

ROUTLEDGE AFRICAN STUDIES

Human Rights, Race, and  
Resistance in Africa and the  
African Diaspora

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# 11 Re-Membering Samson *OtherWise*

## Resistance, Revolution, and Relationality in a Rastafari Reading of Judges 13–16

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What designates scholarship as distinctively African/a? What defines African diasporic (biblical) hermeneutics? And is it possible for a queer Anglo-wo/man, such as myself, to employ a hermeneutic rooted in and inflected by the African diaspora? In this essay, I attempt to engage and embody these inquiries through the interpretation of a popular folktale (found in the Hebrew Bible) with sacred symbolic significance for the Rastafari movement: the story of Samson and the Philistines. Within the history of its reception the character Samson has become a cultural icon of sorts; the biblical tragicomic (anti)hero of excessive strength, unbridled passions, insatiable appetites, and capricious (not to mention violent) outbursts is indubitably a figure of considerable ambivalence whose personhood is portrayed always *as* and *in relation to* an Other. Samson's effective physical prowess and affective mortal weakness have left his readers and audience—much like Delilah and the Philistines—bewildered and frustrated in their attempts to “pin him down” or contain him.

While most biblical scholars situate Samson and his story neatly within the genre of folktale, no scholar to date has actually considered how Samson has been (re)appropriated *as* folktale—a much more precarious project indeed.<sup>1</sup> As yet, no scholar has explored the meaning of Samson within post-biblical communities whose social structures are characterized by orality within contexts of imperial domination, in order to speculate about the story's significance and function within (its so-called) or(igin)al contexts. Ultimately, then, engaging the work of Bakhtin (Carnavalesque-Grotesque), Glissant (Relationality), and Halberstam (Failure), I endeavor to make a so-called postcolonial and queerly affective reading of Samson, ruminating on the potentiality of his meaning and signification for the post-exilic Persian community of Yehud qua the Rastafari movement through a (poststructuralist) Rastafari re-membering of Samson—where the events of his life and death as well as his relationship(s) to and with the Philistines have radical revolutionary implications for all life lived (in the) *OtherWise*.

In the interpretation of Samson (or any biblical character) to ask *who* (a question of identity) is to implicitly ask *whose* (i.e., the interpreter of that *who*): “Who's/Whose Samson?”<sup>2</sup> The preservation of the ambiguity resident in this inquiry is critical to (poststructuralist theory and to) my project, for whether



explicitly acknowledged or not, asking the former elicits the latter. To adequately “answer” the former (*Who is Samson?*) is to always already acknowledge/accent its contingency upon the latter (*Whose Samson?*) and to accept the impossibility of a definitive origin or source for either.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, I query in an effort to get us reflecting upon the ways in which the character Samson—through the re-membering and the re-memory of his folktale—has been interpreted, appropriated, and deployed by many diverse communities for vast and varied purposes.<sup>4</sup> In the current iteration of this project, however, I focus solely upon the Rastafari appropriation of Samson and venture an entirely avant garde interpretation of the final scene of the folktale through Rastafari biblical hermeneutics.<sup>5</sup> At heart, then, my interest in Samson, his reception history or narrative (legacy) and his rhetorical and, therefore, always already political reappropriation—Samson’s re-membering and [re]deployment by interpretive bodies—is to be found (like any other hermeneutic entanglement) in *what is at stake in the encounter*. Why does Samson *matter*, to *whom*, and *how* does he function.<sup>6</sup> It is my hypothesis that Samson’s is a (textual) body that matters affectively to and for social bodies—both ancient and contemporary—in the (political) performance and (re)production of communal ethics and identities.<sup>7</sup>

In attending to these analyses one may only conjecture about the function of Samson as folktale within the post-exilic community of Yehud—the context in which this narrative would have emerged in its [not so] “final” form. Might the oral performance of such a grotesque enfleshing of (a failed) ritual embodiment *not only* reflect more acutely (and accurately) the precarity and complex religious and political negotiations of a marginalized community of bodies under empire *but also* more effectively function to empower those bodies than a totalizing myth of absolute strength and sovereignty in the face of that oppression? Here contemporary discourse on Queer and Affect Theory inflect a Rastafari biblical hermeneutic as I read Samson’s story in Judges 13–16 for its disruptive ambivalence as Carnavalesque-Grotesque. The folktale’s affective power, however, is not merely evinced in our ambivalent reactions to the narrative or traditional interpretations which bifurcate its protagonist—what I understand to be an affectual effect of the dialectic of disgust and desire. The affective fecundity of this tale is most visceral and, therefore, evident in the way in which Samson has become a biblical specter of great ubiquity, who seems to symbolically stand on his own.<sup>8</sup> It is, then, understandably difficult to imagine Samson OtherWise; that is, as other than *either* Samson of great strength who ultimately defeats himself (surrendering to temptation at the hands of the wicked woman Delilah) *or* Samson the sacrificial servant of YHWH (who kills himself in order to defeat the evil Philistines and bring “salvation” to the Israelites).

Even as Samson is “repulsed by and attracted to the Philistines” (and they to him),<sup>9</sup> so too are readers caught in an interpretive web of liminal ambivalence—for this is a tale which surely *pulls* its audiences in even as it *pushes* us away (and not only from its protagonist).<sup>10</sup> Upon my interpretation and, therefore, re-membering through an embodied biblical hermeneutic at the intersections of orality and affect, Samson of Judges 13–16 is a cypher for “Israel” (Yehud) and through him this ancient communal body becomes an intra-historical affective

body engaging *other* bodies across temporo-spatiality.<sup>11</sup> There are therefore, profound political and relational implications both in the text's "original" contexts (Judah and Yehud) and for contemporary interpretive bodies—perhaps no more palpable than the Rastafari movement, who re-member Samson as the original lock bearing Rasta.<sup>12</sup> In the dialogical process of interpretation, as the post-modern reader engages the text as folktale (originally performed orally), penned by a diasporic (post-exilic) people, alongside the Rastafarian Samson, these representations converge, even as they diverge, as assemblage in the event of a sort of trans-temporal *cross-cultural poetics* (Glissant), emerging as something altogether new—firmly rooted in the past yet perpetually transmuting.<sup>13</sup> In this way, then, the making of Samson within its ancient context and the re-membering of Samson in contemporary Rastafari biblical hermeneutics is an embodied encounter with the Other outside (and inside) ourselves—with the potential to affect (transform) and be affected (transformed) by the bodies involved in each particular performative (re)iteration. Inspired by this dialogical intra-temporal or cultural-relational poetics of interpretation, I consider each of these theoretical and political pieces and then move to interpret Judges 16:25ff in order to expose the innumerable interpretive events whereby Samson can only ever be other than *either (good)/or (bad) . . .* and is always already embodied in/as his *re-membering OtherWise*.

