by an androcentric agenda to serve male interests" (Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 89). Then again in "Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power?" she problematizes readings of this text as "reinforcing male domination and the oppression of women" (47). Smith understands the story to reflect "the use of different kinds of power within relationships" and that "such a portrayal need not necessarily serve a patriarchal agenda" (47). See Adrien J. Bledstein, "Is Judges a Woman's Satire of Men Who Play God?" in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, 34-54; Carol Smith, "Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 76 (1997): 45-57. Also see Smith, "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?" in *Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 93-116. In "Delilah,"

highlights, is the only woman named in the Samson saga, which signals that her identity is “not bound to any man;” Delilah is “a woman who takes care of herself.”⁵⁰ And not only does she take care of herself but in Lori Rowlett’s reading of her encounter with Samson as S/M (sodomasochistic) roleplay, where Delilah is the femme dominatrix to Samson’s “butch bottom.”⁵¹ From Bynum to Gunn and beyond, it is entirely evident that while the Samson cycle held enough significance for the people of Israel-Yehud to record his story, his tale resonates beyond and before these particular Mediterranean people; a heritage which may have included the African continent.

**The Other-Wisdom of Fools and Failures:
Judges 13-16 as Creolized Carnival (Grotesque) Folktale?**

Samson’s identity, might then be best understood as cross-cultural, even interethnic. Committed to sanctity/purity, as he was in his Nazarite vows, he was anything but pure. Samson not only represents the very impossibility of purity (racial, ethnic, cultural, genetic, or otherwise) but the perpetual frustration of certainty and stability, in other words, root identity. In this way, he more accurately and archipelogically represents *créolite* than purity. Paul Radin is yet another Western European intellectual whose interest in the trickster led to research, analysis and publication. *The Trickster*, Radin’s exposition on Indigenous American Folktale, what he

Smith queries, “Why does Delilah fascinate?” responding that her intrigue is due to “the nature of the story” but also because of those “unanswerable questions” about her, “which provide food for speculation” (94). In short, Delilah is ambiguous and that ambiguity provides ample space for various and sundry re-memberings. She takes on Phyllis Trible and feminist biblical interpretation. Also see, Phyllis Trible, “If the Bible’s so Patriarchal, How Come I Love It?” *BR* 8.5 (1992): 44-55.

⁵⁰ Fewell, *Judges*, 79.

⁵¹ Lori Rowlett, “Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah,” in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*, Ken Stone, ed. (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 106-115.

deemed “American Indian Mythology,” was published twenty years before *Daemon* and is indicative of the sort of fetishization common in the work of Western European anthropologists in the mid to late twentieth century.⁵² Included in the monograph is commentary from both Carl Jung and Karl Kerényi, who are, like Radin, drawing correlations to Western European mythology. While one cannot overlook the way in which colonial ideology influences their respective approaches to the indigenous American other, as well as the trickster, there are unquestionably characteristics shared by trickster figures across cultures. In the words of Kerényi,

Archaic social hierarchies are exceedingly strict. To be archaic does not mean to be chaotic. Quite the contrary: nothing demonstrates the meaning of the all-controlling social order more impressively than the religious recognition of that which evades this order, in a figure who is the exponent and personification of the life of the body: never wholly subdued, ruled by lust and hunger, forever running into pain and injury, cunning and stupid in action. Disorder belongs to the totality of life, and the spirit of that disorder is the trickster. His function in an archaic society, or rather the function of his mythology, of the tales told about him, is to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted.⁵³

E.T.A. Davidson, in fact, appeals to Kerényi’s description of the trickster as definitively Samson. She also considers Carl Jung’s depiction of the trickster, as “a forerunner of the

⁵² See Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988). In 1953, he published *The World of the Primitive Man*, an anthology that bears obvious resonance with the work of Claude such as Lévi-Strauss. Ironically, in the “Prefatory Note” to the work, Radin acknowledges the Trickster has been present in ancient Greek, Asian, and Semitic cultures. He does not, however, mention Africa. For a compelling critique of Radin’s work, see Jacques Coulardeau’s unpublished paper, “Paul Radin: A White Colonized Mind or Two Books and One Ideology at the Crossroads between Colonialism and Post-Colonialism,” https://www.academia.edu/4196926/PAUL_RADIN_A_WHITE_COLONIALIZED_MIND

⁵³ Radin, Loc. 3041.

savior, and, like him, God, man, and animal at once,” to be equally apt.⁵⁴ Samson, according to Davidson, is trickster as “subhuman and superhuman,” whose actions are alarming (and ultimately leave him alone in the world), yet “the trickster’s behavior towards the end of the cycle becomes quite useful and sensible.”⁵⁵ For Davidson, Samson as trickster is just one element of the story which legitimates its reading as carnival-grotesque.

Along with Niditch and Davidson, I understand Samson (and his interpretations) to bear witness to his identity as an inter-temporospatial amalgam of multiplying and at times conflicting, even contradicting, elements. The very paradox(es?) he inhabits has, in fact, produced a significant corpus of interpretations over the past two decades, which elaborate upon Samson’s precarity, ambiguity, or polysemy. What Niditch calls his liminality, what Greg Mobley considers his hybridity, what Davidson identifies as carnival-grotesque, and what Marco Derks has most recently deemed his (gender) fluidity, is what Glissant would have deemed his creolized errantry. I touch upon these and other recent interpretations, focalizing upon Davidson’s monograph in particular for its relevance to Glissant. Davidson’s rendering, in fact, functions as an invitation to

⁵⁴ Ibid., Loc. 3293. Cited in Davidson, 131. According to Jung, “the “so-called civilized man has forgotten the trickster. He remembers him only figuratively and metaphorically, when, irritated by his own ineptitude, he speaks of fate playing tricks on him or of things being bewitched. He never suspects that his own hidden and apparently harmless shadow has qualities whose dangerousness exceeds his wildest dreams. As soon as people get together in masses and submerge the individual, the shadow is mobilized, and, as history shows, may even be personified and incarnated” (Loc. 3341). One might say, then, according to a Jungian reading, Samson is Israel’s shadow. Jung’s proposition, while undeniably Eurocentric, begs the question of whether the Rastafarian’s distancing of themselves from the trickster, Anancy in particular, Carnival, and, therefore, any remembering of Samson as such, is not a reflection of attempts to be taken “seriously,” respected as “civilized,” and an ironic rejection and reversal of the very subversive status that has contributed and constituted the Rasta’s as critically counter-cultural and “dread.”

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3341. Cited in Davidson, 131.

creolization, for her appeal to Judges as a carnivalesque-grotesque folktale is convincing, yet, like other recent interpretations, only scratches the surface of Samson's subversive and transgressive potential. Offering opportunity for a(nother) moveable bridge between the Bible and the Caribbean, an archipelological route other-wise.

Rather than representing either a festival (appropriated by the bourgeoisie for their entertainment and economic benefit) or a literary genre, carnivalesque-grotesque is a performative vehicle of ritual embodiment for the solidarity and identity formation of the assemblage of creolized identities, (interpretive) bodies constituted in community. It is verbal carnality. Folktales, understood and interpreted archipelologically, become an integral socio-political, and cultural medium within oraliturrhythmic cultures, whose reliance upon this vehicle empowers and enables them to (re)create their (collective) ethos. In other words, it is not necessarily the *festival* performance of such tales, but their *oraliturrhythmic* performative re-membering, which constitutes strategic re-membering and consolidates identity. It is their radically embodied instantiation of verbal carnality in Relation to and/or resistance against the dominant Root-tree culture.

Readers will recall that Glissant poetically reimagines the Caribbean as “a forest of becoming in the untamed landscape, in the human carnival, in the interplay of linguistic and aesthetic forms.”⁵⁶ The Caribbean is a rhizomatic forest rather than Root (tree), it is “creative disorder” and what Glissant sees as “part of the ‘tradition of oral festivity’ and corporeal rhythms;” it is creolization.⁵⁷ Carnival becomes for Glissant not merely a model but a symbol for (life in) the Caribbean and “an essential component in a

⁵⁶ See note 197 in chapter 2 and pages 175-178. Also see Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xli.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Caribbean sensibility.”⁵⁸ Glissant proclaims that it is “the camouflaged escape” of carnival, which offer emancipation from the plantation-world, colonized by the Root-tree, the plantation, he explains, is the Garden of Genesis.⁵⁹ Enslaved by the West’s Root (tree) myth. Carnival and Caribbean folktale are creolization as rhizomatic Relation. They disrupt the Root while interdependancing to the poetic and archipelagic polyrhythms of re-membering the world, as the Bible, other-wise.

Inspired by the Afro-Caribbean re-appropriation of the pejorative label and language imposed by the French colonizer, let us re-member these texts that have *appeared to constrain us*; recognizing their own diasporic creolité.⁶⁰ Carnival holds profound possibility on account of its ambivalence as creolized archipelological and bibliorial modality. Carnival as creolization is “aform of revolution permanente...of ceaseless change,” a “demonstration of a cross-cultural poetics [and] a joyous affirmation of relativity.”⁶¹ Glissant writes,

If we speak of creolized cultures (like Caribbean culture, for example) it is not to define a category that will by its very nature be opposed to other categories (‘pure’ cultures), but in order to assert that today infinite varieties of creolization are open to human conception, both on the level of awareness and on that of intention: in theory and in reality...⁶²

It is the human carnival of creolized bodies that constitutes a critical socio-political disruption of Western European colonial (and epistemological) domination in its hermeneutic hegemony, it bespeaks its cross-cultural relevance (impetus for

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid xli-xlii.

⁶⁰ Creole folk spoke and continue to speak a disruptive, “impure” form of French, intentionally utilized by them to subvert French domination.

⁶¹ Ibid xlii, xliii.

⁶² Ibid., 140, 141.

transformation), and opens up the opportunity to re-member Samson as both carnivalesque-grotesque folktale and an important political symbol in Rastafarian re-memberings.⁶³

While Glissant himself, alongside other West Indian political theorists and cultural critics like Derrick Walcott, has embraced such a spirit of carnivalesque as the resistant poetics of enslaved Africans, the Rasta movement has publically decried it.⁶⁴ Rastafarians, then, have distinguished themselves not only in their rejection of the “official” culture of the Babylon system and its social mores, but by refusing the West

⁶³ This critical subversion is what Judith Butler refers to as “reverse citation” and is manifest in Caribbean re-appropriations of characters contrived in the works of Western European writers. Caliban, specifically in the work of Aimé Césaire, is exemplary in this way. See note 36 in Chapter 2. Also see Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 37ff.

⁶⁴ See Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000). Glissant even turns to William Faulkner’s deployment of Grotesque as exemplary in its exposure of the hypocrisy, racism, and paradoxical prejudices so rampant in the White Plantation South. On Glissant’s appeal to narratives of the past, “... ‘This is not a story to pass on’... It is rather, as Glissant signals, a story to reactivate. Faulkner’s narratives, thanks to their spaces left blank, leave room for this intervention” (*Poetics of Relation*, 122). Glissant writes, “William Faulkner, by questioning the legitimacy of this enclosed space, by showing the perversion of its filiation, opened this place to the world dimension” (Glissant, *Traité du Tout-Monde*, 82). This “trivial response” provides what Loichot considers “the key to a major explanation” of the relationship between Glissant and Faulkner. She notes that the words Glissant uses to describe Faulkner’s writing are those he uses to define the Plantation: “an ‘enclosed space’ that gives birth to an ‘open word’ (*Poetics of Relation*, 75);” “Memory” and a “belly” of the world (*Poetics of Relation*, 67, 75); “Therefore we could say that Faulkner’s narrative conforms to the matrix of Glissant’s texts. We have to keep in mind, however, the complexity of the matrix and in the Caribbean imaginary to understand that it is always a violent and ambiguous space: ‘The boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living as living under the sentence of death’ (*Poetics of Relation*, 6). We also have to understand that the matrix is reversible and that Glissant’s theories, in turn, can mother or remother Faulkner’s fiction...” (*Poetics of Relation*, 123).

Indian tradition of carnival—since both represent, according to a Rastafarian epistemology, an acquiescence to or under-standing of Babylon.⁶⁵ Then, the question remains: If Samson’s is a carnivalesque-grotesque folktale, but the Rastafari movement as a whole rejects carnival (the festivals and the spirit behind them) and the trickster motif within creole folktale—and anything which would dehumanize the Rasta by aligning the movement with Empire much less its entertainment—yet Rastafarians appeal to Samson, then, how is it possible that Samson is both Dread(ed) Rastaman and carnivalesque-grotesque folktale? The distinction, I contend, is in the interpretation and interpenetration.

The difference between modern embodiments of carnival and carnivalesque-grotesque is only a matter of perspective, as both are, in fact, political and epistemological. The former appeals to humor and inversion of hierarchy constructed and perpetuated by the colonizing force (as a primarily “official” festival within Caribbean contexts) and the latter is an oral literary modality, which is also an act of and means to the political resistance of colonization, disempowerment, and dehumanization. Their rhizomatic and interpenetrative Relation, one might say, resides in the lived experience of real “live” bodies, as living texts, in the verbal carnality that is the bibliorality of the archipelagos; a relationship that comes alive in Glissantian poetics of Relation.⁶⁶ While Bakhtin may have provided an exhaustive analysis of carnival folk culture during the European Renaissance, Glissant provides the necessary archipelagic intervention. The

⁶⁵ While none of the literature on Rastafari hermeneutics correlates carnival to the Philistine lords’ command to Samson—that he “entertain” them—there seem to me to be some pertinent connections and potential for further engagement and critique.

⁶⁶ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, xliii. See page 150.

continental thought of the West can no longer serve as epistemological Root for our contemporary creolized landscape, our world becoming archipelago.⁶⁷

And as much as the Boboshanti have distanced themselves from carnival, there are similarities between the Rastafari and the cultural form, whose anger over injustice incites and animates their artistic expression. According to Cooper, reggae is a transgressive agent that, like Carnival and folktale, employs linguistic chicanery in resistance to the dominant language and culture. Rastafari and reggae artists, such as Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Peter Tosh, Rita Marley Sons of Negus (all of whom are of a Rastafari Mansion) intentionally subvert the semantics of the English language and, in this way, latently and overtly undermine the Babylon system. The Rastafari represent a “non-partisan revolutionary consciousness...[that] challenges the political ideology of the ruling elite” and reggae is their rhythmic representation of this spirit.⁶⁸ So, while the Rastafari may publically decry carnival (due to its commodification and collusion with colonial forces) and folktale, to a lesser degree, the resonances between these Africana forms is the affective force of an archipelagic hermeneutic, particularly as we approach the Bible, provide an oralitutory bloom space in which to think them together. In this bloom space, where the rhythms of the Caribbean reverberate, Our all-“worldness” requires an archipelagic, a rhizomatic Relational (theo)poetics to respond in Relation to the Root, remedy our current predicament, and *to think with the thinking*

⁶⁷ See Chapter One.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 9.

*other other- wise.*⁶⁹ The creativity of the creolized carnival mentality, to which Derek Walcott appeals, as the creation of *endless somethings* from a history of/as “nothings,” and the Rastafarian movement convene and coalesce, rhythmically resonating upon the pulsating and palpating pages of the “oral text” that is the biblical corpus.⁷⁰

Glissant’s poetics are a hermeneutics that is the creolized errantry of rhizomatic force with revolutionary relational and, therefore, political consequence, which become the theopoetic (as always already political) frustration of hierarchy and binary epistemologies and the embodied hermeneutics of the Rastafari movement in order to read the folktale of Samson (Judges 13-16) other-wise.⁷¹ Cheryl Exum is but one

⁶⁹ See Glissant, “The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World,” in *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*, ed. Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 287-297.

⁷⁰ Walcott, “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?”, 259. In addressing the ways in which the people at core are not different, but equally valuable, Walcott submits that the Caribbean’s validity is its reality and issues a challenge to Americans in the North. He observes, “To begin with, we are poor. That gives us privilege. The poor always claim intimacy with God over the rich... Like faith, it remains the American problem, how to be rich and still good, how to be great and exercise compassion... Large sections of the population of this earth have nothing to lose after their history of slavery, colonialism, famine, economic exploitation, patronage, contempt. Walcott also directly addresses Trinidadian born British writer Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul who stated that “nothing has ever been created in the West Indies, and nothing will ever be created.” Walcott responds with characteristic wit (and tongue firmly planted in cheek), “Precisely, precisely. We create nothing, but that is to move from anthropological absurdity to pseudo-philosophical rubbish, to discuss the reality of nothing, the mathematical conundrum of zero to infinity. Nothing will always be created in the West Indies, for quite a long time, because what will come out of there is like nothing one has ever seen before.” Here, Walcott specifically speaks to the inability for the Western Root to apprehend archipelagic. Also see Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 263-4.

⁷¹ I am also intrigued by the commonality between Glissant’s *open word* and *relay* to *polyphonic dialogue* and *unfinalizability* in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin as they pertain to my current project, but may not have the time in my next project to pursue this correlation.

scholar who has analyzed the annunciation formula, which introduces the Samson story, in order to consider its internal relevance and external resonance (with other Ancient Near Eastern works).⁷² (Whether or not one is able to identify the annunciation formula as representative or characteristic of a particular type of oral tradition or genre, even casual readers of the Bible would recognize the formula throughout both the so-called Old Testament and in the New.) In fact, such an annunciation is found in the stories of Sarah (Genesis 11:30ff), Rebekah—whose husband just so happens to be the aforementioned miraculous birth (Genesis 25:21ff), Rachel (Genesis 29:31ff)—Rebekah’s daughter-in-law, as well as Elizabeth (Luke 1:7ff). And, who could forget, Jesus himself was the product of such a divinely effective/affective insemination! The trope of barren woman become mother is also found in Psalm 113:9 and Isaiah 54:1 and is recognized as a symbol of God’s favor, sovereignty, sustenance/provision, and providence throughout the biblical text. While popular in the Ancient Mediterranean, the motif is common to mythology and folktales worldwide, universally signifying miraculous and/or magical intervention.⁷³

⁷² Judges 13:1-5 reads, “The Israelites again did what was offensive to the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. There was a certain man from Zorah, of the stock of Dan, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren and had borne no children. An angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, ‘You are barren and have borne no children; but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now be careful not to drink wine or other intoxicant, or to eat anything unclean. For you are going to conceive and bear a son; let no razor touch his head, for the boy is to be a nazirite to God from the womb on. He shall be the first to deliver Israel from the Philistines.’”

⁷³ See Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, “Mapping the Imagination: Heroes, Gods, and Oedipal Triumphs,” in Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, ed., *Psychoanalysis and Theism: Critical Reflections on the Grünbaum Thesis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 159-162.

In other words, from “beginning” to “end,” Samson’s story is folktale and, according to Edith Davidson, carnivalesque-grotesque—two genres central to creative cultural expression in the Caribbean.

E.T.A. Davidson’s Bakhtinian Reading of Judges

In her work *Intricacy, Design, & Cunning in the Book of Judges*, Elizabeth Davidson reads the book of Judges in conversation with Mikhail Bakhtin’s Carnavalesque-Grotesque Chronotope, where the Samson saga is but one among a collection of Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktales.⁷⁴ While Davidson’s work has indubitably influenced my analysis of Samson, I read the tale through this modality in order to highlight its resonance with Afro-Caribbean Carnival, its robust re-membering range and, therefore, its political import for the Rastafari, focalizing upon certain prominent characteristics, which have consequence for a Rastafari re-membering of Samson.⁷⁵ Interpreting Samson as carnivalesque-grotesque, foregrounds the tales orality and highlights the ways in which this tale could as easily be an Africana or Afro- Caribbean folktale as a folk tradition indigenous to the Ancient Near East. In this way, then, biblical stories such as Judges 13-16 become blooming space for a dialogue between orality, Africana, literary, queer and affect Studies. Without foregrounding Western European methodologies or epistemologies, we approach the text through its oral performance, inflecting and re-membering the story in new ways through archipelological routes other-wise. In this way, audiences of real “live” bodies come to

⁷⁴ Davidson, 95ff.

