editorial

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This special issue draws on papers developed from the conference 'Caribbean Women's Writing: Comparative Critical Conversations', held at Goldsmiths, University of London, in June 2011 to address questions concerning the legacy of plantation culture in its shaping of a gendered creolisation. Notably, several of the papers struck a chord in their interrogation of the representation of affects in the literature of the region and its diaspora. From these presentations engaging the broad theme of affects and creolisation (used interchangeably), we asked contributors to consider further the insights that Creole or Caribbean textualisation affords in discussion of Caribbean lives, whether local or transnational, especially in terms of gendered bodily affectivity and the female body's capacity to act. That such consideration needs take account of 'silence engendered through a particular historical violence' (Anim-Addo, 2007: 9), that of slavery, its attendant 'resistance circles' (Brathwaite, 2000: 98) and some 'rewriting [of] the patriarchal contract' (Mohammed, 1995: 20), among other concerns, is central to the challenge of this debate.

Our interest lies less in a play of abstractions and more in praxis concerned to tease out hidden dimensions of a specific affective conundrum rendered the more complex for African-Caribbean women in view of a problematic legacy. That this includes the plantation's mix of historicised silence, and degrees of denial, suppression and distortion of emotions about which little has been written arising from the local and the regional is a sign of the tensions involved in the task we now engage. That African-Caribbean women appear to be latecomers as producers of such knowledge is necessarily connected within the larger picture within which affect is a detail, and as far as we are aware there has been no earlier critical engagement of this subject, *as affect*. Yet, how to theorise this difference that is so important to many of those of plantation heritage (referred to in other contexts as black, or peoples of colour), and to a further pluralising of the discourses of affect, without immediately engendering an oppositional stance or adding to the disunity anxieties of 'integration feminism' (Liljestrom, 2010: 165) is our concern. On the one hand, the articles in this volume attempt to shed light on a specific creolising of affect, acclimatised to plantation conditions, and with this, a concern with specificity. On the other hand, we seek to maintain a multidisciplinary and translocational conversation, begun with each other,

concerning meanings of affect. Despite the inherent difficulties, we remain certain that the task we happily engage matters.

Interested to consider the extent to which plantation realities creolised affects alongside language, culture and so on, we tasked ourselves with a range of complex questions: What evidence might be found to suggest that Creole women's bodies are haunted by memories and legacies of a traumatic history? How have women's bodies been affected by, and themselves affected slavery and indenture, colonialism and migration? How does contemporary literary writing represent creolisation in relation to these dynamics, their processes and legacy so as to affect readers and invigorate the affective? If orality is key to Creole culture, what is the role of performativity in creolised affect? We sought to address such questions particularly in the spirit of Probyn's observation that 'an abstract way of approaching affect and emotion places the writing itself in an uninterested relation to affect. This is a contradiction in terms—affects are inherently interested' (2010: 74).

Notwithstanding their shared beginnings, our essays highlight individual research interests. Several of the essays engage historical time. Joan Anim-Addo's article contextualises the collection within a gendered creolisation framework and an affective register that is creolised as a result of plantation experience. Anim-Addo examines the neo-slave narrative for 'transformative knowledge of sexual difference on the plantation'. She contends that within such knowledge represented in a range of literary texts including Nancy Morejón's 'Amo a mi amo' and Austin Clarke's *The Polished Hoe*, the key understanding of sexual difference informing a gendered creolisation might be found. Arguing that sexual labour distinctive to women on the plantation together with the asymmetries of power within that space-time entity demanded a reformulation and particular creolising of affect, she theorises resistance, control and the local economy of fear as central to the production of creolised affect, its silences, masked emotions and performativity.

Susan Thomas takes as a crucial source the evangelical writing of the 'free-coloured' Anne Hart Gilbert (1768–1834), currently understood to be the first published African-Caribbean woman writer. Thomas notes that Gilbert's writing had a 'transatlantic reach' by means of its distribution through her immediate network and its link with the Female Refuge Society. Of particular significance is the reach this allowed in facilitating Gilbert's address to female anti-slavery societies and her appeal to compassion. Moreover, in theorising Gilbert's deployment of compassion dependent upon 'affective identification across...boundaries', Thomas argues that the community building that Gilbert envisioned and successfully worked towards was grounded in an 'emotion' culture that, while based in Methodist practice, served to produce 'a creolised church among the laity'.