### **A Rastafari Politics of Failure? Re-Membering Judges 13–16 as Carnavalesque-Grotesque and Samson as (Queer?) Creolized Caribbean Chronotope**

In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant describes Creolization as transformation that signals the end of (the pursuit of) myths of origin,

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. . .<sup>14</sup>

The Rastafari claim Samson as their biblical Nazirite forebearer in a lineage of Rasta resistance to Western imperial cultural domination (Babylon). To claim such ancestry, however, is to also claim hybridity. For while Samson's defiance has historically been interpreted as his resistance to change or growth and cast as either strength or weakness, upon a closer look Samson appears to be in a constant state of flux—betwixt and between poles even to his death. It is his fluidity, ambivalence, and ambiguity, I contend, which evinces the grotesque quality of



the folktale more even than its morbid, hyperbolic events. And there is no scene that betrays Samson's slipperiness (and, therefore, the indefinability and vulnerability of Israel in relation to the so-called Philistines) more than the folktale's final scene. From birth, however, Samson's life is couched in conflict and narrated in relation to the Philistines. Born to a barren mother, who though nameless is visited by a divine messenger and given orders to consecrate the child to God through the Nazirite Vow—an oath which affords Samson divine strength and requires that he, among other things, abstain from cutting his hair.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the story, Samson is challenged by the Philistines and each time, by his superior fortitude, he overcomes. As the story draws to a close, we find Samson bound by the Philistines, but this time the price of his liberation is fatal. To honor his livity, Samson must take his life and the lives of the Philistines as well.

Rather than interpreting this as the final, and only absolutely successful, iteration in a series of defiant acts against the Philistines—where Samson is fighting to overcome once and for all his ambivalent relationship to and with the Philistines—when read according to Rastafari *I-n-I* philosophical theology, the pericope might as easily be interpreted as a (seismic) shift in the protagonist's understanding of his relationship to/with the tale's antagonist. In fact, in my remembering, Samson's last words serve as the consummate confirmation of his vulnerability to the Philistines and theirs to him, as well as one of the axial tenets in Rastafari teaching—one which has yet to be explicitly addressed in Rastafari depictions of Samson. While Rastafari interpretations of Samson harness his strength and defiance for its political efficacy—rather than focusing on his flaws or failures—there is great potential within this final scene for an even more profound and politically efficacious Rastafari re-membering.<sup>16</sup>

Most often represented as a prolific monster of a man, depictions of Samson often appear to miss the irony of the text. Samson's size can only be inferred, since the text is almost entirely silent on the subject. In other words, instead of a massive muscled meaty man or even a giant bumbling oaf, what if the part of Samson was in fact performed by a wiry-weasely, scrawny awkward fellow? (Think Dave Chapelle rather than Dwayne Johnson.) Would that not only ensure that Samson's hyperbolic strength be unequivocally interpreted as dangerously divine, but also that the folktale functions even more effectively as Carnavalesque-Grotesque? Bakhtin famously asserted that Carnavalesque-Grotesque is both a literary modality and a political strategy.<sup>17</sup> In *Folk* festivals, as in folktales, we find the carnivalesque spirit in which "common folk" manipulate the socially sanctioned norms of the *Official* order that organize "regular" time and they do so through inversion (as a *WUD: World-Upside-Down*), which results in their subversion. For Bakhtin the WUD as such is perhaps nowhere more palpable than in and through the oral performance of Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktales.<sup>18</sup> It is not merely oral traditions and performance of such folktales Bakhtin emphasizes, but the very culture and conditions out of which such folktales emerge—and here Bakhtin and Glissant intersect most clearly.

In *Caribbean Discourse* Glissant, like Bakhtin, argues that (the cultural valence of) folktale is contingent. In other words, that the very ways in which a

folktale instantiates as embodied oral performance and cultural performativity—the way it quite literally *matters*—varies according to context (and performative and interpretive bodies). It is, in fact, *only* in situations of imperial domination and severe segregation and (class) stratification that Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktale has value and import as a necessary cultural critique with political ramifications.<sup>19</sup> While Glissant himself has embraced such a spirit of Carnavalesque, the Rasta movement has publically decried Carnival.<sup>20</sup> Rastafarians have distinguished themselves in their rejection of “Official” social mores and the refusal of the West Indian tradition of Carnival, since both represent—according to a Rastafarian epistemology—an acquiescence to the rules and roles of the Master’s House.<sup>21</sup> The seeming contradiction begs the question: *If* Samson’s is a Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktale, but the Rastafari movement as a whole rejects Carnival—deeming anything aligning them with Empire (much less its entertainment) as dehumanizing downpression—and *yet* this diverse community appeals to Samson, *then*, how is it possible that Samson is both Dread(ed) Rastaman and Carnavalesque-Grotesque...? The difference that blurs the dichotomy, I contend, is in the distinction Rastafari would identify between the modern embodiment of Carnival (as entertainment and performance) and Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktale (as an epistemology and a politics). For the former appeals to humor and inversion of hierarchy constructed and perpetuated by the colonizer and is a primarily *Official* festival within Caribbean contexts while the latter is a modality for and means to political resistance (to the *Official*) by colonized *Folk*.