⁷⁵ While I will make mention of each particular aspect, there are only a handful of characteristics that are integral to my project.

interpret and identify with the textual bodies as/in terms of “real” fleshy bodies *performing Samson* both culturally and politically. I begin by considering a few of the ways in which Samson conveys carnivalesque-grotesque within its imagined original context only to later pick the text back up and reflect upon why and how this matters for a Rastafarian re- membering hermeneutic. To understand the import of the lens through which Davidson reads Judges, however, we must revisit Bakhtinian carnivalesque-grotesque (and its WUD) to poststructuralism, poetics, Glissant, and, therefore, the Samson cycle.

As the reader will recall, according to Bakhtin, there are two kinds of festivals, “Official” (as authorized, authoritative) state-sponsored events and “Folk,” which are of and by the people and marked by a carnivalesque spirit.⁷⁶ The latter, then, is characterized by the manipulation of the socially sanctioned norms that order “regular” (official, linear, Western European Root) time by the former, not merely by negation but through tactics of inversion, resulting in their subversion. In carnivalesque-grotesque, this subversion is achieved through the construction of a world-upside-down or WUD. It is with this temporo-spatial construct in mind that we consider Davidson’s deployment of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque-grotesque, the first of which is (as is characteristic of the grotesque) the centrality of *Body Parts*. According to Bakhtin, they are everywhere present and are not understood to be *private* parts, but universal. In other words, the grotesque body is like (queerly) creolized testimonios. When Samson’s grotesque (Nazirite-Israelite) body, in Judges 13-16, is re-membered in this way, it

⁷⁶ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 5ff. (Translated from *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable*, Published in Moscow in 1965)

might be interpreted as a sort of metonymy—as the “part” that is *everywhere present* and while he may operate as an individual body, he is actually the representation or body of all (the bodies of) “Israel.” As Davidson asserts, all the main human body parts are used in Samson and some of non-human animals as well.⁷⁷ She goes on to posit: “Samson loves physical contact of all kinds.”⁷⁸ Which is, upon my reading, one of the characteristics that contributes to Samson’s “realness” and “relatability”—the connection is affective. People *feel* him.

Dismemberment is the next category, which for Davidson includes Samson’s hair and the gouging of his eyes, but could also include his encounter with the Lion. Dismemberment is exemplified through scenes and events in wherein “what is inside (hidden) is brought out.”⁷⁹ Davidson continues, “Grotesque literature shows us the body continually undergoing change, being taken apart, being reproduced. Nothing is fixed or eternal.”⁸⁰ I would proffer that while Samson may not appear to “change” once and for all (as we have been conditioned to understand and value as *real* change), he is not only materially but affectively in a constant state of (e)motion. It is, in fact, Samson’s perpetual state of dis-memberment that invites his audience toward a re-membering other-wise (but never once and for all). Always depicted in various affective states and temporal spaces, Samson signifies in relation to bonds and bondage, borders and boundaries, restraints and

⁷⁷ Davidson, 95-6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 95-6. Davidson finds it odd that there is no traditional dismemberment—those “produced by warriors in battle.” I contend, however, that this is not only not odd but is, in fact, apropos, since carnivalesque-grotesque is characterized by the suspension of normal rules of behavior. The only thing that is usual is the unusual.

limit(ation)s—to God, his parents, the Philistines, Women, and himself. Though even when bound he is never entirely still, stable, controlled, predictable, ordered, intelligible (as human)—Samson always finds routes other-wise. Through the repetition of his evasion of the Philistines, we come to trust that he cannot be contained...until he is.⁸¹ It is at this time that he is shackled and dismembered by the Philistines, who cut his hair and gouge out his eyes. When read in (poetic) Relation to the biblical story of the “exodus” and interpreted in terms of “exile” and its larger significance for the people of “Israel” and the Rastafari, Samson’s ability to perpetually evade restraint carries particular import, a point to which I will return.

Davidson proceeds to attend to the other characteristics of carnivalesque-grotesque, at least perceiving their traces when they do not factor significantly into either the plot of Judges and Samson’s narrative. I will identify all of these categories and proceed to touch upon those I consider germane to my re-membling of Samson. Among them are: *Food, Wine, and Banquets*,⁸² *Topsy-Turvy World*,⁸³ *Wrong Use of Common Objects*,⁸⁴ *Disguises & Masks*,⁸⁵ *Weddings*,⁸⁶ *Exaggeration*,⁸⁷ *Heterogeneity*,⁸⁸ *Irony*,⁸⁹

⁸¹ Samson has been interpreted as a trickster primarily according to his perpetual evasion of the Philistines. The trickster is a motif and character associated with Carnival which Rastafarians critique harshly. (See Adrian McFarlane’s “The Epistemological Significance of ‘I-an’I’” in *Chanting Down Babylon*.)

⁸² The Wedding Feast at Timnah: The irony is that the second aspect of the Nazir Vow is no wine or intoxicant or product associated with the grape. And not only does Samson hold a banquet but...The text explicitly states that Samson goes down to the vineyards at Timnah (which is where his Wife and her family are).

⁸³ Bakhtin’s “World Upside-Down” (WUD), common are usurpations and uncrownings and, according to Davidson—following the author in Judges 18:1 and 19:1—this is because there was no order or authority in Israel...and “everyone was doing right in his (*sic*) own eyes.

⁸⁴ The jaw bone of the ass and the weaving pin/loom in particular.

⁸⁵ There are numerous scenes in the story where Samson disguises or masks himself and

Satire,⁹⁰ *Riddles, Puzzles, and Games*,⁹¹ *Focus on Common People, Accurate*

Topography, and Quirky Nomenclature.⁹² The remaining categories, which hold

his intentions. Terms that might be used interchangeably here would be *Deception*, *Betrayal*, and *Trickery*. Two of the most prevalent examples are Samson's decision not to tell his parents about his encounter with the Lion at Timnah in Judges 14:5-9 (where he tore the lion apart with his bare hands and then ate honey from within its carcass), since as a Nazirite he is forbidden from even touching an animal carcass and Samson's game with Delilah. As aforementioned, while the Rastafari have explicitly distanced themselves from the Trickster motif characteristic of Carnival and Anancy fables, like Creole, linguistic cunning inheres in reggae and Dread Talk. Evidence that one can be both committed to truth and radical authenticity and yet still employ masking to subvert the Babylon system. (One of the most important here (for Rastafari) is the betrayal of Samson by the Judahites in Judges 15:9, an act of treason which actually follows the Philistines killing their own. Samson burns their fields. Interesting that both Judah and the Philistines turn on their own kinfolk.)

⁸⁶ Festivals/ Banquets and Weddings are connected and involve violence/fighting, as in Judges 14—the text in which God compels Samson to marry a Philistine. Why? To instigate or, as David Gunn phrases it: “Because YHWH wants to start a fight!”

⁸⁷ Davidson highlights numbers, which “in grotesque fiction are ‘unstable,’ or may be over-precise and exaggerated to the point of monstrosity (463-465).” (Also see Alter 1981 [On repetition in the Samson narrative as well as hyperbole and the number 3])

⁸⁸ Wherein heterogeneous elements are yoked.

⁸⁹ See Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1988).

⁹⁰ According to Davidson, Samson satirizes machismo (101).

⁹¹ For more on the way in which Samson's riddles function as well as interpretations of Delilah's encounter with Samson as a game (specifically bondage), see Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 37-67; Francis Landy, *Beauty and the Enigma: And Other Essays on the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 268-270; [...]; and Lori Rowlett, “Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah,” in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*, 106-115. Also see Claudia V. Camp and Carole Fontaine, “The Words of the Wise and Their Riddles,” in *Text and Tradition*, ed. Susan Niditch (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

⁹² Samson's name is related to the sun (god); Shemesh; and also like Heracles. It bears noting that there have been speculations about Samson at Beth Shemesh, due to an 11th century seal found near Timnah at Tel Batash. (Even the subtitle of the article describing the findings and correlation made by Israeli archaeologists bespeaks the ubiquity of

particular relevance for my re-membering of Samson, include *Women Destroying Men*—which functions as a disruptive inversion in carnivalesque-grotesque, and has been (as I mentioned in the previous chapter) taken literally in fundamentalist readings, like those of the Bobo Ashanti⁹³—*Parody, Travesty, and Burlesque, Body Parts* and their *Dismemberment and Mutilation, Madness, Degradation, and Suspension of Normal Rules* which indubitably appeals to our emotional bodies and will lead me back to further reflection on affect in light of carnivalesque-grotesque.

For Davidson, the categories of *Parody, Travesty, and Burlesque* seem to work together, at least the first two are evident in that Samson's theophany is travesty and his is a grotesque parody of the Abraham/Sarah story. I would argue, however, that Samson could as easily be read as a parody of Moses and the Hebrew people. The Nazarite Vow, stated in Judges 13:5, is given to Moses in Numbers 6, and it comes with a (relatively ambiguous) prophecy which was also spoken to Moses in Exodus 2:1-10—that he would

Samson's popular re-membering: "Scholars in Israel say they may have uncovered the first archaeological evidence of Samson, the Bible slayer of Philistines whose might was undone by his lust for the temptress Delilah.") See Adrian Blomfield, "Israeli scholars claim possible evidence of Samson," *The Telegraph* (July 30, 2012) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/9438668/Israeli-scholars-claim-possible-evidence-of-Samson.html> (Accessed May 15, 2015.)

⁹³ Women are foils to male protagonists. It is no surprise that Delilah is interpreted, then, as Samson's Foil. Samson's Mother, the woman at Timnah, and the "whore," all play important roles here as "living elsewhere," where their identities are defined by and through their "spatial otherness," which, in turn, determines Samson's subjectivity within the story, as Mieke Bal has illustrated. Much as Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva, Bal is concerned with the way in which such dichotomous depictions of women by men are perpetually evaded (as the text deconstructs itself) in spite of the male author's attempts to separate women into "oppositional categories," betraying the impossibility of textual coherence or determinacy and the reality of only ever repeated re-memberings other-wise (19). See Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 194-5, 200-4.

be the first to Deliver Israel or the One to Begin to Deliver Israel.⁹⁴ Numbers 6 concludes with the covenant and blessing from YHWH.⁹⁵ The deity speaks to Moses words which resemble Samson's own peculiar experience with YHWH. "So they shall put my name (i.e., associate, signify) upon Israel and I will bless them!" No matter what, just like Samson, the people of Israel will be identified with YHWH and they will be blessed.⁹⁶ Samson, like Israel, *wanders* (in the Wilderness?) perpetually and, like Moses, is not actually the one to *deliver* Israel. Even as Moses, Samson begins the process but fails to bring it to fruition and, just like Israel Samson continually fails to keep the Covenant/Vows to which he is bound.⁹⁷

The function of violence in carnivalesque-grotesque is ironic: typically the enactment of justice and *a means to the Ethical* (whereby the perpetrator becomes the

⁹⁴ Cf. Judges 13:7, 20ff. As Samson's mother makes the integral decisions regarding his future. Samson's father, however, fears they will die after seeing God—a misperception his Mother must correct (through her faith/wisdom). Within the tale, Samson's mother functions as a vessel for the protagonist's life (and death), while his Father is a mere pawn, yet the father is named (Manoah), while she remains nameless. Typical of hero tales, particularly in the Bible, Samson's mother is barren before miraculous conception for which his dad may or may not have been necessary. See Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 74-80.

⁹⁵ Numbers 6:22-28.

⁹⁶ It bears noting that this notion of "blessing" is difficult to define. I am not certain that God continually blesses Samson, or if YHWH is yet another agent attempting to bind Samson. YHWH instigated the original altercation with the Philistines and time and again "the Philistines" (who function as the Imperial Other to Israel—Babylon and later Persia) are attempting to bind/enslave him. It is uncertain whether YHWH seeks to liberate Samson once and for all or if it is by Samson's own wits, wisdom, and strength by which he always finds a way to evade or outdo them.

⁹⁷ See David Gunn, "Samson of Sorrows: An Isaianic Gloss on Judges 13-16" in *Reading Between the Texts*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 225-253. Judges 15:18-19 is but one more way in which Samson's plot/characterization resembles the Moses/Israel cycle. In this episode, Samson strikes the Rock after crying out to God in thirst just as the people of Israel cry to Moses out of thirst and Moses too strikes the rock and by God's power, water flows out. (See Numbers 20:10.)

object of brutality instead of its subject. In the case of Samson (as Israel) this is instantiated in his slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Philistines, who enslaved the people of Israel.⁹⁸ Somehow what appear to be Samson's *personal vendettas* ensure that "Yahweh's work gets done."⁹⁹ *Madness* is seemingly endorsed by the Divine in the service of Wisdom—a characteristic of Carnavalesque-Grotesque. Of Madness Bakhtin writes, "[it] makes men look at the world with different eyes...in the folk grotesque, madness is a gay parody of official reason."¹⁰⁰ Samson is, for Davidson, an exemplar of such madness, which is the opposite of authorized Wisdom, but might be re-membered other-wise as wisdom in its own right.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Does this, then, imply that the story of Samson is, in fact, a tale about meting justice? Do Samson's actions enact justice for the community of Israel-Judah, that is, Yehud? Or is this a story about the establishment of a theocracy and the establishment of communal identity through the Supreme Power of the Deity YHWH (as Susan Niditch and John Vickery have each argued)? Does Samson's story serve to shift blame from Israel for their wayward wandering to YHWH? After all it was by YHWH's *ruah* that Samson was first led to the Philistines and first incited to kill them and again YHWH's *ruah*, which granted Samson the strength to commit suicide and kill 3,000 Philistines at the temple of Dagon. Which then begs the question, might the people of "Israel" been seeking a more peaceful coexistence with "the Philistines" while YHWH instigated conflict? But if "Israel" was under the watchful eye of various Empires and YHWH desired their liberation and, eventual prominence, was it not in the name of freedom for (and in the name of) "Israel"? Or was it merely for the deity's own glory? Is the Samson narrative, like David Clines' Job, a psychic manifestation or representation of the author's personal neuroses? Or might Samson be Yehud's attempt toward communal psychic mending through meaning-making (however excessive and hyberbolic the endeavor)? See John B. Vickery, "In Strange Ways: The Story of Samson," in *Images of Man and God: Old Testament Short Stories in Literary Focus*, ed. Burke O. Long (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1981), 58-73. Also see David E. Bynum, "Samson as a Biblical φηρ ορεσκως," in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed. Susan Niditch (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 57-73; and Mira Morgenstern, *Conceiving a Nation: The Development of Political Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2009).

⁹⁹ Fewell, *Judges*, 80.

¹⁰⁰ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 39.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 260. See Claudia V. Camp and Carole Fontaine, "The Words of the Wise and Their Riddles," in *Text and Tradition*, 127-151.

In addition to *Madness*, both *Degradation* (negative and positive) and the *Suspension of Normal Rules* are integral to Samson. *Degradation*, marked by spatial descent in various ways, typifies Samson's movement in the narrative. The protagonist is continually "going down" to various locations throughout the story. Davidson asserts that "Dead bodies are fertilizer" in the book of Judges, which I believe holds true for the Samson story.¹⁰² In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin writes, "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high; spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity."¹⁰³ The blurring of the boundary between bodies and within them may contribute to readers ambivalence to Judges and the compulsion to "turn away in disgust."¹⁰⁴

Sara Ahmed deals directly with the affective push and pull of bodies, and particularly the repulsion incited when we feel disgust. Disgust, she posits, "does something, certainly: through disgust, bodies 'recoil' from their proximity, as a proximity that is felt as nakedness or as an exposure on the skin surface."¹⁰⁵ Disgust is not innate, or what Ahmed describes as a "gut feeling"—disgust is performative and socially constructed as such.¹⁰⁶ Disgust is also inherently ambivalent, we are simultaneously compelled toward the very objects perceived as repellant.

¹⁰² Davidson, 95.

¹⁰³ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 19-20.

¹⁰⁴ Davidson, 98, 99. Davidson focuses primarily on characters depicted as lying on the ground or prone (Samson—who is lying in Delilah's lap), and briefly mentions death to be the ultimate example of degradation.

¹⁰⁵ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 83, 84. Appealing to the work of Tomkins, Kristeva, Judith Butler, Audre Lorde, Jean Paul-Sarte, Elizabeth Grosz, and William Ian Miller, Ahmed proceeds to elucidate the process in which disgust comes to stick to bodies, marked as 'disgusting.' See pp. 84-100.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 98. Here she looks to Judith Butler's theorizing of performativity, which is (according to Butler) about "the power of discourse to produce effects through

Disgust pulls us away from the object, a pulling that feels almost involuntary, as if our bodies were thinking for us, on behalf of us. In contrast, desire pulls us toward objects, and opens us up to the bodies of others. While the affect of being pulled may feel similar at one level, at another, the direction or orientation of the pull creates a very different affective relation between the subject and object...[I want to think of the ‘pulling’ as an intensification of movement as such. In such an intensification, the objects seem to have us ‘in their grip’, and to be moving toward us in how they impress upon us, an impression that requires us to pull away, with an urgency that can be undoing.¹⁰⁷

The way in which Ahmed articulates the ambivalence of disgust captures in many ways Samson’s relationship with the Philistines. Samson is gripped by and even as he is quite literally bound by, he is bound to, the Philistines. In the words of Lauren Berlant, Samson’s relationship with the Philistines should be understood as or in terms of cruel optimism. Of course, the Israelite representation of the Philistines resembles what Martha C. Nussbaum deems “projective disgust,” which bears resonance with the Kristevan abject: the body that is “a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable...[which,] like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself.”¹⁰⁸

Nussbaum, for her part, describes projective disgust as “disgust for a group of other humans who are segmented from the dominant group and classified as lower because of being (allegedly) more animal.”¹⁰⁹ In this way, the object of disgust becomes quasi-animal, “occupying a border zone between the truly human (associated with

reiteration.” Also see Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York Routledge, 1993), 20.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (London and Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 184.

transcendence of the body and its substances) and the utterly nonhuman...[and] is a form of anthropodenial, and very likely motivated by deeper anxieties about morality and helplessness.”¹¹⁰ Those groups onto whom this disgust is projected do not, in reality, possess the attributed properties. However, repetition over time results in an affective and, therefore, effective cathecting and, of course, re-membering of the group as such. Nussbaum names the common Western European white miasmatic encounter with a cultural or racial(ized) other as exemplary, specifically the “fantasy that African Americans smelled worse than whites, and the more general anxiety that their bodies would contaminate food, drinking fountains, and swimming pools.”¹¹¹

More than simply being the result of xenophobia, there are at least two other (ironic) elements contributing such dynamics (to which Kristeva, Ahmed and Nussbaum all attend). There may be a sort of psychic displacement at play, where a particular group confers disgust in order to alleviate or assuage their own abjection in society and/or if one is drawn to a perceived other, who is unacceptable within (because unintelligible by) the community, such tactics are employed as prohibitive measures.¹¹² The Israelites serve as exemplary in both scenarios and Samson’s story betrays this ambivalence. In the former, through the projection of impure, profane, or “disgusting” attributes onto the Philistines, the Israelites, who were themselves objects of disgust within the Greco-Roman empire, attempted to displace anxieties about their own abject status. The latter, in fact, involves desire for the very object being constituted as disgusting. Often the anxiety induced by

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² For an extensive exposition on this process in relation to U.S. propaganda concerning Muslim’s and/in the construction of terrorist assemblages see Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Duke University Press, 2007). I find Puar’s critique apropos if one approaches certain passages of the Hebrew Bible as anti-Philistine propaganda. Also see note 96 in the Introduction.

the body (human or otherwise) is the result of the inability to quell desires for this supposed other and/or the concern for losing one's particularity in the exchange. Glissant observes, "if we rediscover the fact that we can change through exchange with others, without losing ourselves or our true nature, then we are able to glimpse what I would like to call worldness, which is our common condition today."¹¹³

We are always already bound inextricably to our various "others" (i.e., not just one, in dualistic difference) in the worldness of our world becoming archipelago. The derogatory and defaming rhetoric regarding the Philistines as well as the prohibitions against exogamy within the Hebrew Bible, rather than bespeaking actual distance, betray the existence of intimate, albeit ambivalent, relations and the intrinsic appeal of the Philistines to the Israelites as part of the all-world of rhizomatic Relation. This is an ambivalent pull, an intensification of desire, as Ahmed elucidates, wherein *the objects seem to have us 'in their grip', and to be moving toward us in how they impress upon us, an impression that requires us to pull away, with an urgency that can be undoing.*¹¹⁴ The relationship of the Israelites and Philistines, as imagined through Samson's ambivalent affective entanglement with them, can serve as a metaphor for the poetics of Relation in our all-world, for worldness. As Glissant maintains, it is entirely possible to change *without losing ourselves*, but we will be undone. To think ourselves and the other (with the thinking other) through the archipelogics of "worldness," the very concept of self (as a Western European Root identity) is always already re-membered other-wise.