As with the first two articles, Mina Karavanta turns to history and to its twenty-first century rewriting. For Karavanta's argument, Sylvia Wynter represents an important cornerstone. Karavanta theorises 'counterwriting' as the process of rewriting of canonical texts engaged by Caribbean authors in order 'to systematically deconstruct the structures' referred to by Wynter as relative to 'the overrepresentation of Man' (2003: 263). Drawing on the counterwriting of two 'text-bodies', Anim-Addo's *Imoinda* and Nourbese Philip's *Zong*, Karavanta rethinks history through their particular use of 'affective memory' and argues, following Derrida and Marx, that the selected texts reveal 'the event of the spectre', since for Atlantic slavery 'the process of expropriation is a spectralizing disincarnation'. Thus, through the counterwriting of affective memory, the poetic text 'orders the spectre' and recalibrates the histories of colonial modernity and the Caribbean diaspora.

Suzanne Scafe's article mines the plantation as a crucial source of difficult affective memory. She raises the issue of generational continuity in her consideration of affect as 'feeling' examined through Donna Heman's *River Woman*. Engaging concepts of marronage, particularly 'creative marronage' and Creole mythology concerning the mythical figure, River Mumma, Scafe argues that Heman's representation of intergenerational rupture and loss evokes the affective consequences of the plantation. She posits that the plantation itself, a key signifier of the history of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean, is 'the matrix within which creolised identities were formed in the Caribbean, identities defined by the proximity of African, European and Asian cultures and the forced and unforced mixing of cultures'.

Viv Golding, addressing questions of affect and emotion, engages a broader textualisation to include art exhibits and museum trails, as they relate to poetics considered 'in relation', in Edouard Glissant's sense, to her focus on two twenty-first century museums: The Horniman and the V&A. Golding raises the timely issue of the marginalisation of women or 'the female sphere' represented within the museum, notably in the V&A's *Uncomfortable Truths* exhibition in 2007. Golding emphasises that 'poetic positioning' of the exhibits allowed a valuable juxtaposition that assisted the affective 'confrontations' desired by curators and artists towards 'fresh interpretation'. She argues for 'developing feminist pedagogy—notably for progressing affective and sensory experiences', particularly regarding museum trails that might 'facilitate critical attention to absences and permit new her/his stories to emerge'.

While Elina Valovirta focuses on sexuality in fiction by Caribbean authors Opal Palmer Adisa and Erna Brodber, her concerns are men in the texts' liberatory quests and how to read them in the light of affective feminist reader theory. Taking what she regards as 'a manifestation of Caribbean women writers' desire and need to reconfigure and reimagine the lives of men in the Caribbean from women's points of view', Valovirta posits that the men portrayed as 'sexual

healers' in the texts contribute to important 'moments of gender harmony'. She addresses the question of the role of the reader 'as someone who feels' in relation to concerns with a politics of reading. She argues that 'when men take part in healing', this not only 'expands our notions of gender relations', it also contributes to our understanding 'of women as gendered'.

Karina Smith's essay, interrogating tomboyism in two texts about Caribbean girls' lives, suggests as important to the task the affective legacy of slavery and colonialism and the performance of identity this engendered. Smith delineates the distinction that through sport and piracy, protagonists Janie and May, respectively, engage a gender transformation that carries regional meanings. She argues that in the Caribbean context, the tomboy identity, itself a hybrid, 'seeks entry to the masculine domain' as a challenge to both the gender binary and exclusion and/or marginalisation. Examining how Janie and May express their anger, shame, fear, frustration and so on 'through their ambiguous gender identity' and a 'determination to intervene in masculinist traditions', she attributes 'the ongoing affects of colonialism and patriarchy in the islands' to the shaping of life narratives such as *Janie*, *Cricketing Lady* and *The Pirate's Daughter*.

To re-iterate, our entry into the debate concerning affect is through creolisation, and by doing so we expect to have opened many more questions than we have sought to address. We have also sought to disturb, if that is what is necessary in order to open the debate further.

Joan Anim-Addo and Suzanne Scafe

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