Carnavalesque, for Bakhtin, is a socio-political performance while Grotesque is a literary modality and their intersection materializes in the lived experience of real bodies.<sup>22</sup> Carnavalesque-Grotesque, then, is a performative vehicle of ritual embodiment for the solidarity and identity of particular communal interpretive bodies.<sup>23</sup> The Rastafari movement—an oral way of being (livity) and a socio-political strategy—is the very lived experience of *Folk* resistance to *Official* institutions of hegemonic colonial discourse. Folktales themselves are Carnavalesque-Grotesque and in the Rastafarian movement they function as an important socio-political and cultural medium, playing an instrumental role in performing and reproducing communal identity and solidarity. It is not necessarily the *Official festival* performance of these tales, but their *oral* performative re-membering within communal bodies of *Folk* that constitutes strategy and consolidates identity. Even as Carnavalesque-Grotesque requires a Mouse to make a Lion, the Rastafari movement demands the slave liberate herself (and the master).<sup>24</sup>

In his work, Glissant is articulating strategies for a popular revolution in Martinique through what he deems *a cross-cultural poetics*, appealing to the very political potentiality with which the spirit of Carnavalesque is pregnant.<sup>25</sup> It is “creative disorder” and what Glissant sees as “part of the ‘tradition of oral festivity’ and corporeal rhythms [and] ... an essential component in a Caribbean sensibility.”<sup>26</sup> Glissant states: it is “the camouflaged escape of the carnival, which I [*sic*] feel constitutes a desperate way out of the confining world of the plantation;”<sup>27</sup> in its *creative excess*, Carnival represents the very antithesis of the regimented and regulated space of the plantation *and* the Garden of Genesis.<sup>28</sup> Carnival becomes, for Glissant, a revolutionary esthetic that is embodied in



Creolization as Caribbean folk appropriating the pejorative label imposed by French colonizers. Carnival, however, only holds such profound possibility in its repossession, since Carnival was itself “appropriated by the official media as a kind of local eccentricity.” Rooted as it is in a valuation of both the individual and collective bodies, Carnival is for Glissant “a form of revolution permanente ... of ceaseless change,” a “demonstration of a cross-cultural poetics [and] a joyous affirmation of relativity.”<sup>29</sup> 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...<sup>30</sup>

It is the reappropriation of Carnival and its cross-cultural (poetic) relevance, which become the example of and impetus for radical political transformation and critical to the conceptualization of Samson as both Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktale and socio-political symbol for the Rastafari.

David Hart, in his essay “Caribbean Chronotopes,” also takes on the political implications of folktale, capitalizing upon other intersections between Bakhtin’s chronotope and Glissantian orality and Caribbean folklore. Hart articulates Caribbean chronotope (time-space), which opens up a bloomspace for my own engagement of Glissant’s poetics—through the Carnival mentality as the creation of *endless somethings* from a history of/as “nothings” (Walcott)—and Rastafari politics as (oral) relational poetics and radically embodied hermeneutics, reading the folktale of Samson *OtherWise*.<sup>31</sup> It is particularly “the ‘time-space’ flux of the chronotope [that] is especially useful in the Caribbean folklore ... [as] authors often look to the past for agency in the present.”<sup>32</sup> How much more so the folktale of Samson—a story appropriated by the Rastafari from their freighted encounter with the Bible, the European *repubblica christiana*, Western biblical interpretation, and all that entails.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, as a Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktale of Caribbean chronotope with critical implications for Rastafari identity and politics Samson’s story demands that we read it as an oral, embodied performative cultural myth, penned for posterity and the production and preservation of a particular (and) present communal body.

In his reflections on the chronotope, Bakhtin proposes that it manifests when in a folktale, narrative, or novel time “thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible [and], likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.”<sup>34</sup> According to David Hart, the chronotope “brings together time and space in a critical moment of flux with an imbued power that may produce either a debilitating or a strengthening change in the protagonist.”<sup>35</sup> The *moment of flux* (which might also be understood in terms of the Deleuzian *event*) is integral to queer theory—as in this fleshy time-space of potentiality, non-normative or queer bodies disrupt officially sanctioned intelligibility through the appropriation and re-membering of the very concept of the (ideal/human) body.

Interpreting Samson accordingly allows contemporary readers the opportunity to at least begin to conceptualize (and contextualize) the narrative disruptions embedded in the poetic bodies of the text, which disturb the very differentiation between those bodies (both *interpreted* and *interpreting*)—as *either* good/positive/us/Self *or* bad/negative/them/Other—and are always already mapped onto corporeal bodies. Interpreting Samson as Carnavalesque-Grotesque through Orality, Queer and Affect Theory succeeds in exposing and exploding these binaries in a way that *pulls* down partitions and *pushes* (Derridean) Deconstruction to confront real “live” bodies. For in this profoundly performative and excessively affective (bloom)space,<sup>36</sup> the bodies *behind the text* blend into those between its lines and those *before the text* blend into those *beneath* it. In this way, then, the hierarchal binaries of interpreter/interpreted, author/reader, master/slave, order/chaos, male/female, life/death, speech/writing, and so forth, dissolve. This becomes an interpretive event wherein each re-membering body is placed beside its innumerable constitutive Others, exclusivity is undone by queer multiplicity, and difference *as duality* is rendered hilarious because preposterous ... for these diverse bodies are “doomed to fail” dichotomous delineation.<sup>37</sup>

I know of no other more thorough exploration of the potential of such failure than Jack Halberstam’s critiques of (re)productive time and his reclamation of “Low Theory” and the reframing of *Failure* (as queer art form). I turn to Halberstam in order to contend that the political gravity of his theoretical assertions lies in the constitution of *agency* vis-à-vis the (strategic) failure of the “agent” to replicate the master’s discourse.<sup>38</sup> Halberstam’s endorsement of so-called Low Theory reappropriates just this sort of failure in the service of a distinctively queer politics.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> While Halberstam’s notion of failure is in relation to the (academic) institution and its tyrannical appropriation of epistemology, I contend that one might read a similar movement in Glissant, Bakhtin, and in a Rastafarian remembering of Samson.<sup>41</sup>

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.”<sup>42</sup> Through his notion of Creolization and the role of writer as a *forcer de langage*, Glissant similarly advocates for and champions the avant garde and what I consider *a politics of failure* whereby so-called Creolized bodies intentionally frustrate Western European epistemologies through the esthetic incarnations of a distinctively *Caribbean discourse*.<sup>43</sup> If, as Halberstam argues, we must first opt for relation vis-à-vis conversation, and thereby *resist mastery*, his strategy is precisely what Glissant and Bakhtin argue for in their representations of literature, a *poetics of relation* and *heteroglossia* respectively. Each acknowledging the unavoidable and, therefore, politically profuse frustration of the (constructed as) “common sense” of hegemonic authorized discourse through the unfinalizability of the wisdom of foolish failures that plague the very notion of identity as origin.<sup>44</sup>



[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.<sup>45</sup>

In the end, Samson dies. At the conclusion of a frustrated and fractured life, not even (a noble) death can save Samson (or the bodies re-membering him) from failure.<sup>46</sup> Samson is doomed to perpetual and unfinalizable failure due to an end, which although overdetermined,<sup>47</sup> is not altogether unambiguous. However, it is not only the content of the folktale 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. 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 Samson's inaugural annunciation indicates, Judges 13:5 may be interpreted variously as (n)either *the first to deliver* or *begin to save Israel from the Philistines* and could also signify that Samson is the first *to save Israel by the hand of the Philistines*—thereby confirming his ambiguous inception, intention, and identification.<sup>48</sup> The text as the character is enigmatic, even incoherent.