Returning to Davidson's list, the final category is the *Suspension of Normal Rules*. In Judges 13-16, these regulations seem to specifically involve the (patriarchal and

¹¹³ Glissant, "The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World," 287.

¹¹⁴ Ahmed, 98.

heteronormative) nazirite sanctions for bodily purity (and the norms to which Samson was bound from the womb) and his transgression of Israelite regulations regarding engaging the Philistines. The most prominent for many scholars, is that he *goes to his* wife (one of the few women in the story) rather than his wife coming to him.¹¹⁵ In her reflections on tragic and comic festivals, Nussbaum also attends to the way in which man is rendered vulnerable through his physical experience of sexual desire. Appealing to *Lysistrata*, Nussbaum highlights the shame specific to the physical marker of that desire, the erection, which is “the device through which the female world wins triumph.” She continues,

By denying men the control they have come to expect over women’s bodies, the women put them in a ridiculous and humiliated position. To walk around with an erection is a confession of a shameful lack of control, over both self and other. Losing their macho authority, the men become capable, ultimately, of sense. As *Lysistrata* remarks, it is easy to get men to make peace—if you catch them while they are erect rather than when they are competing aggressively with one another.¹¹⁶

Nussbaum attends to the way the penis shifts, in *Lysistrata*, from an emblem of “male humiliation and submission...[to one] of reconciliation, hope, and peace,” yet does not address the profound irony of the phallus as ultimate symbol of Western European male power, as penetration and virility, *simultaneously* functioning as the symbol of ultimate impotence and vulnerability.¹¹⁷ I believe her words and my own intervention are apropos in light of Samson’s tale, particularly in the shame implied in his susceptibility to Delilah and the shearing of Samson’s locks.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 99. In addition, Davidson notes that the mood is “festive” and “joyous” like Roman Saturnalia—which holds some significance for Samson (as incarnation of the sun god).

¹¹⁶ Nussbaum, 275.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

I would be remiss if I did not at least mention the connection between Nussbaum's observations, my supplement, and Hélène Cixous's reflections in "The Laugh of the Medusa," particularly in relation to the Samson tale, archipelagic oraliture, and RastaWomanism. In "Medusa," Cixous addresses the universal "inevitable struggle" of women "against conventional man" and the necessity of "bringing[ing] women to their senses and to their meaning in history."¹¹⁸ In order to defy women's oppressive determination under the (Western European) male gaze, as a homogenized one-dimensional object on the one hand or a split subject who can only ever be/represent good or bad, virtue or vice, truth or temptation. "It is time," she announces, "for women to start scoring their feats in written and oral language," for women are not constrained by "that scission, that division made by the common man between the affective the logic of oral speech and the logic of text, bound as he is by his antiquated relation...to

¹¹⁸ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 875, 876. Cixous, like Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, is one of the so-called poststructuralist feminists. Their work finds meaning in the intersections of structuralism and psychoanalytic theory. Therefore, they work not only to deconstruct the structure of language but the way in which psychic experience, identity, and culture are shaped by language. Each of these thinkers worked closely with the Jacques Lacan's reading and revision on Sigmund Freud, critiquing and building upon Lacan's theorizing of the self (none more than Kristeva). Not only were the works of Freud and Lacan instrumental to their work but also the contributions of Melanie Klein, who would capitalize on Freud's ideas on splitting and create her own psychoanalytic discourse around this concept: "object relations theory." According to Klein, children learn very early to categorize experiences and objects according to a binary system in which something is classified either "good" or "bad." Though Klein never expressed this systemization in terms of conditioning, she (in distinction from Freud) did understand this process as a defense mechanism and a learned behavior rather than an innate characteristic. I would suggest that this mechanism expresses the root structure of Western European epistemology and is learned or absorbed by infants and toddlers within Eurocentric societies because humans could not communicate or survive without this system functioning as their epistemological compass. See Melanie Klein, "The Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego," (219-232) and "Personification in the Play of Children" (199-209) in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1975).

mastery.¹¹⁹ Much like Luce Irigaray in *The Sex Which Is Not One*, Cixous focuses on exploding “phallic mystification” through a poetics of feminine desire, as multiple and always craving and creating more in order that “women” will no longer be silenced in self-effacing submission, forbidden from self-representation and expression, by the phallic pen (with the power to cut off her head and take control of her petrifying gaze).¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Cixous, 880, 881. She continues, “It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn’t be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem” (881).

¹²⁰ Cixous, 879, 881. Of course, Cixous is capitalizing on the multiple meanings of Medusa, who unquestionably signifies the “source” of Freud’s fear of castration, but also the impossibility of the phallus and/or the phallogocentric telos of overcoming and resolving that anxiety once and for all through the eradication of its so-called source. That is, the usurpation of male power by whatever is not-Man. Cixous offers a parenthetical regarding what she means by male writing: “I maintain unequivocally that there is such a thing as *marked* writing; that, until now, far more extensively and repressively than is ever suspected or admitted, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural—hence political, typically masculine—economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously, and in a manner that’s frightening since it’s often hidden or adorned with the mystifying charms of fiction; that this locus has grossly exaggerated all the signs of sexual opposition (and sexual difference), where woman has never *her* turn to speak—this being all the more serious and unpardonable in that writing is precisely *the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures” (879). The resonances between the French poststructuralist feminists and the female créolistes are never more clear than in this statement. Each project seeks to assert female agency through women’s writing, in order to seize and capitalize upon the creative and transgressive potential of writing—particularly when it subverts “the same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory” phallogocentric tradition (i.e., [Western European] male epistemological and literary hegemony). Cixous, along with Kristeva, Irigaray and Monique Wittig to a lesser degree, has also been accused of perpetuating the gender binary through her notion of *l’écriture féminine*, “feminine writing,” because “with a few rare exceptions, there has not yet been any writing that inscribes femininity,” writing specific to women’s experience within a (hetero)patriarchal world (878). Of course, the significance of *écriture féminine* lies precisely in its exposure and exploitation of the gender binary through women’s appropriation of their difference and otherness in order to destabilize the very dyadic system that has led to their silencing. It is, as Judith Butler has pointed

Cixous pronounces and performs *l'écriture féminine*, a poetics of verbal carnality in the other-wise, challenging the dominant order that the diverse range of those whom identify as “woman” might unabashedly imagine and announce themselves other-wise as well. Resonating and reverberating with the affective intensity of she boldly proclaims,

I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs. Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst—burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune. And I, too, said nothing, showed nothing; I didn't open my mouth, I didn't repaint my half of the world. I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! What's the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naiveté, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallogentrism, hasn't been ashamed of her strength? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a...divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn't thought she was sick? Well, her shameful sickness is that she resists death, that she makes trouble...We're stormy, and that

out, a necessary step in the disruption and deconstruction of the binary gender system. For the most (in)famous psychoanalytic rendering (re-mem-bering) of Medusa see Sigmund Freud, “Medusa's Head” in *The Medusa Reader*, eds. Marjorie Garber and Nancy J. Vickers (New York: Routledge, 2003), 84-86. For a feminist critique of Freud in relation to his writings on women, see Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud's Writings* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985). In Kofman's analysis, Freud delayed writing about women and, specifically female sexuality “because of the horror/pleasure it provokes, because of the death threat that it is thought to bear. For neither death nor woman's sex can be faced directly. To write about female sexuality is to disclose a dangerous secret, is in one way or another to display openly, to dis-cover, women's fearsome sex. A sex that is all the more fearsome and threatening for man in that he feels vulnerable—and guilty” 20). Catherine Porter, who translated *Enigma* from French to English, points out in a footnote the double entendre in the French phrase Kofman employs, “*coupable (en tous les sens de ce terme)*.” Representing guilt in this way infers both *coupable* as “guilty, susceptible to being blamed” and *coupable* as “cuttable, susceptible to being cut” (from *couper*). As David Leeming illuminates in his mapping of Medusa as transcultural symbol, this image or dream and the fear it bespeaks is prevalent in cultures around the globe and even before classical Greek mythology. See David Leeming, *Medusa: In the Mirror of Time* (London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 2013).

which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation. Our glances, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we're not afraid of lacking.¹²¹

It is in this audacity and hunger in the face of phallo(go)centric gynophobia, the age-old fear of female power, *la femme fatale*, that we find the myth of Medusa and the story of Samson nestled, lodged, embedded in our collective cultural memory. The tale of Samson, according to the Western European heteropatriarchal imaginary, is unquestionably a narrative about the dangers of female desire and/in its threat to Man's absolute authority and power (over himself). The woman-poet who is liberated and empowered is the woman whose appearance "would necessarily bring on, if not revolution...at least harrowing explosions."¹²² And, unfortunately, the Rastafari have inherited this tradition, which is why re-membering Samson in light of I-an-I through a

¹²¹ Cixous, 876, 878. And it is not only misogyny Cixous takes on but racism and colonialism, all under the Western European male gaze, as well as the system that inculcates this oppressive, dehumanizing, fear-ridden, dichotomous deep, root structure of meaning in every culture and people it infects. She explains, "Here they are, returning, arriving over and again, because the unconscious is impregnable. They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they've been given a deadly brainwashing. You can incarcerate them, slow them down, get away with the old Apartheid routine, but for a time only. As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they're taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark" (878). Of course, Cixous' equation of women's experience with blackness is not entirely free of racist underpinnings or the trace of white privilege as she asserts, "We the precocious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths gagged with pollen, our wind knocked out of us, we the labyrinths, the ladders, the trampled spaces, the bebies—we are black and we are beautiful." What becomes readily apparent, however, is that blackness functions as a metaphor and a symbol through which oppressed people's might stand in solidarity against "Men."

¹²² Cixous, 879.

creolized, archipelagic hermeneutic of bibliorality, therefore, as a Rasta, is so very vital.¹²³

From Poststructuralist Samson to an Archipelagic Samson?

Interpreting Samson as creolized and Rasta, invites us to approach his story as carnivalesque-grotesque folktale of Relational poetics necessitating an archipelological hermeneutics of bibliorality characterized not by literacy, linearity, and intelligibility but orality, errantry, and affect.¹²⁴ For even as Samson frustrates all attempts to make sense, his body most certainly matters and is re-membered in many ways by (m)any bodies. The Samson Gregory Mobley reads in Judges 13-16 is the traditional liminal hero and wild man of ancient Near Eastern texts.¹²⁵ Samson's circuitous route and refusal to settle and procreate both reflects the hero's journey and troubles the very masculinity and patriarchal constructions of time and space, which dominated ancient Near Eastern culture. Samson's ethnic identity (as neither Danite nor Philistine) renders him

¹²³ See note 189 in Chapter 3. My utility of "vital" throughout the dissertation is an allusion to Rastafari's prioritizing of life and those activities which are life-giving and life-affirming; those practices which respect and nourish vitality.

¹²⁴ To be clear, I am not juxtaposing these concepts as oppositional, but merely to set up yet another false dichotomy, which fails (in) Samson. It also bears noting that though there are undoubtedly intersections between Glissant's *errantry*, Plato's *χώρα* (and Derrida's *khora*), as well as Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, Bakhtin serves only as a supplementary interlocutor (since it is due to its generic style as carnivalesque-grotesque that I understand Samson to be so effective and affective as a political tool) and Davidson's utility of Bakhtin in her reading of Judges becomes my springboard. (In a previous iteration of the project I worked also with David Hart's work on Caribbean Chronotopes.) See Hart, David W. "Caribbean Chronotopes: From Exile to Agency," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 2, no. 2, (2004): 1-19. Also see Jacques Derrida, *On the Name* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

¹²⁵ See Gregory Mobley, "The Wild Man in the Bible and the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 2 (1997): 217-233. Also see Gregory Mobley, *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

unintelligible as either, he is both master of the beast and beast to be mastered, neither successful as Nazir or Judge, Samson's divine outbursts breakthrough his all too permeable human skin. For Mobley, Samson's indeterminacy betrays his purpose within Israel's cultural (re)memory—Samson is *the solution to a problem* and *a means to an end*. The wild(er)ness of Samson the hero-monster may be the necessary vehicle for Israel's transformation but he will never be its *terminus*.¹²⁶ Mobley argues that Samson had to die in order that the nation-state of Israel might be born.¹²⁷ Since Samson “cannot be understood outside the trope of wild man” and the wild man as Monstrous Other must be killed by the hero—Samson had to destroy both the Philistines and himself.¹²⁸

At base, Mobley's interpretation of Samson, however, is no different from the traditional bifurcated depictions of the warrior/wild man—as both Slave to lust and Savior of Israel. It is not the particular *telos* Mobley proffers that gives me pause, for his conclusion is convincing in light of the traditional depiction of the supposed Deuteronomistic historians theology and perceived preference for resolution of conflict and ambiguity. Rather, it is that Mobley privileges *telos* over *chronos* and how this confines him to reading Samson as an always already closed system and a means to that end, rather than a perpetual process and continual opening. Let me explain.

In his concluding remarks—of both his essay on Samson as Wild Man and, likewise, his expansive upon this notion in his subsequent book—Mobley cites Talmon in his description of the wilderness as a biblical motif, stating that the wilderness is “never presented as a goal in itself but rather serves as the setting of an imposing rite of passage”

¹²⁶ Mobley, “Wild Man,” 233; *Samson*, 113-5.

¹²⁷ See Mobley, “Wild Man,” 233; 20

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

on the way to the Promised Land.¹²⁹ Mobley's aim is not to devalue or degrade the wilderness, but to highlight it as a liminal place and one "to which Israel must return, not to abide but to be transformed before returning to the settled land."¹³⁰ Like the wild man, Mobley asserts, the wilderness is not "wholly negative," but can have "a creative, instrumental function."¹³¹ Ultimately, however, because Samson is both monster and hero and the story cannot "permit a Philistine hero to defeat the monster...Samson must do it himself." In his dramatic concluding remarks, Mobley proclaims: "At the moment of his greatest triumph, then, Samson pulls down the pillars of the temple, killing countless Philistines and, at the same time, erasing himself from the face of the earth."¹³² Case closed. Or is it...? As we know, there is always already a route other-wise.

Mobley meticulously mines Ancient Near Eastern annals for traces of the wild man, appealing to folklore and scholarship on this motif and the wilderness. His excavation includes the Hebrew Bible and the so-called Classics, but due to the Western Root's "historical critical" emphasis on the Mediterranean, he neglects any corollary folktales in Africa, Asia, or the Caribbean. Mobley attends to the textual resonances and divergences between Samson and "the wild man" focuses his energy and attention so intensively on what is *behind* and *between* (or within) the lines of the *text* that he forgets entirely to look *before* and *beside* it; to the ways in which its readers get *beneath* Samson's skin and go *beyond* the text to which Mobley is so faithful. As skillfully as he argues for Samson's liminality, Mobley himself still (re)produces and, therefore,

¹²⁹ Mobley, 232.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid, 233.

represents what David Jobling deems “Israel’s official memory.”¹³³ According to Jobling, the primary characteristic of Israel’s official memory, like that of official folktale or discourse, is that it is “shaped by the systematic exclusion of certain voices” and, I would add, certain bodies.¹³⁴ Jobling continues,

Likewise the tradition of ‘authorized’ biblical interpretation that we inherit...Is the freedom of the Bible, and the freedom of the God whom some of us still think to find in, around, under, against the text of the Bible, a freedom that must be preserved by protecting the Bible and the biblical God from critical questioning? What sort of freedom would it be that could be preserved only by destroying the freedom of the reader, or the believer?—that could be preserved only by excluding the participation of those who are just entering the discourse, out of a history of being suppressed by gender or class or race privilege?¹³⁵

Though Mobley incisively interprets Samson’s liminality, he understands wildness to be a literary trope, which does not extend beyond the bounds of the text¹³⁶ His effort falls short, then, by foreclosing the wild(er)ness of the text according to *the freedom of the reader*.¹³⁷ Mobley forgets to remember the ways in which real “live” bodies matter wildly to, for, and with the text; the ways we re-member the Bible. (Interpretive) bodies re-membering Samson Other-Wise in (Wisdom’s) ways that might be best described as chaotic, resistant, archipelagic or even anarchist—accessing, adapting, and appropriating

¹³³ Jobling, *I Samuel*, 308.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 231.

¹³⁷ Malaki Jeanba, Samson, *The Nazirite Warrior*, 8, 9. “Overstanding” is a Rastafarian neologism employed to replace “understanding,” for the Rastafari reject English words that infer their oppression and choose instead to signify strength and empowerment. Therefore, “under” is always replaced by “over.” In his children’s book “Samson the Warrior,” Malaki Jeanba employs this term as he describes Samson’s mother’s comprehension of the divine message and mandate given her by the messenger from “the most high, lord of all host, creator” (a divine character signified as both “cherub(angle)” and “cherub(angel)” by Jeanba in the first chapters of the book). I use it here to foreground bodies (in their particularity and various interpretations).

