

Reading (with) Rhythm for the Sake of the I-n-I(slands):  
A Rastafarian Interpretation of Samson as Ambient Affective Assemblage

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“The Bible is a Caribbean text,” writes Patrick Taylor. And, as my paper will demonstrate, it is *also* a rhythmic text. 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 goodly folk whose indigenous cultures privilege orality. Such cultures, therefore, affectively 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 music, and Reggae in particular (e.g., Davidson, Middleton, Taylor). As important and influential as orality has become within the field of biblical studies, the recent impetus to bridge the critical theoretical divide has something equally important to offer, further facilitating the de(con)struction of traditional discursive and epistemological barriers that have inhibited more creative and diverse dialogue betwixt and in-between divergent areas and fields. In the concrescence of these multiple and multiplying conversations, my own queerly Caribbean hermeneutics interpret biblical texts as and in accordance with what Seigworth and Gregg have deemed an *affective bloom-space*. A “closed” canon haunted by its excess of meaning, the Bible is bloom-space and gathering place always already open and opening

in its capacity to affect and be affected, perpetually providing opportunity for illimitable interpretations of the human, the non-human, and the divine.

In light of the resonances amidst the *in-between-ness* of affectivity and divinity, in this paper I exegetically enact the Caribbean ethnocultural musicality of the Rastafari as a biblical hermeneutics. Drawing from Spencer-Miller's relation of orality to musicality, I show how a Rastafari hermeneutic might effectuate a rhythmic reasoning whereby the resonances of Glissantian orality and Deleuzian affect are brought into relationship upon the porous and pulsating pages of a Bible still very much alive today. Re-membering the story of Samson (Judges 13-16) in this way, I propose that amidst the intensities and resonances of affect, orality, and the revolutionary rhythms of a Rastafari hermeneutics, a new way of reading Samson in/and the Bible emerges. Here orality as musicality meets affect theory bruising it down as the *I-n-I* of Rastafarian livity, where Pan-Divinity inflects subjectivity in radical alterity and interdependence. Accordingly, then, interpreting the Bible requires that we read with rhythm, vulnerable and therefore attentive to the in(de)terminable bodies intra-acting in its interpretation in/as an ambient affective assemblage.