According to Halberstam, the art of failure—and I would argue a politics of failure—should “*privilege the naïve or nonsensical (stupidity) . . . [and] argue for the nonsensical or nonconceptual over sense-making structures that are often embedded in a common notion of ethics.*”<sup>49</sup> The *naïve* or *ignorant* might actually lead to a different set of epistemological practices altogether, whereby—as in Carnavalesque-Grotesque—what is perceived as Folly is Wisdom and the character traditionally “read” as Fool (and/or Foil) is instead the Wisest of all. Carnival is, according to Derek Walcott, a Caribbean ritual that is “a mass art form which came out of nothing,” and a creative mentality that “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.”<sup>50</sup> Failure is the very bloomspace of (re)generation. It is just this sort of errantry for which Glissant advocates, embodied in the (Other)Wisdom of strangers such as Samson.<sup>51</sup>

I would argue that the wisdom of orality as (affective) embodied cognition is a queer epistemology, which *means* with the body and *inscribes* upon the soul. In the words of Jack Halberstam:

Queerness offers the promise of failure as a way of life . . . but it is up 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.<sup>52</sup>

Samson signals the detour. And, like any other (biblical) character, each time he is re-membered through the critically different repetition of his story (as *différance* abounds), Samson is (re)generated in/as the possibility of signifying anew. In particular, however, 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 amidst “the limits and the risks of resignification.”<sup>53</sup> It is in these spaces betwixt and between that a Rastafari re-membering—not rooted in land or origin but in its own relational poetics—reminds us of our own uncertain origins, our unfinalizable endings, and the fleshy affective entanglements that threaten us with the cognizance of our own profound perpetual potentialities.

**(Re)Reading Samson as Israel/Other Undoing  
Empire(Racism):<sup>54</sup> Revolutionary Rastafari Re-Membering  
in the Khora-ography of Rhizomatic Relational Identity**

It is in this hyphenated chronotopic bloomspace—where the activity of creation is unrelated to origin and identity is exploded by its impossibility—that the amorphous shape, or *shapelessness*, and manifold fecundity of the rhizome replaces the root (as metaphor of becoming). In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant differentiates between the varieties of identity by placing them in two distinct categories: *Root Identity* and *Relation Identity*. *Root identity* is defined by its foundation on a myth of origin and is “sanctified by the hidden violence of a filiation” that inheres in this myth.<sup>55</sup> Root identity grounded “the thought of self and of territory and set in motion the thought of the other and of voyage,” claiming legitimacy to land (as territory) through the proclamation of entitlement, it is preserved through conquest and its authorization.<sup>56</sup> *Relation identity* on the other hand is not attached to a cosmology but “to the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures” and emerges within “the chaotic network of Relation” as opposed to filiation. It does not derive legitimacy from entitlement but “circulates, newly extended,” conceiving of land as a place “where one gives-on-and-with” rather than territory to be possessed—“Relation identity exults the thought of errantry and of totality.”<sup>57</sup> It is for the totality of this errantry that in its more recent iterations, Glissant has begun to consider relation identity in terms of the Deleuzian rhizome.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari's exposition on the rhizome as assemblage resonates with(in) Glissant's relational poetics. The philosophers assert

unlike trees or their roots, 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.<sup>58</sup>



Ruminating upon the implications of the DeleuzeGuattarian rhizome, Glissant identifies its appeal for/as relation identity: “The single root is that which kills around it while the rhizome is the root that extends to meet other roots.”<sup>59</sup> It is a poetics of Relation, *the chaos-monde in relation (to itself)*, a khora-graphy of sorts.<sup>60</sup> “It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows ... between things, interbeing, *inter-mezzo*.”<sup>61</sup> Concluding their introductory reflections on the rhizome Deleuze and Guattari write;

The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. 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 ... establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings.<sup>62</sup>

The queer(er, clear) connections between rhizome and relation are palpable—each is characterized by errantry, orality, and affect, inviting us to an embodied radically relational (biblical) hermeneutics inspired by the wisdom of the *chaos-monde*.<sup>63</sup>

Glissant’s writing *speaks* of the frustration of root by relation and/in the immanence of the past, perpetually interrupting the present.<sup>64</sup> Our re-memory is both a conscious activity and a subconscious event as we come to acknowledge our incapacity to order the chaos that orchestrates our world and relations therein.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, Glissant’s errant poetics, like Bakhtin’s carnivalesque chronotope, in relation to the Rastafari expose the ways in which folktales are (re)appropriated, represented (orally), and re-membered so as to become part of the communal consciousness of a collective body as an intra-temporo-cultural assemblage.<sup>66</sup> I understand Glissant’s errant poetics of relation to be politically revolutionary *because they are* radically (intra)relational and, as a result, have profound implications for an embodied (biblical) hermeneutics; that is, affectual, sensual, transnational, and intertextual interpretation.<sup>67</sup>

Judges 13–16, then, becomes radically relational as Samson is Israel, but always already other than Israel and/as Israel’s (Philistine) Other.<sup>68</sup> A cypher for Israel Samson also represents YHWH God (Jah),<sup>69</sup> but if not read as embodying and exceeding Israel Samson’s revolutionary ruin goes unrecognized, his fecund failure forgotten—a rebel buried beneath the rubble.<sup>70</sup> For like the rays of the sun (for which he was named) Samson is never (only) One,<sup>71</sup> diffuse in effect/affect and experienced directly though never directly perceived. Samson slips and slides his way through the folk narrative worlds of Judges 13–16, touching, feeling, and sticking to bodies. Betraying his Nazirite vows and normative gender scripts,<sup>72</sup> Samson is wo/man, but also wise folly and humanity indistinguishable from divinity. Samson is the haunting hyphenation that disrupts difference as hierarchal binary. At various times and affective registers Samson (dis)appears as prostitute/pimp, mother-father, martyr-monster/maiden-murderer,

penetrator/penetrated, feminine/masculine, enslaved-master/free-bonded, judge/convict, hero/villain-saint/sinner-suicidal-savior, s/he is failure/victor, warrior/trickster, and more. Any attempt to read Samson as Other than OtherWise is to fail (to re-member) Samson.