“Official” apparatus in order to re-member the social body as Other. That is, *other than* a discrete, docile, and delimited unit (of production).¹³⁸

In his own reflections on biblical interpretation otherwise, David Jobling appeals to Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* and poststructuralist criticism to provide new avenues of interpretive possibility. He passionately declares, “The Bible can be read ‘otherwise,’ in ways that will make it a significant partner in the discourses of the third millennium.”¹³⁹ Jobling, in fact, appeals to Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, employing the term “anarchy” to describe “the ferment of new reading methods,” which push us beyond “authorized” interpretations.¹⁴⁰ While I concur with Jobling in his detection, and application, of anarchy within the poststructuralist (biblical) imaginary, by privileging “postmodern” biblical interpretation he proceeds to reinstate the very Western European authority his anarchic readings seek to disrupt.¹⁴¹ For while poststructuralist discourse inarguably subverts traditional Western European Root (i.e., historical critical) biblical interpretation, as continental thought it in no way unsettles the well-established (official) chain of command. If poststructuralism is the origin of the *unraveling* or *explosion* of meaning and Jacques Derrida its author, then, deconstruction has exposed Western European’s philosophies “track-covering.” However, neither Mobley nor Jobling engage real “live” interpretive bodies *beside, beneath, or beyond* the Root. (He need not conceal

¹³⁸ I am working from David Jobling’s utility of a term of great significance to Marx (and, Derrida after him), for what I perceive (alongside Jobling) to be its profound political implications for biblical/cultural hermeneutics. See James Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford World Classics, 2006). Also see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹³⁹ Ibid., 309.

¹⁴⁰ Jobling, *I Samuel*, 308.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 308-309. Also see Moore and Kelle 2011.

his agenda nor the audience to whom he directs his argument—Jobling’s is a wholly scholastic endeavor wherein he unambiguously seeks to establish the relevance, validity, and therefore necessity of biblical studies to and for larger cultural, historical, political, and theoretical engagements.) Jobling, however, indubitably leaves the door ajar for the otherwise of the other-wise. In the final words of his commentary, he conjures (concedes to) a crack: “but no one can predict what these ways will be.”¹⁴² Because they can always be other-wise.

If Mobley had himself foregrounded affect and actual bodies, or considered epistemological routes beyond the Root, he would have intuited how Samson is excessively affected by *and* affecting bodies and as a result renders Israel perpetually susceptible to the threat of its own errantry—the Other(Wisdom) within skin. What I find most disturbing about Mobley’s willingness to interpret Samson’s end as inevitable is that his termination functions as the necessary means for the inception of the nation-state and, as Jobling points out, modern representations of the Philistines—especially with regards to the interpreter’s relation to the nation-state.¹⁴³ While there are (at least) two vastly different depictions of the Philistines in the Hebrew Bible, according to David Jobling, most often the Philistines are re-membered in a way that reflects communal anxieties over (the threat and proximity of) the Other.¹⁴⁴ Jobling tracks the appearance and representation of the Philistines in order to highlight the ways in which the Philistines

¹⁴² Ibid., 309. He continues, “As Derrida says, trying to program the future is just what makes revolution go wrong.”

¹⁴³ Ibid., 199-211.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 197-8. Jobling’s own “methodological assumptions” are instructive, for he contends that the Bible can be read “by listening to the odd ways in which we and our culture have unwittingly internalized it.” The modern use of “Philistines” is a primary example of this internalization. I wonder, however, about his qualification of the ways we have internalized the Bible.

functioned within the biblical text. In Genesis, he notes, there seemed to be “reasonably comfortable coexistence” between Israel and the Philistines.¹⁴⁵ However, after *the “exodus” paradigm* (the release of the enslaved from their enslavers), which is not inherently problematic, a significant issue arises in its sequel: *the conquest of Canaan*.¹⁴⁶ For this shift reflects a threat, which “the myth of Philistines otherness” seems to have been produced (and policed) to resolve repetitively across time and interpretation. Jobling understands this to occur when “a history of ordinary warfare with a troublesome but ordinary neighbor is turned into a myth whereby the hero David can establish the Israelite state only by the absolute suppression of the Philistine Other.”¹⁴⁷ Ironically, Jobling’s assessment, written almost twenty years prior to Mobley’s book, seems quite an apt description of Mobley’s assessment.¹⁴⁸

While the entire text is plagued by ambivalence and hyperbole in its representation of Samson’s liminality, Mobley presents only one (authorized, Root) route in which to interpret Samson’s slaughter-suicide: as the end of Israel’s *in-between-ness* and the beginning as its nation-state(self)hood.¹⁴⁹ However, what is for Mobley an issue

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 225-7, 242.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 199. Jobling is appealing to Edward Said’s response to Michael Walzer’s application of *the “exodus” paradigm*. See Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 242-3.

¹⁴⁸ To be fair, Jobling himself, while leery of such totalizing moves, seems most interested in the work of scholars who are, like himself, Western European (white) men. With the exception, of Gale Yee (who is referenced five times), Spivak (once), and Sugatharajah (once), and, of course, the Western European (white) women he engages intermittently. Which include (in order of frequency) Fewell, Exum, Hackett, Rose, R. Schwartz, Tribble, Bach, Camp, Felman, Fetterley, Malbon, Rigby (Tribble only shows up three times and the last six on the list make only one appearance each).

¹⁴⁹ Jobling focuses upon scholars who are themselves highly implicated in the (in)formation and perpetuation of the nation-state as it relates to citizenship and identity—even if their investment is just below consciousness. Even as I offer these

to be overcome, is the very possibility Samson's (conduct) un/becoming (re)presents for his audience-interpreters. Samson, as creolized carnivalesque-grotesque folktale has revealed, is a *coincidencia oppositorum* and the very unity of opposites Mobley perceives as warranting resolution (through the destruction of one by the other as the assurance of ethnic and communal stability). However, I consider Samson's failure to be bound, even in death, to be his obfuscation of overdetermination. The vigilance with which his grave must be guarded (by the Root) exposes the ways in which re-memberings of Samson other-wise render his destruction or finality, as any interpretation, impossible and entirely archipelagic.

Samson's failure to conform to any and every norm imposed upon him bespeaks an errantry that evades the very strictures of the Deuteronomistic Historian, whose theology Mobley imagines Samson's death would have benefited greatly. While Mobley effortlessly connects the dots, Samson still strays.¹⁵⁰ In the wisdom of his foolishness, his remains remain, re-membered posthumously, but each time differs from the one before.¹⁵¹

critiques, I would like to acknowledge my complicity as one who both continues to operate within and reap the benefits of both the United States of (North) America and one of the primary institutions through which it has disseminated its phallogocentric, ethnocentric, anthropocentric, egocentric, Christocentric, androcentric, and telocentric hegemonic discourse of sameness juxtaposed over and against a monstrous (unintelligible) Other. I can only hope that I will stick at the margins.

¹⁵⁰ Samson is arguably an errant, opaque, liminal, transient, codependent, nymphomaniacal, disabled, anarchic, archipelagic, homicidal and suicidal (anti)hero.

¹⁵¹ And this critical difference, as *différance*, is necessary and it is what marks re-membering. In her essay, "The Many Faces of Samson," Cheryl Exum, in fact, expounds upon a number of the various versions of Samson submitted throughout history. Among them are Samson as fool, moral lesson, hero, freedom fighter, terrorist, xenophiliac, comic figure, tragic figure, Israel, Nazirite and judge, and "man of many faces." "How is it possible that Samson can have so many faces?" She queries, immediately responding, "[o]bviously different approaches to the text, different reading strategies, presuppositions, perspectives and questions, expose different faces of Samson." However, she posits, no other biblical character "has been the subject of so many different interpretations as

As enslaved liberator, blind seer, divine force, impure Nazirite, Samson's body is itself an affective assemblage, and the impossibility of his success as either judge, Nazirite, man, or hero is perpetually frustrated.¹⁵² His feminized masculinity has been particularly vexing for interpreters, like Creolized bodies haunt the anxious colonizer(s) and as χώρα haunted Plato's philosophical (cosmological) discourse, Samson's failure as both a leader and a man continues to haunt textual and corporeal bodies.¹⁵³ Scholars have ruminated

Samson," so... is there something special about Samson's story that "enables its readers to interpret Samson in many different ways?" (29) See Cheryl Exum, "The Many Faces of Samson" in Erik Eynikel and Tobias Nicklas, eds., *Samson: Hero or Fool? The Many Faces of Samson* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 13-31.

¹⁵² As Robert Chisholm's recent Judges commentary reflects, efforts to interpret Samson's actions as "an act of heroism, sacrifice, and redemption," like Galpaz-Feller, often fall short due to Samson's self-avowed desire for personal vengeance against the Philistines and the lack of evidence for his concern for Israel or the people's deliverance. However, if Samson is a cypher for Israel, then one might infer that his personal action is always already a collective endeavor for the good of the community. See Robert B. Chisholm, *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2013), 371-347. Also see Pnina Galpaz-Feller, "'Let My Soul Die with the Philistines,' (Judges 16.30)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30 (2006), 315-25.

¹⁵³ There are myriad studies centering Samson's masculinity and its precarity, the "male fear of losing the penis to a woman" (Exum, "Aspects of Symmetry and Balance in the Samson Saga," 83), as well as the masculinizing (and feminizing) discourse in Judges. Elzbieta Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska is among the most recent and comprehensive as she maps previous studies on Samson's masculinity before asserting her own intervention. As the title of Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska's essay implies, Samson's masculinity may have been lost but it also may have been regained, in the final scene of the story. (And here she is reading with Cheryl Exum and Renate Jost.) Of course, as Niditch argued in 2008, as easily as one might read agency into Samson's prayer for vengeance, one can interpret Samson as a divine pawn. Ultimately, according to Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska, "vindicated though Samson may be," his demise is a warning for Israel: "the future of Israel belongs to those who do not take wives from the uncircumcised Philistines" (184). Elzbieta Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska, "Samson: Masculinity Lost (and Regained?)" in Ovidiu Creanga, *Men and Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd, 2010), 171-88. Also see Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987); Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); James L. Crenshaw, "The Samson Saga: Filial Devotion or Erotic Attachment?" *ZAW* 86 (1974), 470-504; Cheryl Exum, "Aspects of Symmetry and Balance in the Samson Saga," *Journal for the Study of the*

upon and deliberated over the ways in which Samson subverts and is subverted, dominates and is dominated, becomes masculine and is emasculated by Delilah and the Philistines. As we see in traditional patriarchal Rastafari interpretations, Samson's masculinity and its threatening by Delilah becomes for them the story's central moral and motif—reflecting not so much the folktale's primary theme but the values, biases, and fears of the respective interpretive community. As much as Samson's interpreters, as the Philistines, have sought to station his body securely, he occupies the gap between two poles, inhabiting the precarious in-between, Samson stands askew and his is a (textual) body that betrays the ability of the author-narrator-interpreter to ensure the meaning of any (bodily) matter once and for all.

My argument is not novel. It is as ancient as Samson's folktale and as persistent as the paradox of his predicament and it may be identified most readily in the interpretations proffered by poststructuralist, postcolonial, and queer biblical scholars, who echo Nietzsche in their reminder that there is no origin behind the thought, no doer behind the deed, only infinite re-memberings of what happened before but never exactly as it happens now. It should come as no surprise, then, that Jacques Derrida too found Samson irresistible. While the Bible was never the focus of his work, Derrida was undeniably caught in an ambivalent (cruelly optimistic) entanglement with the Bible and his

Old Testament 6 (1981): 3-29; Cheryl Exum, "The Theological Dimension of the Samson Saga," *VT* 33 (1983): 30-45; Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)Versions of Biblical Narratives* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1993); Renate Jost, "God of Love/God of Vengeance, or Samson's 'Prayer for Vengeance'" in *Judges*, ed., Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 117-25; Susan Niditch, "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 608-24; Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

occasional exegesis and frequent biblical allusions betray a deeply freighted unconscious (af)filiation with the corpus.

In her introduction to the edited volume *Derrida's Bible*, Yvonne Sherwood provides a litany of the biblical characters and tropes Derrida engaged, ranging from creation and the “fall” to Elijah and Job, and from Jesus’ healings, crucifixion and resurrection to John’s apocalypse.¹⁵⁴ Derrida even wrote about Samson. In *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (1993), Samson becomes the consummate confirmation of his Freudian slip into interpreting blindness (in the Bible) through castration. For Samson “loses every phallic attribute or substitute, his hair and then his eyes, after Delilah’s ruse had deceived his vigilance, thereby giving him over to a sort of sacrifice, a physical sacrifice.”¹⁵⁵ According to Derrida’s (reading of the) Bible, Samson becomes a monstrosity right before our very (minds’) eyes. A castration-figure, but, Derrida observes, “a bit like all the blind,” Samson is “a sort of phalloid image, an unveiled sex from head to toe, vaguely obscene and disturbing.”¹⁵⁶

He is stretched towards the invisible and threatening place of his desire in an energetic, determined, but uncontrollable movement, being sheer potential, potentially violent, at once groping and sure, between erection and fall, all the more carnal, even animal, in that sight does not protect him, most notably, from shameless gestures. More naked than others, a blind man virtually becomes his own sex, he becomes indistinguishable from it because he does not see it, and not seeing himself exposed to the

¹⁵⁴ Yvonne Sherwood, ed., *Derrida's Bible: Reading a Page of Scripture with a Little Help from Derrida* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1. For another incisive anthology offering contributions from religion and biblical scholars on Derrida in conversation with the Bible as well as religion and Christian theology more broadly, also see Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart, eds., *Derrida and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 104-106.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

other's gaze, it is as if he had lost even his sense of modesty.¹⁵⁷

Derrida, too, reads Samson close enough to draw a correlation between his (imposed) state of in-between-ness and his stationing in between the pillars of the temple Dagon (just before his sacrifice), the philosopher-poet-exegete most certainly highlights his paradoxical precarity. The victim of punishment and one divinely elected/*chosen*, Samson “will save his people by sacrificing himself, along with the Philistines, after being able once again to get it up [bander]—his energy, that is. Column against column, a column between columns, which all come tumbling down: the one makes the others fall, on all the others and on itself.”¹⁵⁸

**Samson Beyond the Binary (Gender Matrix):
A Relational Poetic Archipelagic Assemblage
Or Why Samson's Gotta' Die**

“Samson cried, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ and he pulled with all his might. The temple came crashing down on the lords and on all the people in it. Those who were slain by him as he died outnumbered those who had been slain by him when he lived.”
—Judges 16:30

Considered an “offshoot of postmodern feminism,” queer theory, in the most basic sense, is characterized by the interrogation and destabilizing of normative sexual identity (according to the binary gender system). Ostensibly one of the most heavily quoted definitions of “queer” in contemporary academia is that offered by David Halperin in

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 108.

1995. Queer, he explains, “is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. ‘Queer’ then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative.”¹⁵⁹ Annamarie Jagosse, however, would not even identify queer as an identity but instead considers it to be identity’s “critique.”¹⁶⁰ Having just celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday, Queer Theory, its history, and development as a field of critical inquiry has been rehearsed and elaborated upon *ad nauseam*. In fact, queer theory’s radical aversion to normativity (and relative ubiquity) has finally provoked some of its most prominent proponents to question whether it has been vacated entirely of its efficacy as a critical lens.¹⁶¹ Of course, it seems only appropriate that queer theory itself is being subjected to its own critique.

Even with the more current trend toward querying queer theory, its interrogation of identity is far from being rendered in appurtenant or determined “dead.” In fact, the patron saint of queer theory, Judith Butler, is herself an example of how this cognitive domain continues to adapt in light of emerging discourses on identity, being, and becoming. Butler’s most recent publications are fully immersed in ethics, politics, and even religion but are no less queer.¹⁶² Queer biblical criticism employs queer theory in an

¹⁵⁹ David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

¹⁶⁰ See Annamarie Jagosse, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

¹⁶¹ See Robin Weigman and Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Queer Theory without Antinormativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁶² See Judith Butler and Jewish Voice for Peace, *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017); written with Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative and the Political* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013); *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York:

attempt to disrupt traditional binaries about sex and gender (male/female; heterosexual/homosexual, etc.), but is no longer limited to these categories of identity. There have been few explicitly queer interpretations of the Samson story since the turn of the century. Though in Deryn Guest's commentary on Judges in *The Queer Bible Commentary* (2006) Samson is only mentioned once and solely in reference to the objectification of the Timnite woman the commentary deserves mention as a groundbreaking contribution.¹⁶³ Five years later, Lori Rowlett, offered "Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah," in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*. In her reading Rowlett took the infamous story of Samson's shearing by Delilah and read Samson as Sub to Delilah's Dom.¹⁶⁴ Not long after Marco Derks brought us full-circle, motioning to Niditch and Ackerman in his queer reading of Samson, whose hyper-masculine body is repeatedly and hyperbolically feminized in Judges 13-16.¹⁶⁵

While Judith Butler's work on the subversion of normative gender scripts might be the vanguard within Queer Theory, J. Jack Halberstam's work on *Female Masculinity*—a more explicit affront to the institution of (heteronormative cis-gender male) masculinity—instantly became a Lesbian cult(ure) classic. It is, however, Halberstam's more recent critiques of (re)productive time and his (re)appropriation of

Columbia University Press, 2012); *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2009).

¹⁶³ Guest's commentary is characteristic of the volume—though it touts itself as a queer commentary, it includes as much, if not more, feminist and lesbian and gay concerns as it does queer interpretations of the books of the Bible. In fact, Guest's contribution might more accurately be nestled among other highly influential feminist commentaries on Judges such as Danna Nolan Fewell and Cheryl Exum or even Adele Reinhartz, which centering female characters/women's bodies/subjectivity.

¹⁶⁴ Lori Rowlett, "Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah." *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*. Ken Stone, ed. (2011): 106-115.

¹⁶⁵ See Marco Derks, "If I Be Shaven Then My Strength Will Go from Me: A Queer Reading of the Samson Narrative," *Biblical Interpretation* 23, no. 4-5 (2015), 553-73.

“Low Theory” and *Failure* (as queer art form) to which I turn in order to contend that the political gravity of his theoretical assertions lie in the constitution of agency vis-à-vis the (strategic) failure of the “agent” (to replicate the Master’s/hegemonic discourse).¹⁶⁶

Halberstam’s endorsement of so-called Low Theory (re)appropriates just this sort of failure in service of a distinctively queer politics. The notion of failure might be characterized most succinctly by a *resistance to mastery*, which invests in (finding) “counterintuitive modes of knowing such as failure and stupidity” as alternatives to hegemonic colonial discourse.¹⁶⁷ Stupidity for Halberstam refers not simply to “lack of knowledge but to the limits of certain forms of knowing and certain ways of inhabiting forms of knowing.”¹⁶⁸ Appealing to Moten and Harney’s “Seven Theses,” Halberstam understands his project to “join forces with their ‘subversive intellectual’ [who] agrees to steal from the university, to... ‘abuse its hospitality’ and to be ‘in it not of it’.”¹⁶⁹ (For those of us with Judeo-Christian “roots,” the biblical and theological reference here is difficult to miss.) Halberstam, like Moten and Harney, identifies the utility of strategic appropriation in order to subvert the master narrative, acquiescence only in order to creatively express an identity other-wise. When conceptualized in this vein, the notion of

¹⁶⁶ In his article “Caribbean Chronotopes: From Exile to Agency,” David Hart draws upon Édouard Glissant’s Creolization, Mikhail Bakhtin’s “chronotope” (“the flux of ‘time-space’ in popular folk tales”), and Homi Bhabha’s “dissemination” to think cultural agency in Caribbean postcolonial contexts. While Hart draws from Bhabha’s concept of dissemination, in future projects I would like to instead consider Bhabha’s reflections on Thirdspace in conversation with Soja’s (and Lefebvre before him) notion of Thirdspace.

¹⁶⁷ Halberstam, *Failure*, 11. According to Halberstam it is also refusal which involves the critique of “all-encompassing and global theories” (Foucault).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 11. It bears noting that while Halberstam here seeks to speak seditiously against the institution (and) for the amateur—something this humble amateur appreciates immensely—Halberstam does so safely seated in the security of a tenured position within the academy.

failure resonates with the carnivalesque spirit and with creolité. As an affront to the official script of Western European “Academy,” the epistemological tyranny of the Root, Halberstamian failure bears resonances with Bakhtinian carnivalesque-grotesque (and unfinalizability) and Glissantian creolization. It may likewise be engaged to interpret Samson’s folktale and his recurrent, hyperbolic, almost rhythmically repeated failures.

Creolized, Carnavalesque-Grotesque, and Queer: Re-Membering Samson’s Failure Other-Wise

Jack Halberstam contends, “Conversation rather than mastery seems to offer one very concrete way of being in relation to another form of being and knowing without seeking to measure that life modality by the standards that are external to it.”¹⁷⁰ Through his notion of creolization and the role of writer as a *forcer de langage*, Glissant similarly advocates for and champions the avant-garde in what might be considered a *politics of failure* whereby so-called creolized bodies intentionally frustrate Western European epistemologies (and empiricism) through the aesthetic incarnations of a distinctively *Caribbean discourse*.¹⁷¹ Halberstam argues that we must first opt for relation vis-à-vis

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 12. Resistance to mastery is, in fact, the first of the seven theses Halberstam expounds upon in her exploration of the import of failure for queer communities.

¹⁷¹ See page 143. Kamau Braithwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). According to Kamau Braithwaite, the very word “Creole” seems to have “originated from a combination of the two Spanish words *criar* (to create, to imagine, to establish, to found, to settle) and *colono* (a colonist, a founder, a settler) into *criollo*: a committed settler, one identified with the area of settlement, one native to the settlement though not ancestrally indigenous to it.” The notion of *creole* and *creolization*, then, explicitly exposes the constructed nature of identity as such. “‘Creole,’ in the context of this study, presupposes a situation where the society concerned is caught up ‘in some kind of colonial arrangement’ with a metropolitan European power, one the one hand, and a plantation arrangement on the other; and where the society is multi-racial but organized for the benefit of a minority of European origin. ‘Creole society’ therefore is the result of a complex situation where a colonial polity reacts, as a whole, to external metropolitan pressures, and at the same time

conversation, and thereby *resist mastery*, and in so doing, he unwittingly enacts a (Glissantian) *poetics of relation* rather than an appeal to epistemological originality and, therefore, sovereignty as Root identity.¹⁷² In his acknowledgement of the unavoidable and, therefore, politically profuse frustration of the (constructed as) “common sense” of Western European hegemonic authorized discourse through the wisdom of foolish failures that plague the very notion of identity as origin, Halberstam’s queer critique inadvertently channels Glissant, carnivalesque-grotesque, and archipelagic thinking.¹⁷³

[It] takes us not simply through the looking glass but into some negative spaces of representation, dark places where animals return to the wild, humans flirt with their own extinction, and worlds end... To live is to fail, to bungle, to disappoint, and ultimately to die; rather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite, the embrace of the absurd, the silly, and the hopelessly goofy. Rather than resisting endings and limits, let us instead revel in and cleave to all of our own inevitable fantastic failures.¹⁷⁴

to internal adjustments made necessary by the juxtaposition of master and slave, elite and labourer, in a culturally heterogeneous relationship” (xxxii).

¹⁷² What Bakhtin would understand as *heteroglossia*. See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

¹⁷³ Halberstam, *Failure*, 17. Halberstam exhorts his reader to embrace professional and personal failure as a queer epistemological intervention and the assertion of identity other-wise; that is, in resistance to normative ways of thinking, writing, and being. He does not, however, identify the ways in which failure is also an Africana aesthetic, and is integral to Afro-Caribbean philosophy (as well as postcolonial theory). Halberstam’s musings echo the disruption of Official discourse we find in Glissant (and Bakhtin), but there is no conversation with the Martinican philosopher. Halberstam’s interlocutors are primarily Western European philosophers and the material culture he examines is continental. In his explication of hegemony and common sense he references Gramsci and Hall, writing, “Accordingly, *hegemony*, as Gramsci theorized it and as Hall interprets it, is the term for a multilayered system by which a dominant group achieves power not through coercion but through the production of a system of interlocking ideas which persuades people of the rightness of any given set of often contradictory ideas and perspectives. Common sense is the term Gramsci uses for this set of beliefs that are persuasive precisely because they do not present themselves as ideology or try to win consent.”

¹⁷⁴ Halberstam, 186-7. What Halberstam asserts of animated film, I would likewise contend is true of biblical narrative: “While many readers may object to the idea that we can locate alternatives in a genre engineered by huge corporations for massive profits and

In the end, Samson dies and the Philistines along with him. At the end of a frustrated and fractured life, not even (a noble)¹⁷⁵ death nor those re-membering him can save Samson from failure.¹⁷⁶ And though Samson is doomed to failure and/as death, although his end is in sight (i.e., visible, “on-stage” violence) and explicated (as both author and protagonist comment on the event), is not altogether unambiguous. (Was Samson the hero or the fool or otherwise/other-wise?) It is not merely the folktale’s content that betrays Samson’s unfinalizability, but also its always already imperfect repetition and reiteration of innumerable re-memberings by illimitable (interpretive) bodies who (knowingly or unknowingly) perform Samson’s failure (as genealogical critique).¹⁷⁷ For even as Samson signals—both in the Hebrew text and in its (re)interpretation(s)—an unfinalizable and, therefore, infinitely open end, he simultaneously frustrates all appeals to origin, essence, and identity. As the lack of

with multiple product tie-ins, I have claimed that new forms of animation, computer-generated imagery in particular, have opened up new narrative opportunities and have led to unexpected encounters between the childish, the transformative, and the queer.” The “dark side of animation” could easily be the “dark side of the Bible.” Halberstam concedes “Of course in animation for children they never do quite end, and there is usually a happy conclusion even to the most crooked of animated narratives... But along the way to these ‘happy’ endings, bad things happen to good animals, monsters, and children, and failure nestles in every dusty corner, reminding the child viewer that this too is what it means to live in a world created by mean, petty, greedy, and violent adults.”

¹⁷⁵ I inserted noble here in order to highlight the ambivalence that inheres in the two most prevalent interpretations of Samson’s death: as self-sacrificial and, therefore, noble, or the ultimate and appropriate climax to a life characterized by self-destruction.

¹⁷⁶ Is Samson’s possibility enacted in his suicide? At risk of glorifying suicide, I would like to make explicit a distinction I am making between literal and literary (or metaphorical) suicide, which I perceive as rooted in Western empiricism (empire/racism).

¹⁷⁷ Integral to poststructuralist inquiry, Nietzsche’s genealogical critique interrogates any appeal to (myths of) origin and destabilizes notions of identity as static in his claim that “there is no doer behind the deed.” See Nietzsche, *Genealogy*; as well as Michel Foucault’s appropriation of Nietzsche’s critique, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); and that of Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*.

consensus among scholars indicates, Samson cannot be interpreted unequivocally as either *the first to deliver Israel*, or as the one who *begins to save Israel* (Judges 13:5).¹⁷⁸

According to Halberstam, the art of failure, and I would argue a politics of failure, “*privilege[s] the naïve or nonsensical (stupidity)...[and] argue[s] for the nonsensical or nonconceptual over sense-making structures that are often embedded in a common notion of ethics.*”¹⁷⁹ Those heretofore deemed *naïve* or *ignorant* according to a Western European epistemological taxonomy might lead us toward a different set of epistemological practices altogether, whereby (as in carnivalesque-grotesque) what is perceived as Folly is, in fact, Other-Wise and the character traditionally “read” as Fool (and/or foil) is instead the Wisest of all. If Carnival is “a mass art form which came out of nothing,” dedicating itself to “the concept of waste, of ephemera, of built-in obsolescence...[not] of manufacture but of art,” and a “regeneration,” which perpetually *makes new*, then, Carnival is a queer art and a politics of failure.¹⁸⁰ Whether queerly parading as the *cross-cultural poetics* of carnivalesque-grotesque, corporeal creolized chronotope, or queer art of obsolescence, failure as the playground for perpetual paradoxical possibilities embodies the Wisdom of folly which endlessly inaugurates the (chronotopic) bloom space when/where/how playing the Fool is Wise...? Ironically, it is just this sort of errantry for which Glissant advocates, that is manifested in Plato’s *χώρα*, and that is embodied in the (Other)Wisdom of strangers.

¹⁷⁸ Either translation is an acceptable way to render 13:5, which reinforces his as an entirely inaccessible beginning (of *salvation for Israel*), which may be interpreted as a series of false starts and innocuous attempts at an unrealizable end with perpetual beginnings.

¹⁷⁹ Halberstam, *Failure*, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Derek Walcott, “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, 261.

We realize that peoples who are most ‘manifestly’ composite have minimized the idea of Genesis. The fact is that the ‘end’ of the myth of Genesis means the beginning of the use of genealogy to persuade oneself that exclusivity has been preserved. Composite peoples, that is, those who could not deny or mask their hybrid composition, nor sublimate it in the notion of a mythical pedigree, do not ‘need’ the idea of Genesis, because they do not need the myth of pure lineage... The poetics of creolization is the same as a cross-cultural poetics: not linear and not prophetic, but woven from enduring patience and irreducible accretions... Creolization is the unceasing process of transformation...¹⁸¹

As Ferdinand Deist asserts, transformation is “a *process* of constant change”

(271).¹⁸² While Samson is often interpreted as never having learned, grown, or changed (citation)—except to have regressed—as I see it, his very character is in a constant state of flux and the final scene of the tale betrays a transformation—a paradigm shift—so seismic that it results in the collapse of what just might have been the most ostentatious edifice in Gaza. Though represented as a prolific monster of a man by popular culture (and Sunday School Flannel Graphs) Samson’s size can only be inferred, since the text is almost entirely silent on the subject. In fact, he could just as easily be pictured as a tiny little, wiry-weasely thing, a mere hint of a “man,” which might actually make the story even more effective as Carnavalesque-Grotesque. For when I think about Israel and the size of the (whale) tales told about the people in their communal imaginative re-memberings, it seems more appropriate to think of David in Saul’s oversized armor and Joseph in a “Technicolor Dreamcoat” with a crown two times the size of his own. Likewise, Bob Marley himself was only 5’8.” Which seems to me to make the most of

¹⁸¹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 141, 142. As a parenthetical, Glissant notes, “The only traces of ‘genesis’ identifiable in the Caribbean folktale are satirical and mocking... These parodies of genesis do not seriously claim, in any case, to offer an explanation of origins; they imply a satirical attitude to any motion of a transcendental Genesis.”

¹⁸² Ferdinand Deist, “‘Murder in the Toilet’ (Judges 3:13-20): Translation and Transformation,” *Scriptura* 58 (1996): 271.

Samson's hyperbolic strength—for carnivalesque-grotesque requires a Mouse to make a Lion and Rastafari demands a slave liberate (herself and) the master.

Samson is an impetuous judge, whose story is a carnivalesque-grotesque folktale and in order to “grasp” the text and do it justice, it must be read as such; as an oral embodied performative cultural myth, penned for posterity and the preservation of the respective communal body. Interpreting Samson accordingly allows contemporary readers the opportunity to at least begin to conceptualize (and contextualize) the narrative disruptions embedded in the corporal bodies of the text, which disturb the very differentiation between those bodies, both those *interpreted* and those *interpreting*. Interpreting Samson as archipelagic assemblage decenters Eurocentric episteme and reads the bible as bloom space, where Africana interprets affect and orality is infused with carnivalesque-grotesque as a queer modality, exposing and exploding the totalitarian Root, pushing deconstruction to confront real “live” bodies in/as a poetics of Relation. For in this profoundly performative and excessively affective (bloom)space, the bodies behind the text blend into those between its lines and those before the text blur with those beneath it. In this way, then, the hierarchal binaries of master/slave, order/chaos, male/female, life/death, speech/writing and so forth dissolve, as each re-membering body is placed beside the(ir) Other, exclusivity is disarmed and undone by a queer multiplicity, and difference as dichotomous is rendered hilarious because preposterous. The subversive wisdom of bibliorality as an (affective) embodied cognition is an archipelagic epistemology that means with the body and inscribes upon the soul. Creolité is queer. In fact, Jack Halberstam motions us toward the archipelagos and the creolized wisdom of

Jamaica Kincaid in order to help us think truth other-wise. He writes, “Queerness offers the promise of failure as a way of life.”¹⁸³ It is, however, he submits,

“[U]p to us whether we choose to make good on that promise in a way that makes a detour around the usual markers of accomplishment and satisfaction. Indeed while Jamaica Kincaid reminds us that happiness and truth are not the same thing, and while numerous anti-heroes...articulated a version of being predicated upon awkwardness, clumsiness, disorientation, bewilderment, ignorance, disappointment, disenchantment, silence, disloyalty, and immobility, perhaps Judith in the movie version of *Where the Wild Things Are* says it best: ‘Happiness is not always the best way to be happy.’¹⁸⁴

Samson is just that sort of queer anti-hero, oafish and awkward, riddled by clumsiness, disorientation, and bewilderment, haunted by “ignorance” and disappointment. And, yet, is ignorance truly what we have previously understood it to be? What if ignorance is itself re-membered? Surely ignorance signifies a lack of education, awareness, or knowledge and implies, from its root, one who willfully dismisses. But what happens when its semantic range expands to include its creolized connotation? Carolyn Cooper enlightens us that ignorance means more in Jamikeyan than in English, it also signifies indignance, “to consciously assume an attitude especially in combative circumstances where the dignity of the ignorant is in question.”¹⁸⁵ The “ignorant” one is thinking and acting outside of established norms, refusing to acknowledge or participate in those norms. Because normativity is assumed regnant, in the moment of confrontation, the “ignorant” person is indeed and intentionally performing failure and is adamant about

¹⁸³ Halberstam, *Failure*, 186. Halberstam is offering an emendation of Foucault’s (re)framing of homosexuality in terms of “friendship as a way of life,” from his 1980 interview *L’ami*.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 186-7.

¹⁸⁵ Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, 6. Also see pages 168-170 and note in 167 in Chapter 2.

the right to do so. Samson got ignorant (for his dignity was being called into question as he was repeatedly ridiculed by the Philistines).

Each time Samson is reconfigured through the critically different repetition of his story as archipelagic assemblage in the *différance* of re-membering, the Bible is given the opportunity to become possible and the possibility of signifying anew.¹⁸⁶ Samson's failure creates the partial openness—or *open futurity*—that is always already (the [re]vision) of his tragicomic death. Samson's ending is the very crack by which he is (re)appropriated and (re)created over and again—though not because the Wild/Chaos/Monster is destroyed, but because s/he cannot be and so haunts any effort at absolute annihilation of the Other. It is, then, within the various (re)iterations or (re)incarnations of Samson's (re)memory that the manifold potentialities for the (in-breaking) event emerge aside “the limits and the risks of resignification.”¹⁸⁷ It is in the space between that a Rastafari re-membering reminds us of our own uncertain origins, our unfinalizable endings, our perpetual undoing, and the fleshy affective entanglements that threaten us with the cognizance of our own profound perpetual potentialities.

Reading with Rhythm: Affect as sensual and structural A Rhythmic, Relational, Rhizomatic Rastafari Reading of the Bible

Now, reading the Bible with rhythm is a hermeneutic of bibliorality in that it is sensory and structural. I am interpreting Samson by literally (formalistically)

¹⁸⁶ Samson is a metonym not only for Israel but, according to my re-membering, representative of the way in which we might approach the Bible as archipelagic assemblage.

¹⁸⁷ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 38. Also see Deleuze and Guattari, *The Fold* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

foregrounding and following the beat in the text. The Hebrew word for “beat” is *pa’am* and this word occurs on seven occasions in the Samson saga (Ch. 13-16). I contend that just like the rhythm of (Reggae) music, the locations of the beats and their spatial relationship to one another, determine the rhythm of the text and moves us (to a new understanding of it).¹⁸⁸ If affect and resonance are achieved through the relationship of *rhythms and pauses* rather than in reference to concepts or objects, instantiated in difference, disparity, and Diversity, then, the sense of absence, hesitation, holding back or even halting, creates the affective experience, and particularly affective resonance.¹⁸⁹ My exegesis is, then, guided by the formal, which I understand to be strategic, placement of the beat (*pa-am*) and in terms of this sort of relational understanding of rhythm’s affect, which functions as both a structural and sympathetic framework for my Rastafari interpretation in attempt to grasp its *force*.

Pa’am’s first occurrence in Judges is just after Samson’s birth in 13:25. Not surprisingly, in verbal form *pa’am* can mean “to move, thrust, impel, stir, trouble, agitate or disrupt.”¹⁹⁰ Thus, in this instance, the verse reads, “The *ruach* (or spirit) of Jah began moving [Samson].” As a noun, *pa’am* not only signifies “beat” but may also be translated “step, pace, foot, time, once, now, anvil or hammer.”¹⁹¹ The remaining six times *pa’am* appears in the folktale it is in this form.¹⁹² Interestingly, *pa’am*’s presence becomes more prevalent toward the story’s conclusion: it shows up four times in 16:15-16:20—twice in

¹⁸⁸ See pages 43-44 and note 105. Also see page 202.

¹⁸⁹ See pages 43-44 and note 105.

¹⁹⁰ HALOT, 952-3.

¹⁹¹ HALOT, 952. *Pa’am* translated as “time” is essentially the shorthand version and a literal and literary translations. Its other denotations are “foot, anvil, occurrence,” or *event* and also resonate with my re-remembering.

¹⁹² Judges 15:3; 16:15; 16:18; 16:20a; 16:20b; 16:28.

20 alone—and is then entirely/surprisingly absent for another seven verses, until it finally resurfaces in Samson’s penultimate statement (16:28). One might even, albeit loosely, read this repetition as a *refrain* or *ritournelle* (which has great affective import for Guattari and Deleuze) or even *anaphora*—where the repetition of *pa’am* gives *prominence to the concept, rhythm to the passage, and even appeals to our emotions* in order to not only *move* the narrative and its protagonist, but us.¹⁹³ Without even *knowing* the references within the narrative, simply by identifying the appearances of this concept and their proximity to one another, we are able to interpret what it is *doing* (and *undoing*).¹⁹⁴ It is as if the space between the *beat*—what we might establish as its *rhythm* and where affective resonance is established—is communicating with us...before and beyond cognition. As if it is *moving* (Samson/us) forward, toward some dramatic end, yet simultaneously harkening back to the story’s beginning and the first time Jah’s *ruach* moved and stirred Samson. As if the rhythm is teasing, slowly luring us, then building, heightening, and ceasing altogether, and resting (for seven counts), only to pound (us?) yet again one last time.

Now, when we read the narrative attentive to these rhythmic cues, we notice the beat becoming more vigorous at one of the most climactic and erotically charged moments in the narrative. Delilah begs to know Samson’s “whole secret,” to prove his love for her (*pa’am*), and—after hours of what is now assumed among queer bible folk to

¹⁹³ See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateau*, 312-316 and Guattari, *Chasomosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Sydney: Power, 1995). For an incisive exposition on Guattari’s ruminations on refrain, see Bertelson and Murphie (2010).