It is precisely Samson's perpetual borderline (schizophrenic) crossings that haunt readings and representations such as that of the so-called Deuteronomistic Historian, of biblical scholars such as Greg Mobley, and/or any solidified notion of nationhood for Israel or those who are invested in *nationhoodness*. And Samson threatens not only the borders between nations, but also the very trust we have in the definitive difference between *you* and *me*, "us" and "them." It is an OtherWisdom, a Wisdom of the Other, that *scars us to death* because it signals death. For Samson's "stranger danger" is his re-membering within the all too permeable boundaries of our skin. The threat of this proximity haunts interpretation, identity, Nationhood, body, and text (as oraliture).<sup>73</sup>

When one considers Samson's liminality, transience, and mercurial behavior in light of Israel's political, cultural and ethnic negotiations (particularly within Yehud), not only does Samson signal Israel, but the failure of a system obsessed with the need to establish primacy (vis-à-vis genealogy) and authorize its own intelligibility. The end of such ideology, then, marks the beginning of conscientization (an always already open futurity) and the ecstatic interdependence of all life: a sign of the affectual bloomspace of (the in-breaking event) as continually operating OtherWise. Whether Samson's perpetually erratic behavior in relation to the Other-Philistines is read as predictable or always already initiating a new moment, Samson certainly signifies difference as *différance*. Samson (as Israel) incessantly wandering,<sup>74</sup> embodying the raw wildness of the *nephesh*, the "bundle of desires,"<sup>75</sup> that is life...even as he signals the instability of agency and/as the threat of impending death—of the Philistines and the "I."<sup>76</sup>

Upon my Rasta re-membering, the progression in Samson's last three statements reveal Samson's conscientization. In the penultimate scene Samson is once again in a bind at the hands of the Philistines, this time however unable to free himself from bondage. Unaware that his hair has been cut and/or that YHWH has left him—the text is ambiguous—what is entirely apparent is that Delilah has weakened him, so when Samson struggles to break free, he fails. Seized, taken to Gaza and shackled, Samson is imprisoned and made a mill slave by the Philistine lords. Alas, all is not lost, for 16:21b holds a small detail with profound consequence: during Samson's enslavement, the hair on his head begins to grow back. Samson's head, in fact, holds great import for my re-membering and the Rastafari, going back to take a closer look at 16:17 reveals its relevance and reframes the entire pericope.

Before he is bound, Samson states, "No razor has ever touched my head."<sup>77</sup> Rethinking his terminology renders an alternative translation in support of a Rastafari re-membering. First, the word *rosh*, translated *head*, represents a broad spatio-temporal semantic range in Hebrew and English signifies a head (of a body, river, politik, etc.), the male member, as well as a beginning, and/or Wisdom. I read *rosh* as Wisdom and translate the verse accordingly. Therefore, *morah*—translated "razor" (or "shearing knife")—is also the root of *moreh*:



“master teacher” or “teacher of lies.”<sup>78</sup> *Morah* is followed by the particle of negation and the verb *alah*—a spatial verb prevalent in Judges and typically translated “to go up” or “to ascend.”<sup>79</sup> Due to the assumed context, *alah* alongside *morah* here seems to indicate shaving and has been ubiquitously translated as such. However, *alah* can also mean to cover, to rise (in importance), to take possession, and/or to do of one’s initiative.<sup>80</sup> Ergo, if or(igin)al audiences were thinking neither literally nor literarily, but orally, aurally, and therefore more broadly and affectively *and* we read the Masoretic text rather than the BHS, the text could instead be read, “No master/teacher of lies will rise above and/or take possession of my Wisdom.” In other words, as statement asserting the very OtherWisdom of the Nazirite/Rastafari commitment not to cut or comb one’s hair/dreads: Because no Master rules me, my feral locks are proof of my (over-standing) OtherWisdom.

Samson is summoned by the Philistine masters to “entertain them” and is then shackled between the pillars (*amudim*) of their Temple (16:25). The scene and dialogue are undoubtedly affective: a blinded and baldheaded Samson is dropping leg for the Philistine lords and thousands of onlookers. When he is led by a young boy to stand between the pillars, he asks to be released so that he might *feel* the pillars.<sup>81</sup> The text proceeds without complication, but as a Carnavalesque-Grotesque folktale, one can safely assume Samson is up to something—especially when in the next breath, the narrator describes the temple and its inhabitants. Samson feels the pillars, leans against them, our eyes follow him, whose eyes scan the crowd of thousands whose eyes are all on him. And then it happens. Samson cries out to Jah one last time (*pa’am*), and one last time Jah responds with his [*sic*] *ruach*. In verse 28 Samson begs Jah to “Re-Member” him by giving him strength *once more*—to be avenged. While Samson emphatically proclaims he wants revenge, he does not state that he be avenged for the Philistines’ shearing his locks, enslaving, and/or ridiculing him. He wants vengeance “if only . . . for (one of) his *two eyes*.”<sup>82</sup> That is, *I-an-I*.