¹⁹⁴ See Seigworth and Gregg, 3.

be light bondage or edgeplay—Samson concedes.¹⁹⁵ Once he has proven himself by sharing his secret/strength (*pa'am*), in exhaustion Samson falls asleep upon Delilah's lap—well, actually, between her knees (Hebrew *'al birkeyhâ*; Judges 16:19), which is an oblique reference to her genitalia.¹⁹⁶ While Samson's head is nestled there between her legs, Delilah then informs the Philistines, who (out to get him) enter the house, shear his seven locks, enslave, and then blind him. A stripped and sightless Samson awakens in shock and the story—as the beat—explodes. In rapid succession, one beat immediately follows the next, *pa'am* pulsates: *k'pa'am b'pa'am*. Up to this point in the narrative Samson has been inextricably bound *to* the Philistines, now, however, he is bound *by* them. Unaware that Jah has left him, Samson struggles to shake himself free, yet the sensation produced in his encounter with these active forces is not enough.¹⁹⁷ Samson fails.¹⁹⁸

The folktale's final scene and dialogue, like the entire narrative, resonates with affective force. Summoned by his Philistine masters to dance for/"entertain them," Samson is bound in between and to the pillars of their temple.¹⁹⁹ On his way to a shackled state of in-between-ness (nothing like the liminality that has previously characterized his livity), Samson asks the young boy leading him *by the hand* to release

¹⁹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 151. "Mistress...[you] may ties me down on the table, ropes drawn tight, for ten to fifteen minutes, time enough to prepare the instruments." Enter the Philistines.

¹⁹⁶ See Susan Ackerman, "What if Judges Had Been Written by a Philistine?" *Biblical Interpretation*, 8, no. 1 (2000): 39.

¹⁹⁷ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 21.

¹⁹⁸ And yet, all is not lost, for in 16:21b the audience finds Samson's hair begins to grow *again*.

¹⁹⁹ I am sure that when performed this scene invites and involves raucous laughter and building excitement in anticipation of retaliation.

him. “Let me *grasp* and *feel* the pillars upon which the temple is established.”²⁰⁰ While the text proceeds without complication, reading with rhythm has warned us otherwise. (Reading with rhythm) *We* anticipate the beat—there’s just got to be one more! Waiting we watch a sightless Samson *embrace* and *feel* the pillars, *lean* into them. Our *eyes* follow him, whose *eyes* cannot see the crowd, whose 6,000 *eyes* are all on him. And the beat returns and resounds (*pa’am*), as Samson enacts *an active discharge of emotion* directed right at Jah,²⁰¹ and one last *time* (*pa’am*), Jah responds. In verse 28 Samson screams, “Oh God, Please...Re-member me!” He demands strength *once more*—to be avenged.²⁰² Now, while Samson emphatically exclaims that he wants revenge, he does not state that he be avenged for the Philistines’ shearing his locks, enslaving him or ridiculing him. Samson wants vengeance “if only...for (one of/from) my *two eyes*.” That is, for the sake of *I-an-I*.²⁰³

If, as Taylor permits, “the Rastafari are the bearers of relational thinking in its fullest,” might they not have something to offer us as we approach the Bible vis-à-vis a poetics of Relation?²⁰⁴ Incorporating the ambient and all-pervasive divinity of Jah

²⁰⁰ Samson’s first words to the *na’ar* leading him by the hand are literally, “Let me go and let me *feel* the *amudim*” (16:26). While it seems to echo the request/command for release of the Hebrew people in Exodus 9:1, the roots are not the same.

²⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 400.

²⁰² The word here for remember (*zakar*) is incidentally the same word for “male” in Genesis 1:27, which I believe holds a degree of significance for the re-membling of Samson as Israel. Interestingly, Samson cries out to YHWH but appeals to *Elohim* for vengeance.

²⁰³ An allusion to Hammurabi’s code perhaps?

²⁰⁴ Taylor, “Sheba’s Song,” 75. In his conclusion of “Sheba’s Song,” Taylor identifies the I-an-I “logic of Rastafari discourse” as reflected in other discourses—particularly Buber’s “I-Thou” and Kierkegaard’s “God-relationship.” While he gives a nod to poststructuralism, he only refers to Derrida to acknowledge that I-an-I is a supplement to “a European Judeo-Christian tradition told in accordance with the doctrine of ‘the One’.”

through the acknowledgement of Pan-Divinity *and* a radical livication (dedication) to self-awareness, affirmation and assertion, I-an-I simultaneously represents personal agency and collective interdependence identified as the divine assemblage alive in all.²⁰⁵ Like Glissant's creolized archipelagic epistemology, Plato's khora, even Keller's many-one, I-n-I is the one exploding into many, "out of many, one."²⁰⁶ "*We can seek the unity of rhythm only at the point where rhythm itself plunges into chaos, into the night, at the point where differences of level are perpetually and violently mixed.*"²⁰⁷ I-n-I, the wave of Jah's spirit, surging and submerging Samson, he is surrounded by sensation, imbued with (affective) force. Samson violently pushes and pulls down the pillars of his captivity²⁰⁸—the boundaries of bodies as "organism...[which] imprisons life,"²⁰⁹ and the strongholds of an edifice built to construct and constrict identity according to the (downpressing) dyad

He is not actually identifying the ways in which I-an-I might be understood in terms of poststructuralism—or at least by means of identifying their resonances.

²⁰⁵ See Rex Nettleford, "Discourse on Rastafarian Reality," and Adrian Anthony McFarlane, "I-an-I" in Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane, eds., *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). The contingency of identity (Rastafarian cultural and communal construction and co-constitution) is but one reason why the Rastafari remembering of Samson must be read in conversation with the experience of those bodies within Persian province of Yehud.

²⁰⁶ Glissant, *Poetics*, 33. "The Caribbean, as far as I am concerned, may be held up as one of the places in the world where Relation presents itself most visibly, one of the explosive regions where it seems to be gathering strength."

²⁰⁷ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 39.

²⁰⁸ HALOT, 925. Aptly *natah*, the verb used here, has a vast and varied semantic range, signifying either/or, both/and push, pull.

²⁰⁹ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 40. Deleuze writes, "the organism is not life, it is what imprisons life. The body is completely living, and yet nonorganic. Likewise sensation, when it acquires a body through organism, takes on an excessive and spasmodic appearance, exceeding the bounds of organic activity. It is immediately conveyed in the flesh through the nervous wave or vital emotion." A statement that describes Samson's spasmodic flesh throughout the story.

(of this/that, either/or) according to (Greco-Roman, Western) cultural imperialism's insidious apparatus/machinations.²¹⁰

In his last (scream)breath, *written without ceasing to be a scream*, Samson shouts (and lets it all) out:²¹¹ "If the Philistines die, my livity will cease!"²¹² In I-an-I we are many-one. *A body is as much outside itself as in itself.*²¹³ (In a moment, death triumphs over/in incremental distance as difference.)²¹⁴ A creolized rhythmic re-membering other-wise redefines bodies and difference as ambi(val)ent affective assemblage of divine multiplicity. This mass slaughter-suicide, this aggregate annihilation, then, reverberates with undeniable affective resonance *when read with rhythm for the sake of the I-n-I(slands)* since we, as the all-world, are becoming archipelago. Engulfed and embraced, as we are, in and by these waves of resonance in a poetics of Relation, occupying the *in-between* of ostensibly discrete, divergent-converging bodies of land, of text, and of human and other-than-human beings. These bodies, these concepts, these affects, our poetic rhythms of Relation, are always moving us into and through routes other-wise. Samson's affectual *undoing* is a heuristic to demonstrate the hermeneutic of bibliorality but also to the way in which the Bible is always already bloom space; an ambi(val)ent

²¹⁰ Following the beat, reading with rhythm, leads us to re-member Samson's final act, where his massacre-suicide effects *resistance* to imperial domination and difference constructed according to Western hierarchical dualisms, always already invigorated by the *resonance* of *I-an-I* theo-logics. It is uncertain just how the Rastafari reconcile Samson's status/subjectivity as a disabled, blind, bound, and enslaved body in their renderings and re-memberings of him. While I believe there is great political potential within the symbol of Samson's disabled (disfigured, disdained yet not disqualified) body, in my admittedly limited research I have not yet found this body as accessible to or appealing for Rastafari re-membering Samson.

²¹¹ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 40. Also see note 80 in the Introduction.

²¹² Judges 16:30. My translation.

²¹³ Seigworth and Gregg, 3.

²¹⁴ Brinkema, 2.

affective assemblage through which we might recognize the other-wise and come to realize our own re-memberings other-wise.

EPILOGUE:
Toward Epistemological Routes Other-Wise
The end is the beginning is the end...¹
Bibliorality: Between and Beyond Binaries

*As it was in the beginning, so shall it be in the end...
 You thinks its the end, But it's just the beginning.*

—Bob Marley

*What I write may live with me, but when I die, my writing lives on;
 Therefore, what you do or write must be so clear as to live on when you are gone.*

—Marcus Garvey

*Every diaspora is the passage from unity to multiplicity. This is important in all the
 movements of the world.²*

—Édouard Glissant

As I shared, I began writing this dissertation over 4 years ago, in the confluence of two seminars as I proffered a Rastafarian reading of Samson (with a whole lot of Glissant). I had been trained in biblical studies, poststructuralist discourse and queer theory. While I was certainly familiar with non-Western perspectives, I had been raised by the Root, which had all but razed any route other-wise in order to ensure its singularity and authority. The doctoral seminar in Africana rocked my world, it opened my eyes, and, as I related, it radically altered the course of my intellectual trajectory. The deeper I delved into Glissant and Africana, perceiving resonance between certain the threads, themes, and concepts Africana and Continental Philosophy unmined, or even identified,

¹ Smashing Pumpkins, “The End is the Beginning is the End,” Billy Corgan, April 4, 1997. These lyrics are reminiscent of T.S. Eliot’s poetic proclamation, “What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.”

² Édouard Glissant, “One World in Relation,” dir. Manthia Diawara, *TWN* (2011).

the more apparent was the Root of this injustice and the stronger the drive to expose and extirpate. This dissertation embodies the materialization of intertextual, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural resonances entirely in resistance to the Root. In this way, then, the creative poetic expression of my own transformation by archipelagic thinking is itself a subterranean convergence. I convey the idea of thinking with the thinking other as the occupation of the in-between, the aqueous flow between islands as bodies, and this is archipelogics. As we allow the episteme of a poetics of Relation, rather than the Root, to guide the interpretive (as interpenetrative) process, we are incited and inspired to remember the Bible other-wise. We are no longer satisfied to read the canon as (fore)closed, nor can we work solely with rusted and busted tools. We need a technology of reading adequate to our milieu, which is always already in the middle. Therefore, we require a hermeneutic of bibliorality, which empowers us to interpret this ambi(val)ent affective assemblage with sensitivity to the other-wise of the always other bodies implicated in the interpretive event. This dissertation is also, then, the product of my commitment to (Relational) poetic justice in this all-world becoming archipelago.

In his recently published essay, “Exodus as the Door of (No) Return,” Kenneth Ngwa reflects, “Identity is forever fractured. And the fracturing is coded in bodies and stories—official and unofficial—but also in the structures that hold these doors.”³ Knowledge, too, is coded. The rights to Wisdom have historically been reserved by and restricted to only those granted access; a privilege traditionally bestowed upon those who claim Western European episteme as their Root. But, as we have seen, Wisdom is not Root, it is rhizomatic and its routes are diasporic, ever extending in diverse embodiments,

³ Kenneth Ngwa, “Exodus as the Door of (No) Return.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136, no. 1 (2017): 215.

and enduringly other-wise. “Diaspora is haunting;” and I am among the haunted.⁴ I too am compelled by the queries that impel Ngwa, “what kind of citizen[s] are we willing to be? And how [do we] engage the Bible, given its role in the construction of these haunting structures and narratives that populate global spaces?”⁵ I cannot and will not answer for others, but I am seeking interpretive routes other-wise in order to respond in resistance to the empiricism of the Root and with respect for our all-worldness. Remembering other-wise is not your (ecclesiastic or epistemic) Father’s hermeneutic—staid, sanitized, and safely separated from the dregs of society—it is a hermeneutic in the midst of the catastrophic; and if scholars of all varieties have any hope for relevance in the 21st century, that is precisely where we must be.

In the final months of writing, I re-read Cornell West’s exhortation in “Prophetic Religion and the Future of Capitalist Civilization,” and was once again encouraged by his call to academics (and not just of religion), beyond solidarity into authenticity, to love and live in the midst of “the catastrophic.” He elucidates,

The centrality of the catastrophic that sits at the center of prophetic religion, Shelley and Byron, prophetic poets—the catastrophic, the suffering of oppressed people, not in any kind of abstract way, not in any kind of condescending way, not in any kind of philanthropic or charitable way; justice being not just in solidarity with dominated peoples but of actually having a genuine love and willingness to celebrate with and work alongside those catching hell—with the wretched of the earth, in the language of Frantz Fanon.⁶

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. I understand this spectrality to be an instantiation of rememory and is for me an allusion to re-membering.

⁶ Cornell West, “Prophetic Religion and the Future of Capitalist Civilization” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 96.

“How broad, how deep is your empathy?” He inquires. “How broad, how deep is one’s imagination?”⁷ Empathy and imagination are not simply correlated, they are directly proportional. He continues, “And most importantly for me—and this is something that makes it difficult for a blues man like myself to remain for too long in an academic context—when you have that kind of orientation, you’re always full of righteous indignation and holy anger at injustice.”⁸ You can’t help but get ignorant. West is right, we have to seek truth *and* speak the truth, and do so without consistently trying to “deodorize that funk” of our “ravaged world.”⁹ In fact, we need really funky folk “keeping track of the catastrophic,” and operating in the archipelogics of an oraliturythmic Relational poetics, “so that unaccountable elites at the top don’t run amok with greed and narrow empathy and truncated imagination.”¹⁰ This dissertation is about keeping track by occupying the crack. Intellectuals, poets, and prophets of the 21st century must *explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilizations, boldly go where no Man has gone before*, but they cannot do it by the well-established routes of the Root. (We can see where that has gotten us). It will not be through exploration, exploitation, and extortion, but through imagination, (re)creation, and always already in (a poetics of) Relation.

Samson’s suicide-mass homicide is catastrophic and it calls us to consider our own I-an-Identity—as and through creolization rather than filiation. While, according to Western European episteme, folktales are fiction, they are not “fact” or historically accurate, they have the capacity to reveal something much more real and honest than the

⁷ Ibid., 97.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See note 130 in the Introduction.

¹⁰ Ibid.

History we have been spoon-fed as citizens of a planet consumed and reconstituted by the voracious and insatiable appetite of colonialism and capitalism. To see this, to *feel* this, however, we need to think, *to live and move and have our being*, beyond the Western European Root episteme; we need to acknowledge our own creolization.¹¹ As a diasporic, archipelagic assemblage, Creole was birthed of an epistemology of in-between-ness that is the Caribbean I-an-Islands. It is person(al), style, culture and language; “an intermediary category, defined primarily by its relationship to the other, rather than an essence.”¹² Creolization, then, according to Bamikole, is the “coming together of different elements in an interacting and interpenetrative process, producing a new reality or entity which is neither one nor the other of the original elements, but which nevertheless share some features with the original elements.”¹³ As Glissant, posited Creolization is *métissage* and it is hybridity, but it is also something more, something

¹¹ See note 119 in the Introduction.

¹² Lawrence O. Bamikole, “Creolization and the Search for Identity in Caribbean Philosophy,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 2007): 76. Bamikole is drawing from Allen in this and the previous footnote. See Carolyn Allen, “Creole Then and Now: The Problem of Definition,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, nos. 1 & 2 (1998): 31, 36.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 76. Lawrence Bamikole looks to Kamau Brathwaite’s definition of creolization, crediting him with introducing the concept into academic discourse and, therefore, its acceptance as a “household unit of analysis, especially among linguistics and sociologies in interrogating the social history of a group or groups of people who have been hybridized by the phenomena of slavery and colonialism” (76). Though Lawrence Bamikole never once mentions Édouard Glissant, the resonances between his portrayal of creolization and Glissant’s are undeniable. Creolization, for Bamikole, is the key “to fashion out a distinctive Caribbean philosophy” (80). Bamikole concludes, much as he does in his contribution to *Rastafari in the New Millennium*, “Caribbean people should look inwards and develop alternative ways of conducting their affairs. This does not mean that they have to sever themselves totally from their progenitors and historical antecedents, but in the spirit of creolization, they should make use of the knowledge gained from the interactive process with other cultures to better their human, social and spiritual conditions” (81). Also see Carolyn Allen, “Creole Then and Now: The Problem of Definition,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, nos. 1 & 2 (1998): 31, 36.

entirely other-wise; a third kind.¹⁴ Creole is queer and something akin to *χώρα*. *Creolité est agencement*. Creolization is assemblage. It is, in fact, rhizomatic, archipelological assemblage and it is time—as *καιρός* and *αἰών* displace *κρόνος*—that we come to discern and honor the significance of this subterranean convergence by inhabiting the catastrophic and occupying the in-between.¹⁵ My re-membering of the Bible, through

¹⁴ In “The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World, Glissant writes, “Creolization has the following characteristics: the lightning speed of interaction among its elements; the ‘awareness of awareness’ thus provoked in us; the reevaluation of the various elements brought into contact (for creolization has no presupposed scale of values); and unforeseeable results. Creolization is not a simple crossbreeding that would produce easily anticipated synthesis” (290). It is totally other-wise.

¹⁵ In Christian theology, time is typically differentiated as either *κρόνος* or *καιρός*, the former representing linear, sequential “chronology” and the latter bears theological significance as a particular appointed time or season (e.g., Mark 1:15). See Paul Tillich, *The Interpretation of History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936). In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze contrasts *κρόνος* and *αἰών*. He submits that time is “on the one hand, the always limited present, which measures the action of bodies as causes and the state of their mixtures in depth (Chronos); on the other, the essentially unlimited past and future, which gather incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects (Aion)” (Deleuze, 61). He expounds, “Chronos is the present which alone exists. It makes of the past and future its two oriented dimensions, so that one goes always from the past to the future—but only to the degree that presents follow one another inside partial worlds or partial systems” (Deleuze, 77). The Aion is, in the words of John Marks, “a time of pure becoming, a straight line that extends infinitely into the past and future,” but “running in both directions simultaneously, the Aion is in fact a straight line as a labyrinth” (Marks, 89). It is rhizomatic, perpetually subdividing the event, which is, in Deleuze’s words, “that no one ever dies, but has always died or is always going to die, in the empty present of the Aion, that is, in eternity” (Deleuze, 63). The Deleuzian Aion is something akin to the Derridean “absolute secret,” absolutely closed (and clothed?) and “infinitely open;” *εσκατον, παρουσία*, the apocalyptic “Come” (cum *différance*) the Messiah who is always present, always coming, yet never arrives. This Messiah is *tout autre*, and “in order to be the Messiah, is, and must be,” in the words of Catherine Keller and Stephen Moore, a figure of dread...no less than desire—but less because his Parousia marks the impossible arrival of an absolutely unanticipatable future, oriented to justice beyond the law and hospitality beyond reciprocity, than because the Apocalypse’s ‘Come,’ which impatiently holds the door open for the immanent advent of the Messiah, is an implementation of justice as slaughter on a surreal scale” (Keller and Moore, 194, 195). See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); John Marks, *Gilles Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1998); Jacques Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” in *Raising the*

Wisdom and Samson, alongside Afro-Caribbean Relational poet-intellec-tuals, poststructuralist philosophers, biblical scholars, and Rastawo/men, creates a conversation that would not otherwise materialize but *must*, in fact, take place if the field is to adapt and take into account the ways in which living and literary bodies are affectively imbricated.¹⁶ Rather than attempting to identify an “original” and, therefore, legitimate meaning or the methodological means through which to access it, my re-membering of the Bible foregrounds the always already interpreted contingency of legitimacy and troubles the very notion of origins as well as the infinite possibility and radical instability of all interpretation. My re-membering of Samson in particular provides an illustration of biblical interpretation and biblical studies as (efforts toward) inhabiting the (poetics of Relation) other-wise, whereby we actively engage, acclaim and even enact “ignorant”

Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida, ed. Peter Fenves, trans. John P. Leavey Jr. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 117-172; idem, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 40-101; idem, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997); and Catherine Keller and Stephen D. Moore, “Derridapocalypse,” in *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments*, eds., Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart (New York: Routledge, 2005), 189-207.

¹⁶ See Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 55. In *Return to the Source*, Amilcar Cabral presents his call for a universal culture, “The foundation of national liberation rests on the inalienable right of every people to have their own history...In the framework of the conquest of national independence and in the perspective of developing economic and social progress of the people, the objectives must be at least the following: development of a popular culture and of all positive indigenous cultural values; development of a national culture based upon the history and the achievements of the struggle itself; constant promotions of the political and moral awareness of the people (of all social groups) as well as patriotism, of the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the cause of independence, of justice and progress; development of a technical, technological and scientific culture, compatible with the requirements for progress; development, on the basis of a critical assimilation of man’s achievements in the domains of arts, science, literature, etc., of a universal culture for perfect integration into the contemporary world, in the perspectives of its revolution; constant and generalized promotion of feelings of humanism, of solidarity, of respect and disinterested devotion to human beings.”

(because previously illegitimate) intelligences and unorthodox (intertextual) interpenetrations, invigorated by (our entering into) the uncanny interdependence of our all-world: ambi(val)ent affective assemblage. Let us, then, intentionally resist filiation and transparency in favor of creolization and opacity, occupying and obstinately embracing the always already in-between of our (re)creative and catastrophic creolized existence, our all-worldness. As diasporic, rhizomatic route away from the Root, engaging (in) the archipelogics of bibliorality we open and activate our (limbo) imagination, and our own I-an-Identity, so as to re-member the Bible and our world (as archipelagic) other-wise.

In the islands, the coconut tree is Tree of Life, is Baobab, is Wisdom, and archipelagic peoples around the world have utilized the tree, and all its parts, as a source of sustenance for centuries. Dianne Stewart speaks to the relevancy of the fruit's three eyes within the Caribbean, which facilitate "contact with mystical power and the spirits of the departed."¹⁷ The coconut, she expounds, "known worldwide for its uses in human consumption, is simultaneously a vehicle for the transportation of messages and provides just one of many paths to the Divine Community."¹⁸ The coconut is a path to the Divine; the coconut is the fruit of Wisdom. Why did I not know this until my thirties?¹⁹ The fruit in Eden was never named, yet into my twenties it was an apple. From sitting cross-legged in Sunday School, staring at the flannelgraph scene, to wandering my way through the Uffizi, the Academy, and into the Sistine Chapel, it was always an apple. What if, instead

¹⁷ Dianne M. Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), ix.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Moreover, how did I not grasp the significance of this symbol as a social and spiritual force until recently?

of an apple, it had been a coconut? What if islands instead of a continent? What if poetry and not prose? What if by rhythm, not by wrote? And what if Relation rather than Root identity?

The question of what might be had the Other side won is not new; but that is not my query. Even as I am perturbed by pure pontification and enraged by the intellectual (mutual) masturbation that has dominated the disembodied discourses of academia, I am disinterested in discussing what could have or should have been. I will not fight for the right to be heard in a space where I cannot be seen (as epistemological equal) and where the voices from whom our world so desperately needs to hear are implicitly disadvantaged and disqualified. I am intensely and intimately invested and entangled in the other-wise. Therefore, what really matters, now that we West has “won,” is (how) can it surrender to the Rest in order to re-member, to (re)create, our world other-wise? My intervention is not a promise nor is it a prescription, it is an epistemological invitation and a challenge, particularly to Western European academics, to betray the continent, its colonizing proclivities and its Root sensibilities, and become the archipelago. It begins with choice, the intentional and repeated act of displacing the West, History, Literature, the Book, the Bible. Only as we disrupt intellectualism as usual, revoking the scale of singularity and renouncing the tyranny of transparency, have we any hope of living the Wisdom of our world as rhizome and creolized bloom space. We are our worldness, therefore, identity can no longer be thought in duality and determinacy but as that which infinitely diffracts in Diversity and opacity. We are the poetics of Relation, the word made flesh (making our world), terminally and indeterminately creolized verbal carnality. We are the archipelogos, guided by the diasporic other-Wisdom of the Rest. Will you join

me in new rhizomatic routes and, honoring the ambi(val)ent affective assemblage that is the Bible and our creolized all-world becoming archipelago, will you join me in remembering other-wise?

Bibliography

- Achebe, Chinua. "The African Writer & the English Language." In *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 428-34. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Aching, Gerard. *Masking and Power: Carnival and Popular Culture in the Caribbean*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Ackerman, Susan. "What if Judges Had Been Written by a Philistine?" *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 1 (2000), 33-41.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004
- Akoto-Abutiata, Dorothy Bea. *Proverbs and The African Tree of Life: Grafting Biblical Proverbs onto the Ghanaian Eve Folk Proverbs*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Althaus-Reid, Marcella. *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Anyidoho, Kofi, Daniel Anorgbedor, Susan Domowitz, and Eren Giray-Saul, eds. *Cross Rhythms: Papers in African Folklore*. Bloomington: Trickster Press, 1983.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- _____. *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010.
- _____. "Race." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, edited by In Frank Lentricchia and Tom McLaughlin, 274-287. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- _____. "Race in the Modern World." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (Mar 2015), 1-8.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony, and Henry Louis Gates Jr., eds. *Identities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. Oxford and New York: Oxford World Classics, 2006.
- Arnold, A. James. "The Erotics of Colonialism in French West Indian Literary Culture." In *New West Indian Guide* 68, no. 1-2 (1994), 5-22.

- Assman, Jan. *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Early, Civilization*. Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Asante, Molefi K. *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism: An Afrocentric Response to Critics*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- _____. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984. (Originally published in 1972.)
- _____. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Bal, Mieke. *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- _____. *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- _____. *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Bamikole, Lawrence O. "Creolization and the Search for Identity in Caribbean Philosophy." *Caribbean Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 2007), 70-82.
- Barber, Daniel Colucciello. "Assembling No: Remarks on Diaspora and Intransitivity," in *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism* 46, no. 1 (2017), 155-165.
- Barnett, Michael. "Rastafari Dialectism: The Epistemological Individualism and Conectivism of Rastafari" in *Caribbean Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (December 2002): 54-61, 88.
- Barnett, Michael, ed. *Rastafari in the New Millennium: A Rastafari Reader*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012.
- Barrett, Sr., Leonard E. *The Rastafarians*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997. (Originally published in 1977.)
- _____. *Soul-Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1974.
- _____. *The Sun and the Drum: African Roots in Jamaican Folk Tradition*. Kingston: Sangster's Book Stores, 1976.
- Bedasse, Monique. "Rasta Evolution: The Theology of the Twelve Tribes of Israel." *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 5 (May 2010), 960-973.

- Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin, ed. *Psychoanalysis and Theism: Critical Reflections on the Grünbaum Thesis*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.
- Bejel, Emilio. *Gay Cuban Nation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University, 2011.
- John L. Berquist, *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.
- _____. *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2003.
- Bertelson, Lone, and Andrew Murphie. "An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers: Félix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain." In *The Affect Theory Reader*. Edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Duke & London: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- _____. *Nation and Narration*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Bilby, Kenneth. "Masking the Spirit in the South Atlantic World: Jankunu's Partially-Hidden History." Presented at The Ninth Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference: The Legacies of Slavery and Emancipation: Jamaica in the Atlantic World. New Haven: Yale University, November 1-3, 2007.
- _____. "Surviving Secularization: Masking the Spirit in the Jankunu (John Canoe) Festivals of the Caribbean." In *New West Indian Guide* 84, no. 3-4 (2010), 179-223.
- Boedecker, Edgar C. "Individual and Community in Early Heidegger: Situating das Man, the Man-self, and Self-ownership in Dasein's Ontological Structure." *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 44, no. 1 (2001), 63-99.
- Boer, Roland. *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013.
- Bongie, Chris. "Reading the Archipelago." *New West Indies Guide* 73, no. 1-2 (1999), 89-95.
- _____. *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/colonial Literature*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Brathwaite, Kamau. *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

- _____. *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean*. Mona: Savacou Publications, 1974.
- _____. *Our Ancestral Heritage: A Bibliography of the Roots of Culture in the English-speaking Caribbean*. Mona: Savacou Publications, 1976.
- Braziel, Jana Evans. *Caribbean Genesis: Jamaica Kincaid and the Writing of New Worlds*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Brennan, Teresa. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Brenner, Athalya. *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
- Brenner, Athalya, ed. *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Brenner, Athalya, and Fokkeli van Dijk-Hemmes. *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.
- Brinkema, Eugenie. *The Forms of the Affects*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Britton, Celia. *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999.
- Bruns, Gerald L. *On the Anarchy of Poetry and Philosophy: A Guide for the Unruly*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006.
- Burns, Lorna. *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature Between Postcolonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy*. New York: Continuum, 2012.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- _____. "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism.'" In *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*. Ed. Steven Seidman, 153-170. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- _____. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- _____. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London New York: Verso, 2009.
- _____. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

- _____. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- _____. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Bynum, David. *Daemon in the Wood: A Study of Oral Narrative Patterns*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Cabral, Amilcar. *Return to the Source*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Camp, Claudia V. *Wise, Strange, and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Campbell, Horace. *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rooney*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987.
- Caputo, John S. *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997.
- Carlson, Keith Thor, Kristina Fagan, and Nathalia Khanenko-Friesen, eds., *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- _____. *Une Tempête*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969.
- _____. *A Tempest: Based on Shakespeare's "The Tempest;" Adaptation for Black Theatre*. Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1992.
- Chevannes, Barry. *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994.
- Chevannes, Barry, ed., *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998.
- Chisolm, Robert B. *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2013.
- Christensen, Jeanne. *Rastafarian Reasoning and the Rastawoman: Gender Constructions in the Shaping of the Rastafari Livivity*. Plymouth, UK: Lanham Books, 2014.
- Christensen, Thomas G. *An African Tree of Life*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.

- Cixous, H el ene. "The Laugh of the Medusa," translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976), 875-893.
- Clarke, Richard L. W. "Root Versus Rhizome: An 'Epistemological Break' in Francophone Thought." *Journal of West Indian Literature* 9, no. 1 (April 2000), 12-41.
- Cliff, Michelle. *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise*. Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1980.
- Colebrook, Claire. *Gilles Deleuze*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Coleman, Rebecca. *Transfiguring Images: Screens, Affect, Futures*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Cooper, Carolyn. *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the Vulgar Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- _____. "Slackness hiding from Culture: Erotic Play in the Dancehall." *Jamaica Journal* 22, no. 4 (November 1989-January 1990), 12-20.
- _____. *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Cooper, Cedric E., *Echoes of the Baobab Tree: Some Things should not Be Kept Secret*. Missouri City, TX: Publishing International, 2014.
- Crenshaw, James L. *Samson: A Secret Betrayed, a Vow Ignored*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978.
- _____. "The Samson Saga: Filial Devotion or Erotic Attachment?" *ZAW* 86 (1974), 470-504.
- Crenshaw, James L., ed. *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1976.
- Crichlow, Michaeline A., ed. *Carnival Art, Culture and Politics: Performing Life*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Cull, Laura, ed. *Deleuze and Performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- Cull, Laura. *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Culley, Robert C. "Oral Tradition and Biblical Studies." In *Oral Tradition* 1, no. 1 (1986), 30-65.

- Dabashi, Hamid. *Can Non-Europeans Think?* London: Zed Books, 2015.
- Dalfovo, A.T. "African Proverbs and African Philosophy" in *Embracing the Baobab Tree: The African Proverb in the 21st Century*, edited by Willem Saayman, 37-48. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1997.
- Dance, Daryl C. *Folklore from Contemporary Jamaicans*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985.
- Dash, J. Michael. *Edouard Glissant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Dash, J. Michael. *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1998.
- Davidson, E.T.A. *Intricity, Design, and Cunning in the Book of Judges*. Bloomington: Xlibris, 2008.
- Davidson, Steed V. "Leave Babylon: The Trope of Babylon in Rastafarian Discourse." In *Black Theology: An International Journal* 6, no. 1 (Jan 2008), 46-60.
- Davies, Carol Boyce. *Black Women, Writing and Identity. Migrations of the Subject*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.
- DeLanda, Manuel. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
- Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel': A Study of Biblical Origins* (London & New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. (Originally published in 1992.)
- Davies, Carol Boyce, Meredith Gadsby, Charles F. Peterson, and Henrietta Williams, eds. *Decolonizing the Academy: African Diaspora Studies*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003.
- Dawes, Kwame. *Natural Mysticism: Toward a New Reggae Aesthetic in Caribbean Writing*. Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1999.
- Dawes, Kwame, ed. *Talk Yuh Talk: Interviews with Anglophone Caribbean Poets*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2001.
- DeCosmo, Janet L. "Bob Marley: Religious Prophet?" In *Bob Marley: The Man and His Music*. Ed. Eleanor Wint and Carolyn Cooper, 59-75. Kingston, JM: Arawak, 2003.
- _____. "The Concept of 'Surplus Populations' and its Relationship to Rastafari." In *Depth: A Journal for Values and Public Policy* 4, no. 1 (1994), 69.
- Deist, Ferdinand. "'Murder in the Toilet' (Judges 3:13-20): Translation and Transformation," *Scriptura* 58 (1996), 263-72.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. New York: Continuum, 1987.

_____. *The Logic of Sense*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. (Originally published in 1969.)

_____. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

_____. *The Fold*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

_____. *A Thousand Plateaus*. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

_____. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.

Demos, Virginia E. "An Affect Revolution: Silvan Tompkin's Affect Theory." In *Exploring Affect: The Selected Writings of Silvan S. Tompkins*. Ed. Virginia E. Demos, 17-26. New York: Press Syndicate of the U. of Cambridge, 1995.

Derks, Marco. "If I Be Shaven Then My Strength Will Go from Me: A Queer Reading of the Samson Narrative," *Biblical Interpretation* 23, no. 4-5 (2015), 553-73.

Derrida, Jacques. *Glas*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. (Originally published in French in 1974.)

_____. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

_____. "On Colleges and Philosophy." Interview with Geoffrey Bennington. *Postmodernism: ICA Documents*, ed., Lisa Appignanesi (London: Free Association Books, 1989): 227-228.

_____. *On the Name*. Ed. Thomas Dutoit. Trans. John P. Leavey Jr., et al. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.

_____. *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- _____. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York and London: Routledge, 1994.
- _____. *Writing and Difference*. 2nd ed. Trans. Alan Bass. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Desai, Gaurav Gajanan, and Supriya Nair, eds., *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Dewey, Joanna. "Textuality in an Oral Culture: A Survey of the Pauline Traditions." *Semeia* 65 (1994), 37-66.
- Donaldson, Laura E. *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender and Empire-Building*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Donnell, Allison. *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Drabinski, John E. *Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Dunn, James D.G. *The Oral Gospel Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013.
- Edmonds, Ennis B., and Michelle A. Gonzalez. *Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2010.
- Edmonds, Ennis B. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Matthew Desmond. "Race and Reflexivity." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35, no. 4 (April 2012), 574-599.
- Erskine, Noel Leo. *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981.
- _____. *From Garvey to Marley: Rastafari Theology*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007.
- Exum, Cheryl. "Aspects of Symmetry and Balance in the Samson Saga," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 6 (1981), 3-29.
- _____. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)Versions of Biblical Narratives*. Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1993.
- _____. "Judges: Encoded Messages to Women." In *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*.

Eds. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker, 112-127. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012.

_____. "Promise and Fulfillment: Narrative Art in Judges 13." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 1 (1980), 43-59.

_____. "The Theological Dimension of the Samson Saga," *VT* 33 (1983), 30-45

Eynikel, Erik, and Tobias Nicklas, eds. *Samson: Hero or Fool? The Many Faces of Samson*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014.

Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, ed. *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1997.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 2008. (Originally published by Éditions du Seuil in 1952.)

Fewell, Danna Nolan. "Judges." In *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Ed. Carol Ann Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, 73-83. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Fewell, Danna Nolan, ed. *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

Forsythe, Dennis. *Rastafari for the Healing of the Nations*. Kingston: Zaika Publications, 1983.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

_____. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York: Random House, 1978.

_____. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

Fox, Everett. "The Samson Cycle in an Oral Setting." *Alcheringa: Ethnopoetics* 4 (1978), 51-68.

Frank, Kevin. "Female Agency and Oppression in Caribbean Bacchanalian Culture: Soca, Carnival, and Dancehall," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1-2. The Sexual Body (Spring-Summer 2007), 172-190.

Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Ed. New York: Continuum, 2000.
- Frith, Simon. "Music and Identity." In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, 108-127. London: SAGE Publications, 1996.
- Galpaz-Feller, Pnina. "'Let My Soul Die with the Philistines,' (Judges 16.30)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30 (2006), 315-25.
- Garber, Marjorie, and Nancy J. Vickers, eds. *The Medusa Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Gaston, Sean. *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida*. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Gates, Jr., Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- _____. *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora*. New York: BasicCivitas, 2010.
- Gilbert, "Signifying Nothing: 'Culture,' 'Discourse' and the Sociality of Affect." *Culture Machine* 6 (2004). <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/viewarticle/8/7>
- Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse*. Trans. Michael Dash. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989.
- _____. *L'Intention Poétique*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969.
- _____. *Faulkner, Mississippi*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- _____. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Celia Britton. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- _____. *Traité du Tout-Monde*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997.
- _____. "The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World." In *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*. Ed. Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, 287-297. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

- Gordon, Lewis R., ed. *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.
- Gossai, Hemchand, and Nathaniel S. Murrell, eds. *Religion, Culture, and Tradition in the Caribbean*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.
- Green, James N. *Beyond Carnival: Male Sexuality in Twentieth Century Brazil*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Guattari, Felix. *Chasomosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Sydney: Power, 1995.
- Guillaume, Laura, and Joe Hughes, eds. *Deleuze and the Body*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Gunkel, Hermann. *Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History*. Trans. W. H. Carruth. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1901.
- Gunn, David. *Judges Through the Centuries*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Gunn, David, and Danna Nolan Fewell. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Halberstam, J. Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
- Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Hall, Stuart. "Creolization, Diaspora and Hybridity" in *Creolite and Creolization*. Eds. Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, and Octavio Zaya, 185-198. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2003.
- Hall, Stuart, and Paul Du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage Publications, 1996.
- Hallen, Barry. *A Short History of African Philosophy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Halperin, David. *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Harris, Wilson and Sewlyn Cudjoe. *History, Fable, and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas*. Trinidad and Tobago and Wellesley, MA: Calaloux Publishing: 1970.