It, however, his third and final statement, which is the paramount example of a Rastafari I-n-I epistemology, Pan-Divinity, as the oneness of God alive in all humans.<sup>83</sup> Just before Samson pulls the pillars and obliterates the edifice upholding the system under which he stands, he screams out: “Let me die with the Philistines!”<sup>84</sup> While Samson’s statement appears self-evident, it might actually have greater relational and political consequence. For in Samson’s final stand is a performative speech act that signals just the opposite of what the audience expects: not only the destruction of the Temple but the annihilation of the very discourses/institutions/apparatus that produce and perpetuate it. In other words, the power of Samson’s performance is not merely that he eradicates the Philistine Other (as/and self), but that he pulls down the pillars upholding the structure, which defined and differentiated Samson and/from Philistine.<sup>85</sup>

The intentions and implications of Samson’s actions, however, are not merely evinced in the words he speaks just before the Temple collapses, but also in the text’s depiction of the event. In an effort to resolve any ambiguity the TNKH translates Judges 16:30, “Samson cried, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ and he pulled with all his might.” While the TNKH is (unintentionally) highlighting

*affective ambivalence*—as the protagonist *pulls* the pillars toward himself—the Hebrew word here, *natah*, conveys greater polysemy than the translation indicates.<sup>86</sup> The semantic range of this verb is relatively broad and signifies extension (*pushing*) as often if not more than retraction (*pulling*). I emphasize the ambiguity in the meaning of this word to foreground the ambivalence of Samson's activity and, I would argue, his affect. For this movement, whether pushing or pulling (has no object and) could very easily encompass his *b'coah* as strength and vulnerability, so powerful that the effect (of affect) is the collapsing of the Temple and all the Philistines with it.<sup>87</sup> Might it then be, that by leaning so forcefully (*b'coah*) on the pillars—either intentionally or unintentionally—that he exposes the instability of the pillars (and faulty foundation) of the structure and, therefore, of the system itself...?

The great irony of this scene is that Samson now blind (at the mercy of the Philistines) sees more (with *I-n-I*) than in all the story, through his wandering and wondering, that in this mo(ve)ment he is not just killing "Philistines" one more time (*pa'am*). This time he is, in fact, eradicating the very structure (the Master's House) that has constructed difference in terms of polarity in hierarchical dualism—whereby one is always already Master (since the construction is "founded" on genealogical claims) and, therefore, the Other must perpetually be enslaved. As evinced in his final words, Samson asks Jah for strength to do what he was sent to do but not in the way he has ever done it before. Samson's action, therefore, is not simply for the emancipation of enslaved bodies, but in order to *emancipate [I-n-I]selves from mental slavery*. That is, Samson and the Philistines who are themselves subjects/objects of this hierarchal dehumanizing system—not only one class of people, but divided according to intelligibility in and amongst, over and against themselves.

Samson's is the critical mo(ve)ment of a conscientized being, who in *touching-feeling*<sup>88</sup>-seeing (with/as *I-n-I*) that we are all equally enslaved in the system, heretofore makes the decision not to perpetuate the system through unconscious mimicry (of the rules of the Master's house), but instead to pull down the very pillars (tenants) upon which it stands, the barriers that separate, the poles that isolate, the bars that subjugate. In so doing, Samson not only speaks that *I-n-I* are the same ... he enacts it. Therefore, when Samson destroys the Temple, he succeeds in his mission even as he fails, because he defies the "Law" imposed on him by the Master, who is mastered by the System. For while Samson's body is in chains, his mind is liberated and never more than in Judges 16:25–30—Samson's last stand, which is simultaneously his fall. Here Samson reveals that all bodies within the structure, regardless of vantage, are enslaved by the system. It is not just Samson who was bound, but the Philistines who sought to bind him. The critical shift for Samson happens in the final scene. Like the Rastafari resistance to Carnival, no longer would Samson "entertain" the Master. He asks to be released and the young boy—who symbolizes the unconditioned mind—lets him go as *feels* the pillars and the pain of the incarcerated, both oppressor and oppressed. Political action as revolutionary event can only be realized through radical relationality—what I consider ecstatic interdependence—such as we find in the re-mem(ber)ing of Samson's last (over)stand through the



embodied, oral interpretation of Rastafari biblical hermeneutics. In this evental-body-space we come face-to-face with the possibility of re-membering not only Samson but also ourselves, OtherWise.

Reading with a hermeneutics inflected *because affected* by Rastafari theology reads to tear down the hierarchal dualisms that construct lived experience and difference as dichotomous.<sup>89</sup> Rastafari “cite up” the Bible in ways that privilege the experiences of particular bodies and when interpreted universally by a community of critical interpretive bodies thinking OtherWise, the biblical text may be utilized not to merely perform and preserve identity, but for the political survival and thriving of all bodies as incarnations of divine multiplicity.<sup>90</sup> It is with real “live” bodies in mind, that Samson (and all other biblical characters) must be perpetually remembered through Rastafari biblical hermeneutics—where the Hebrew Bible meets and is transformed by real “live” bodies, interpretive bodies affected by those (affective) bodies in the text. Is it possible that Samson is, in fact, using God in order to undermine and (because he is now able to truly) *overstand/stand over* the very (super)structure by which YHWH is himself [*sic*] being established—over and against Other gods...? An affective Rastafari re-membering of Samson as Carnavalesque-Grotesque reminds us to read orally, to resist Official memory, to wander chorically, to appeal to rhizomatic relationality over root identity, to push to pull down (phallogocentric) systems of oppression, and acknowledging our permeability to the Other within (our own skin) to reinterpret Samson OtherWise—a reading for and by the bodies of those who themselves live (in the) OtherWise. The Wisdom of those Others who are the bodies in-between whose own experience as Other-ed has given them the OtherWisdom to re-member Samson with critical *dif-férance*.<sup>91</sup> How does one know the difference? How can one identify Wisdom? *I-n-I* will know it when *I-n-I* sees it, as *one* that is always already *we*—multiple and multiplying in the embodiment of OtherWisdom re-membering. Biblical hermeneutics can only be revolutionary when they are radically relational, honoring the affective (rhizomatic) event(ing) of real “live” (interpretive) bodies in every mo(ve)ment.<sup>92</sup> And so, in accordance with my interpretive proposition, the story of Samson becomes a folktale of failure where Samson’s *last stand* is the articulation of his overstanding of/in/as *I-n-I*.

## Notes

- 1 Specifically, Susan Niditch, Carole Fontaine and Colleen Camp, as well as Edith Davidson.
- 2 For the *El DeBarge* fans in the audience, you might recall their chart topper “Who’s Johnny?” released in 1986, which exemplifies the ambiguity in the inquiry due to the contraction of *who* and *is*.
- 3 That is to say that while both appear to inquire about the location, root, cause, or identity of a character, thinker, or thought, neither question can guarantee such a thing. I am here appealing to Austin’s speech act theory and Althusser’s interpellation, which have both enjoyed illustrious careers in the hands of Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, de Man, and Judith Butler.
- 4 The distinction between re-membering and re-memory while slight is nevertheless significant. The distinction is apparent in the work of Gerald West on the former and Toni Morrison (and Avery Gordon) on the latter.