- Hart, David W. "Caribbean Chronotopes: From Exile to Agency," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 2, no. 2 (2004), 1-19.
- Hausman, Gerald. *The Kebra Negast: The Lost Bible of Rastafarian Wisdom and Faith from Ethiopia*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Havelock, Eric. *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Hearon, Holly E. "The Implications of 'Orality' for Studies of the Biblical Text." In *Oral Tradition*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2004): 96-107.
- Henry, Paget. "Rastafarianism and the Reality of Dread." In *Existence in Black*. Ed. Lewis Gordon, 157-164. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- _____. *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
- Henry, Paget, and Paul Buhle, eds. *C. L. R. James's Caribbean*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Hess, Richard S., and David Toshio Tsumura, eds. *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994.
- Hill, Jack. "Black Religious Ethics and Higher Education: Rastafarian Identity as a Resource for Inclusiveness." *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 24, no. 1 (2003), 3-13.
- Hill, Robert A. *Dread History: Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in Early Rastafari Religions in Jamaica*. Chicago: Frontline Distribution International, 2001.
- Homiak, John P. "The Mystic Revelation of Rasta Far-eye: Visionary Communication in a Prophetic Movement." In *Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations*. Ed. Barbara Tedlock, 220-45. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- _____. "Dub History: Soundings on Rastafari Livity and Language." In *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews*. Ed. Barry Chevannes, 127-181. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- _____. "Movements of Jah People: From Sound Scapes to Mediascape." In *Religion, Diaspora and Cultural Identity: A Reader in the Anglophone Caribbean*, edited by John Pullis, 87-123. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1999.
- _____. "The Boboshanti: International Routes Return Reggae to Its Levitical Roots." In *Rootz, Reggae, and Kulcha* 10, no. 1 (2009), 22-3.

Hoogland, Renée C., ed. *Gender: Sources, Perspectives, and Methodologies*, Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks. Michigan: Macmillan Reference USA, 2016.

hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

_____. *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

_____. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

_____. *Writing Beyond Race: Living Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Horsley, Richard A., ed. *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Horsley, Richard A., Jonathan A. Draper, and James Miles Foley. *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.

Howell, Leonard Percival [G. G. Maragh]. *The Promised Key*. Kingston: Headstart Printing and Publishing, 1997. (Originally published around 1935.)

Huntington, Julie Ann. *Transcultural Rhythms: An Exploration of Rhythm, Music and the Drum in a Selection of Francophone Novels from West Africa and the Caribbean*. Dissertation. Vanderbilt University (May 2005).

Hurtado, Larry. "Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? 'Orality,' 'Performance,' and Reading Texts in Early Christianity." In *New Testament Studies* 60, no. 3 (July 2014), 321-340.

Imre, Anikó. *Identity Games: Globalization and the Transformation of Media Cultures in the New Europe*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009.

Irigaray, Luce. *The Sex Which is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

_____. *The Speculum of the Other Woman*, translated by Gillian Gill. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Iyasere, Solomon. "Oral Tradition in the Criticism of African Literature." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 1 (1975), 107-119.

Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

- Jobling, David. *Berit Olam: 1 Samuel*, edited by in David W. Cotter. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Jost, Renate. "God of Love/God of Vengeance, or Samson's 'Prayer for Vengeance.'" In *Judges*. Ed. Athalya Brenner, 117-125. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Kadish, Doris Y. ed., *Slavery in the Caribbean Francophone World: Distant Voices, Forgotten Acts*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000.
- Keller, Catherine. *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Keller, Catherine, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010.
- Kelber, Werner H. "Orality and Biblical Studies: A Review Essay." *Review of Biblical Literature* 9 (December 2007), 1-24.
- _____. *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Gospel of Mark, Paul, and Q*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- King, Audvil. ed., *One Love*. London: Bogle-L'Óuverture Publications, 1971.
- King, Stephen A. *Reggae, Rastafari, and the Rhetoric of Social Control*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2002.
- Klein, Lillian R. *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*. Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1988.
- Klein, Melanie. *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945*. New York: The Free Press, 1975.
- Knight, Franklin W. *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Konstan, David. "Violence in Ancient Comedy: Men and Women, Citizens and Slaves." Lecture. Drew University, Founders Hall. April 16, 2013.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Word, Dialogue and Novel." In *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi, 34-61. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. (Originally published in 1969.)
- _____. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* New York: Columbia, 1982.
- _____. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

- Lake, Obiagele. *Rastafari Women: Subordination in the Midst of Liberation Theology*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1998.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- Larrier, Renée Brenda. *Francophone Women Writers of African and the Caribbean*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000.
- Latour, Bruno. "How to Talk about the Body?" *The Normative Dimension of Science Studies*. *Body and Society* 2, no. 3 (2004), 205-29.
- Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska, Ela. "Samson: Masculinity Lost (and Regained?)." In *Men and Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*. Ed. Ovidiu Creanga, 171-188. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd, 2010.
- Lee, Hélène. *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2003. (Originally published in French by Flammarion in 1999.)
- Leeming, David. *Medusa: In the Mirror of Time*. London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 2013.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966. (Originally published in French in 1966.)
- _____. *Totemism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963. (Originally published in French in 1962.)
- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien. *How Natives Think*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1926. (Originally published in French in 1910.)
- _____. *Primitive Mentality*, translated by Lilian A. Clare. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923. (Originally published in French in 1922.)
- Lewis, Shirleen K. *Race, Culture, and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory from Négritude to Créolite*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006.
- Loichot, Valérie. "Negations and Subversions of Paternal Authorities in Glissant's Fictional Works." In *Naming the Father: Legacies, Genealogies, and Explorations of Fatherhood in Modern and Contemporary Literature*. Eds. Eva Paulino, Terry Caesar, and William Hummel, 96-119. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000.
- Lopez, Davina C. *The Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

- Lorenz, Helen Shulman. "Thawing Hearts, Opening a Path in the Woods, Founding a New Lineage." In *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*. Eds. Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating. New York: Routledge (2002), 496-506.
- Lovesey, Oliver, ed. *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2012.
- Low, Bronwen. And Mela Sarker. "Translanguaging in the Multilingual Montreal Hip-Hop Community: Everyday Poetics as Counter to the Myths of the Monolingual Classroom." In *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy*. Ed. Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese, 99-118. Netherlands: Springer, 2014.
- MacNeil, Dean. *The Bible and Bob Marley: Half the Story Has Never Been Told*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013.
- Mahubani, Kishore. *Can Asians Think? Understanding the Divide Between East and West*. South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 1998.
- Margalith, Othniel. "Samson's Foxes." *VT* 35 (1985), 224-9.
- Martin, Dale. *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.
- Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Affect, Movement, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Maxey, James. *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible*. Wipf & Stock, 2009.
- Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. (Originally published in 1992.)
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- McKenzie, Earl. "Glissant on Time and History" in *Caribbean Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (December 2002), 62-70.
- McKittrick, Katherine. *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Mendieta, Eduardo, and Jonathan Vanantwerpen, eds. *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Meschonnic, Henri. *Critique du rythme, anthropologie historique du langage*. Lagrasse: Verdier, 1982.

_____. *Politique du rythme, politique du sujet*. Lagrasse: Verdier, 1995.

Mettinger, Tryggve N. D. *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 2-3*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007.

Middleton, J. Richard. Identity and Subversion in Babylon: Strategies for ‘Resisting Against the System’ in the Music of Bob Marley and the Wailers.” In *Religion, Culture, and Tradition in the Caribbean*. Eds. Hemchand Gossai and Nathaniel S. Murrell, 181-205. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000.

Middleton, Darren J. N. *Rastafari and the Arts: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Mobley, Gregory. *The Empty Men: The Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel*. New York: Doubleday, 2005.

_____. *Samson and the Liminal Hero in the Ancient Near East*. New York: Continuum, 2006.

_____. “The Wild Man in the Bible and the Ancient Near East.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1997), 217-33.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics*. London: Routledge, 1985.

Mordecai, Pamela, and Betty Wilson, eds. *Her True-True Name: An Anthology of Women’s Writing from the Caribbean*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1989.

Mordecai, Pamela. *Subversive Sonnets*. Toronto: TSAR Publications, 2012.

Morgenstern, Mira. *Conceiving a Nation: The Development of Political Discourse in the Hebrew Bible*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2009.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1987.

Mudimbe Boyi, M. Elisabeth. *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Mugambi, Helen “Intersections: Gender, Orality, Text, and Female Space in Contemporary Kiganda Radio Songs.” *Research in African Literatures* 25, no. 3. (Fall 1994), 47-70

Mulvaney, Becky. “Rhythms of Resistance: On Rhetoric and Reggae Music,” Ph.D. dissertation. University of Iowa, 1985.

- Munro, Martin and Celia Britton. *American Creoles: The Franco-Caribbean and the American South*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012.
- Munro, Martin. "Rhythms, History, and Memory in Édouard Glissant's *le Quatrieme Siecle*." *The Romanic Review* 101, no. 3 (May 2010), 409-424..
- Murdoch, H. Adlai. "Creole, *Criollismo*, and *Créolité*." In *Critical Terms in Caribbean and Latin American Thought: Historical and Institutional Trajectories*. Eds. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, Ben. Sifuentes-Jáuregui and Marisa Belausteguigoitia. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Murrell, Nathaniel Samuel, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane, eds. *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Nelson, Angela M. S., ed. *This is How We Flow: Rhythm and Sensibility in Black Cultures*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.
- Nenitez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Nettleford, Rex M. *Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race, and Protest in Jamaica*. William Collins & Sangster, 1970.
- Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986.
- _____. "The Language of African Literature." In *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Gaurav Gajanan Desai and Supriya Nair. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press (2005): 143-68.
- Ngwa, Kenneth. "Exodus as the Door of (No) Return." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136, no. 1 (2017), 213-220.
- Niaah, Jalani A. "Poverty (Lab) Oratory: Rastafari and Cultural Studies." *Cultural Studies*, 17, no. 6 (Nov 2003), 823-842.
- Nicholas, Tracy. *Rastafari: A Way of Life*. Chicago: Frontline Distribution International, Inc., 1996.
- Niditch, Susan, ed. *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.

- Niditch, Susan. *Judges: A Commentary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.
- _____. *Oral World and the Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
- _____. "Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, Bandit: The Empowerment of the Weak," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 52 (1990), 608-24.
- _____. *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore*. New York: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1887.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- O'Byrne, Patricia, Gabrielle Carty, and Niamh Thornton, eds., *Transcultural Encounters amongst Women: Redrawing Boundaries in Hispanic and Lusophone Art, Literature and Film*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.
- Ochshorn, Judith. *The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.
- Ogundipe, Adoleye. *Esu Elegbara, the Yoruba God of Chance and Uncertainty: A Study in Yoruba Mythology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Okpewho, Isodore. *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Characters, and Continuity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Owens, Joseph. *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica*. Kingston: Sangster's book Stores, 1976.
- Paul, Annie. "Dancehall in Jamaica: Keeping it 'Jiggy' in Babylon," paper presented to the Society for Caribbean Studies, 30th Annual Conference, The National Archives, London, 5-7 July, 2006.
- Pelton, Robert. *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight*. University of California Press, 1980.
- Perdue, Leo G. *Proverbs*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- _____. *The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empires*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

- _____. *Wisdom & Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.
- _____. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007.
- Petrilli, Susan, and Augusto Ponzio. "Telling Stories in the Era of Global Communication: Black Writing—Oraliture." *Research in African Literature* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 98-109.
- Pinn, Anthony, Stephen C. Finley, and Torin Alexander, eds. *African American Religious Cultures*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009.
- Pollard, Velma. *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.
- Paquet, Sandra Pouchet, Patricia J. Saunders, and Stephen Stuempfle, eds., *Music, Memory, Resistance: Calypso and the Caribbean Literary Imagination*. Kingston, Jamaica and Miami: Ian Randle, 2007.
- Praeger, Michèle. "Edward Glissant: Towards a Literature of Orality." *Callaloo* 15, no. 1. The Literature of Guadeloupe and Martinique (Winter, 1992), 41-48.
- _____. *The Imaginary Caribbean and Caribbean Imaginary*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.
- Prahlad, Sw. Anand. *Reggae Wisdom: Proverbs in Jamaican Music*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2001.
- Pressing, Jeff. "Black African Rhythm: Its Computational and Transcultural Foundations." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19, no. 3 (Spring 2002), 285-310.
- Puar, Jasbir K. "I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess: Becoming Intersectional in Assemblage Theory." *philoSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012), 49-66.
- _____. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017.
- _____. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Duke University Press, 2007.
- Radin, Paul. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Schocken Books, 1988. (Originally published in 1956.)
- Rawson, A. Paige. "(Re)Membering Samson OtherWise: Resistance, Revolution, and Relationality in a Rastafari Reading of Judges 13-16." In *Human Rights, Race, and*

Resistance in the African Diaspora. Ed. Toyin Falola and Cacee Hoyer, 210-231. New York: Routledge, 2016.

_____. "A Socioeconomic Hermeneutics of Chayim: The Theo-Ethical Implications of Reading (with) Wisdom," *Common Good(s): Economy, Ecology, and Political Theology*. Ed. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Catherine Keller, and Elias Ortega-Aponte, 407-426. New York: Fortress Press, 2015.

Reddock, Rhoda E., ed. *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Jamaica, Barbados, & Trinidad and Tobago: University of West Indies Press, 2004.

Reiland, Rabaka. *Africana Critical Theory: Reconstructing the Black Tradition from W. E. B. DuBois and C. L. R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009.

Reinhartz, Adele. "Samson's Mother: An Unnamed Protagonist." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 55 (1992), 25-37.

Walter Rodney. *The Groundings With My Brothers*. Newark: Frontline, 2001.

Rodriguez, Rafael. *Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014.

Roncace, Mark, and Patrick Gray, eds. *Teaching the Bible through Popular Culture and the Arts*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.

Rowlett, Lori. "Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah." In *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*. Ed. Ken Stone, 106-115. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001.

Rushdy, Ashraf H. A. "'Rememory': Primal Scenes and Constructions in Toni Morrison's Novels." In *Contemporary Literature* XXXI, no. 3 (1990), 300-23.

Russell, Heather. *Legba's Crossing: Narratology in the African Atlantic*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2009.

Ruvalcaba, Héctor Domínguez. *Translating the Queer: Body Politics and Transnational Conversations*. Chicago: Zed Books, 2016.

Sallis, John. *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Sasson, Jack M. "Who Cut Samson's Hair (and Other Trifling Issues Raised by Judges 16)." *Proof* 8 (1988), 333-39.

- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1986. (Originally published in 1916.)
- Saussy, Haun. *The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and its Technologies*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
- Saayman, Willem, ed. *Embracing the Baobab Tree of life: The African Proverb in the 21st Century*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1997.
- Schaefer, Donovan O. *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Schaeffer, John D. *Sensus Communis: Vico, Rhetoric, and the Limits of Relativism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Scham, Sandra. "The Days of the Judges: When Men and Women Were Animals and Trees Were Kings." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 97 (2002), 37-64.
- Schnepel, Ellen M. "The Other Tongue, The Other Voice: Language and Gender—French Caribbean." *Ethnic Groups* Vol. 10 (1993), 243-68.
- Schneider, Tammi J. *Judges*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Sherwood, Yvonne, ed. *Derrida's Bible: Reading a Page of Scripture with a Little Help from Derrida*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Sherwood, Yvonne, and Kevin Hart, eds., *Derrida and Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Shouse, Eric. "Feeling, Emotion, Affect." *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php> (accessed November 15, 2015).
- Smith, Carol. "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?" In *Judges*. Ed. Athalya Brenner, 93-116. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- _____. "Samson and Delilah: A Parable of Power?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 76 (1997), 45-57.
- Smith, Karina. "Re/Telling History: Sistren's *Ida Revolt inna Jonkonnu Stylee* as Neo/Colonial Resistance" in *Thirdspace: A Journal of Feminist Theory & Culture* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 17-36.

- Soguk, Nevzat, and Geoffrey Whitehall. "Wanderings Grounds: Transversality, Identity, Territoriality, and Movement." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, no. 3 (1999), 675-698.
- Spencer Miller, Althea. "Creolizing Hermeneutics: A Caribbean Invitation." In *Islands, Islanders, and the Bible: RumInations*. Eds. Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed Vernyl Davidson, 77-95. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2015.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *Ethics*. Translated by Edwin Curley. London: Penguin Books, 1996. (Originally published in 1677.)
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, 271-313. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1998.
- _____. "French Feminism in an International Frame." *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981), 154-84.
- Stam, Robert. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- Stewart, Dianne M. *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Stone, Ken. 2005. *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective*. New York: T&T Clark, 2005.
- Taylor, Patrick. *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity, and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Thomas, Oral. *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context*. Oakville, CT: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2010.
- Thomas-Hope, Elizabeth M. "Caribbean Diaspora, the Inheritance of Slavery. Migration from the Commonwealth Caribbean." In *The Caribbean in Europe: Aspects of West Indian Experience in Britain, France and the Netherlands*. Ed. Colin Brock. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1986.
- Tlostanova, Madina V., and Walter D. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012.
- Tomkins, Silvan. *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness: The Positive Affects, Vol. 1*. New York: Springer, 1962.

- Torgovnick, Marianna. *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Toynbee, Jason. *Bob Marley: Herald of a Postcolonial World?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.
- Tyler, Stephen A. *The Unspeakable: Discourse, Dialogue and Rhetoric in the Postmodern World*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.
- van Dijk, Frank Jan. "The Twelve Tribes of Israel: Rasta and the Middle Class." *New West Indian Guide* 62, no. 1-2 (1988), 1-26.
- Vickery, John B. "In Strange Ways: The Story of Samson." In *Images of Man and God: Old Testament Short Stories in Literary Focus*. Ed. Burke O. Long, 58-73. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1981.
- Wafula, W.F., and Joseph F. Dugan, *Knowledge Activism Beyond Theory: A Worldwide Call to Action* (Alameda, CA: Borderless Press, 2016).
- Walcott, Derek. "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" In *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Gaurav Gajanan Desai and Supriya Nair, 257-264. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Walker, Julia M. *Medusa's Mirror: Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the Metamorphosis of the Female Self*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998.
- Wallace, Anthony. "Revitalization Movements." *American Anthropologist* 58 (Apr. 1956), 264-281.
- Walzer, Michael. *Exodus and Revolution*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
- Weber, Max. *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.
- _____. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations*. New York: The Free Press, 1947.
- Weitzman, Steven. *Song and Story in Biblical Narrative: The History of a Literary Convention in Ancient Israel*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- _____. "The Samson Story as Border Fiction." *Biblical Interpretation* 10 (2002), 158-74.
- _____. *Surviving Sacrilege: Cultural Persistence in Jewish Antiquity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

- West, Gerald O. "Reading Shembe 'Re-Membering' the Bible: Isaiah Shembe's Instructions on Adultery." *Neotestimenica* 40, no. 1 (2006), 157-184.
- West, Gerald O., ed. *Reading Other-wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.
- Wilson, Stephen. *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Witting, Monique. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon, 1992.
- Wolde, Ellen van *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1994.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles." *World Literature Today* 63, no. 4 (Autumn 1989), 637-48.
- _____. "Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of Folk Dance as a Cultural Process." *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (1970), 34-48.
- _____. "One Love—Rhetoric or Reality? Aspects of Afro-Jamaicanism." *Caribbean Studies* 12, no. 3 (1972), 64-97.
- _____. "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désêtre: Black Studies toward the Human Project." In *Not Only the Master's Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice*. Eds. Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, 107-169. New York: Paradigm Press, 2006.
- _____. "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with David Scott." *Small Axe* 8 (2000), 119-207.
- _____. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003), 257-337.
- Wynter, Sylvia, and Greg Thomas. "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle." In *The Caribbean Woman Writer as Scholar: Creating, Imagining, Theorizing*. Ed. Keshia N. Abraham, 31-70. Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2009.
- Yee, Gale A. ed. *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. 2nd Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007.