- 5 Implicit in my question *Whose Samson?* (i.e., *Which face/story of Samson are we seeing/hearing?*) are two other questions: “*How* has Samson been (re)appropriated?” and “*Why?*” or “For what purposes?”
- 6 The term “interpretive bodies” is my personalizing of Stanley Fish’s “interpretive communities” (1980) in order to emphasize the embodied, communal, and affective nature of the collectives who re-member stories and texts in ways particular to their identity and perpetuation on the level of material corporeality.
- 7 See Butler 1993.
- 8 See Gunn 2005. David Gunn relates that Samson’s reception—from early Jewish commentators’ through Christian and popular history—has been “mixed” and his own mapping of the text betrays this same affective ambivalence. Referencing Revisionist Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky’s version of Samson, his language betrays the subjective and affective implications Gunn understands to be implicit in the interpretive endeavor; identifying Jabotinsky’s rendering as “his Samson,” this is one of innumerable times Gunn uses the possessive pronoun to speak of particular representations of Samson throughout (primarily) Western history.
- 9 Gunn (2005): 190.
- 10 Ahmed (2004): 81ff. A web, then, with the potential for (un)becoming an *OtherWise* affective bloomspace (Seigworth and Gregg).
- 11 What I consider a “Touching Feeling Backwards” Reading, a term which is my own “mash-up” of Eve Sedgwick’s notion of *Touching Feeling* (Queer/Affect), Heather Love’s concept of *Feeling Backwards* (Queer/Cultural), and Judith McKinlay’s “Reading Backwards” (Feminist/Biblical)—particularly apt because othered bodies (queer, “strange,” or non-literate) are commonly labeled “backwards.” Not only so, but to the Euro-Western eye, Hebrew is written “backwards” and reflecting upon or studying the past is often referred to as “looking back(wards).”
- 12 A claim so ubiquitous for the Rastafari that it requires no source. I focalize upon the Rastafari movement as case study en route to my own re-membering.
- 13 I am, of course, conjuring Glissant’s notion of Creolization, which is a poetics of relation.
- 14 Glissant (1989): 141, 142.
- 15 Which appears to be the only vow he keeps—until Delilah, that is.
- 16 Samson’s vulnerability is most often portrayed universally in conjunction with temptation and according to lust, specifically for Delilah (who becomes another iteration of the *ishah zarah*).
- 17 Bakhtin (1984): 5ff.
- 18 Glissant (1989): 141, 142. Glissant, likewise, is juxtaposing these two forms of festival and discourse in his work.
- 19 Influenced by the socio-political context in which both wrote, Bakhtin and Glissant’s interests in the political efficacy of such esthetic strategies, created and appropriated within contexts of imperial domination: Bakhtin in the 1920’s in Russia and Glissant in and around Martinique in the twentieth century.
- 20 See Glissant 1996. Glissant appeals to narratives of the past not as stories “to pass on” but to reactivate.
- 21 While none of the literature on Rastafari hermeneutics correlates Carnival to the Philistine lords’ demand that Samson “entertain” them, there are pertinent connections and potential for further engagement and critique.
- 22 Bakhtin 1981; also see Clark and Holquist 1984.
- 23 Bakhtin explicates it is neither a festival (for the entertainment of the elite) nor a literary genre.
- 24 When considered in the context of Israel’s narrative tradition and the exorbitant tales told about the people in their communal imaginative re-memberings, we are reminded of David in Saul’s oversized armor and Joseph donning a crown two times the size of his own. Likewise, Bob Marley himself was only 5’8” but his footprint and his *Legend* expand across the globe.



25 Glissant (1989): xli. In the Introduction to *Caribbean Discourse*, J. Michael Dash summarizes Glissant's vision:

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.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., xli–xlii.

29 Ibid., xlii, xliii.

30 Glissant (1989): 140, 141.

31 Ibid. 263–264. Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* as orality and creolized errantry instantiates reverberating rhizomatic force and when supplemented by Bakhtin's carnivalesque-grotesque chronotope (what I understand to be the poetic [as always already political] frustration of hierarchy and binary epistemologies) and the embodied hermeneutics of the Rastafari movement holds revolutionary political consequence.

32 Hart, 1. In his article "Caribbean Chronotopes: From Exile to Agency," Hart draws upon Glissant's Creolization, 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.

33 See Murrell 2000.

34 Bakhtin 1981: 84. The chronotope, or spatial/temporal frame of a narrative, is a concept that Bakhtin defined to study literary narratives (also see Todorov 1984). According to Bakhtin, the spatial and temporal frames of a narrative are closely integrated (space as a trace of time and time as a marker of space) and make up one unique "spatial-temporal" frame (chronotope); the spatial/temporal frame of a narrative plays a key role in the production of meaning, as the matrix of situated meaning-making, roles, identities, values, boundaries and crossings, cultural classes of discourse and tools (Deleuze 2006); the chronotope of the narrative relates its interpretation by a reader, a spectator, or a researcher with the broader historic, socio-cultural setting in which it is interpreted.

35 Quoting Hart, Meerzon writes,

This exilic chronotope constitutes the "backward glance" to the past, which affirms the onlooker's "exile from the present".... It is a peculiar spatial and temporal moment of exchange in Caribbean literature through which, paradoxically, *exile becomes a solution of exile*. Caribbean authors thus subvert the exile of the present by looking to the past (Hart 23).

36 See Seigworth and Gregg "An Inventory of Shimmers."

37 See Barthe's "Death of the Author" (1967).

38 See Butler 1990.

39 While Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* is recognized as the "seminal" text of Queer Theory and a manifesto on the subversion of normative gender scripts, Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* is a more explicit affront to the institution of (heteronormative male) masculinity and a LGBTQ cult(ure) classic for its critical ruminations on non-conforming bodies, performativity, mimicry, appropriation, and subversion (by Folk).

40 Halberstam, 11. According to Halberstam it is also refusal as the critique of "all-encompassing and global theories" (Foucault). Stupidity plays a key role in the way failure is understood and, referring not simply to "lack of knowledge but to the limits of certain forms of knowing and certain ways of inhabiting forms of knowing" (12).

41 Ibid., 11. Appealing to Moten and Harney's "Seven Theses," Halberstam understands his project to "join forces with their 'subversive intellectual' and agrees to steal from

the university, to, as they say 'abuse its hospitality' and to be 'in it not of it.'" It bears noting that while Halberstam here seeks to speak seditiously against the institution and for the amateur, Halberstam does so safely seated in the security of a tenured position within the academy.

42 Halberstam, 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.

43 Braithwaite, xxx. According to Kamau Braithwaite, the very word "Creole" seems to have originated in the combination of the Spanish words *criar* (to create, imagine, establish, found, settle) and *colono* (a colonist, founder, 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 to internal adjustments made necessary by the juxtaposition of master and slave, elite and labourer, in a culturally heterogeneous relationship.

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44 Halberstam, 17. Halberstam's own musings echo the disruption of Official discourse:

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.

45 Halberstam, 186–187. 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 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.

46 Is Samson's possibility enacted in his suicide? At risk of glorifying suicide, I would like to make explicit the distinction I am making between literal and literary (metaphorical) suicide.

47 Visible "on-stage" violence and explicit commentary on Samson's death (marks of Carnavalesque-Grotesque) announce his final failure, but Samson's life was a failure due to his inability to honor or adequately perform his Nazirite vows.



- 48 The lack of consensus among scholars reflects the various ways in which the verbs, substantives, and multiple prepositions in this verse might signify. Therefore, translations abound, reinforcing Samson's as an entirely opaque and inaccessible origin (of *salvation for Israel*), which may be interpreted as a series of false starts and innocuous attempts toward an unrealizable end.
- 49 Halberstam, 14.
- 50 Walcott, 261. Also see Loichot 2000.
- 51 In my dissertation, I argue that this errant OtherWisdom is also manifest in Plato's *χωρα*—the wandering womb of the cosmos—a correlation that highlights the creative and/in the chaotic.
- 52 Halberstam, 186–187. But, he reasons,
- Indeed while Jamaica Kincaid reminds us that happiness and truth are not the same thing, and while numerous anti-heroes, many of them animated, quoted in these pages have 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."
- 53 Butler (1997): 38. Also see Deleuze 1992.
- 54 *Empiracism* is neologism I've coined to signify the racism implicit in empiricism (and, of course, empire).
- 55 Glissant (1997): 143–144.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 *Ibid.* 144.
- 58 Deleuze (1992): 21.
- 59 See Glissant, "Sliding Island."
- 60 See Derrida and Caputo 1997.
- 61 Deleuze and Guattari (1992): 21, 25.
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 *Chaos-Monde* and ecstasis in Glissant (1989) are the relation of the oral and the written, the ecstatic *cri* (cry) and the static *corps* (body). Ecstasy for Samson is khora-graphy—being [hurled] outside the socially constructed self into the divine manyone (Keller).
- 64 A defining characteristic not only of Glissant but of Africana theory and African-American literature is the rumination on the presence of those unseen who are still very present.
- 65 See Loichot 2007.
- 66 See Deleuze and Guattari 1987.
- 67 Though (Rastafari) re-membering of Samson might appear to have been an appeal to root identity, it may be read OtherWise: as a manifestation of rhizomatic force for a revolution of errantry.
- 68 Similarly, the multiple Other(ed) characters multiply in meaning, further contributing to this boundary blurring.
- 69 Gunn, 249–250. Though Gunn himself never states that Samson *is* Israel, he infers as much. In Gunn's intertextual interpretation of Judges 13–16 alongside Isaiah 40–55, Samson is Israel, the nations beyond Israel, Cyrus, YHWH, etc.—a fluidity that likely reflects Samson's function for/within the folktale's original contexts.
- 70 Jeanba, 48.
- 71 See Crenshaw 1978.
- 72 See Derks 2015.
- 73 Jobling, 274–280. Jobling utilizes Derridean hauntology (1993) to disrupt Marx's discrepancy between Ghosts and Spirits and *living with the lost ideal*. Also see Glissant 1989.
- 74 Again, as khora, the wandering womb of the cosmos.

- 75 Danna Nolan Fewell's translation of the Hebrew word for the *life breath* given to humans by *Elohim* (Gen. 1).
- 76 Gadamer (1997): 302. It is continually on the horizon as fusion of meaning.
- 77 The prohibition is only found in two places: 13:5 when the messenger speaks with Samson's mother and 16:17 when Samson shares his vow with Delilah. "The hair of his *rosh*" is only mentioned in two other places: 16:19 when his seven locks are cut and 16:22, when his hair is growing back.
- 78 HALOT, 560–561.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 See HALOT, 828–829.
- 81 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.
- 82 Judges 16:28.
- 83 See Nettleford in Murrell *et al.* 1998: 311–325. Also see McFarlane (107–121). I-n-I is not only a theology, philosophy, and epistemology, but a subjectivity. In my dissertation I refer to it as a *theopoetics* (of relationality).
- 84 TNKH Judges 16:30.
- 85 The binary of dominant Master/subordinate Slave is but one iteration of an insidious paradigm constructed to resolve the inescapably ambiguity that perpetually haunts identity by establishing order and intelligibility (once and for all) as essential and originary.
- 86 See HALOT, 692–694.
- 87 Who are, incidentally, never mentioned again in the book of Judges and do not reappear until 1 Samuel 4 (if we are reading the books chronologically).
- 88 See fn. 12.
- 89 See Nettleford in Murrell *et al.* 1998.
- 90 Murrell and Williams, 343, 344. The embodied, emergent, evental reading of the biblical text in the hands of Isaiah Shembe, in the hands of a young HIV positive widow in the Siyaphila Support Group, in the hands of the Rastafari, and even in my hands ... this is, *we*—these bodies, our bodies, reading and reciting scripture aloud—are an ever present reminder of the reality of the multiplicity of interpretation and the orality that is divorced from the written text.
- 91 To be clear, these are not folk who would necessarily identify themselves in post-structuralist terms. I do so, however, to emphasize the ways in which these goodly folk—reading in the fray because occupying the fray—are fleshy radically present bodies, always haunted by the many pasts sharing this bloomspace, and actually practically enact what may otherwise only be theorized.
- 92 For an explication on the event in both Badiou and Deleuze, see Faber, Kripps, and Pettus 2010.

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