

104 | **gendering creolisation: creolising affect**

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abstract

Going beyond the creolisation theories of Brathwaite and Glissant, I attempt to develop ideas concerning the gendering of creolisation, and a historicising of affects within it. Addressing affects as 'physiological things' contextualised in the history of the Caribbean slave plantation, I seek, importantly, to delineate a trajectory and development of a specific Creole history in relation to affects. Brathwaite's proposition that 'the most significant (and lasting) inter-cultural creolisation took place' within the 'intimate' space of 'sexual relations' is key to my argument. In the light of this, I consider how Creole cultural knowledge about affect—as the primary motivational system inclusive of fear, anger, outrage and so on—might be identified, and what constitutes such Creole knowledge within which affect might be embedded. How might Glissant's relationality and Creole literary texts add to this knowledge? I focus primarily on three texts: Clarke's *The Polished Hoe*, Collins' *The Colour of Forgetting* and Morejón's 'Amo a mi amo'/'I Love My Master'. Each text on which I draw is selected for its intersectional representation of gender relations, 'knowledge about sexual difference' and its representation of Creole subjectivities within the context problematised here as the 'demonic ground'. Moreover, as auto-theorising texts, they represent both narrative and meta-narrative of a creolising of affects in and against the economy of the slave plantation. Each represents also a stage or aspect of the development of subjectivities and an affective community that inform this intervention concerned with theorising against consolidated, universalising and Eurocentric conceptualisations of affect. In the process, I attempt to offer a differentiated cartography and literary archaeology of affect.

keywords

gendered creolisation; creolising affects; intersectional representation; auto-theorising; Creole; Caribbean

Amo a mi amo pero todas las noches,
cuando atravieso la vereda florida hacia el cañaveral
 donde a hurtadillas hemos hecho el amor,
me veo cuchillo en mano, dessollándole como a una res
 sin culpa.

I love my master but every night,
when I cross the flower-bordered path towards the plantation
 where, surreptitiously we have made love,
I see myself knife in hand, slaughtering him as I would a beast
 without guilt.

(Morejón, 2001)¹

introduction

This article departs from Brathwaite's creolisation theory and Glissant's relational concerns with creolisation to consider how a gendered creolisation might be conceptualised and be shown to account for a creolising of affect, inclusive of emotions.² Brathwaite's (1974: 19) elaboration of the process of creolisation in *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean* highlights 'sex and amorous influences' as integral to social processes that contribute towards creolisation. He amplifies the process of creolisation as interlinking first 'acculturation', in which one culture is absorbed by another, and second 'interculturalisation', involving an intermixing that is in some measure—even in the asymmetrical power relations of the plantation system—reciprocated (*ibid.*: 11). These ideas expand upon and substantiate Brathwaite's (1971: 303) earlier proposition that 'the most significant (and lasting) inter-cultural creolisation took place' within the 'intimate' space of 'sexual relations'.

Going beyond Brathwaite's theorising to consider notions of a gendered creolisation, I am nevertheless concerned to focus on spaces characterised by plantation history signifying both Atlantic slavery and Caribbean creolisation.³ Moreover, I bring to bear on the matter a positionality as a black woman Creole subject engaged with both historicising and literary practice foregrounding women.⁴ It is with the imaginary plantation represented in literary texts that I intend to engage in order to examine creolised gender relations and 'knowledge about sexual difference', as Scott (1988: 2) has pinpointed for feminist historians. Furthermore, I propose to delineate both a trajectory and the development of Creole history in relation to affects as illustrated through the subjectivities represented by the texts.

The main texts that I draw upon are Clarke's *The Polished Hoe* (2004), Collins' *The Colour of Forgetting* (1995) and Morejón's 'Amo a mi amo'/'I Love My Master'

1 Morejón's 'Amo a mi amo'/'I Love My Master', with translation by Jean Andrews, may be read in its entirety in this volume, as well as in the collection *Black Woman and Other Poems/Mujer negra y otros poemas* (2001) from which it is taken.

2 I make no distinction between emotion and affect. For a useful survey of the field in the light of such distinction, see Gorton's (2007) valuable review article.

3 Several models of creolisation theory have evolved since Brathwaite's (1971) thesis. Perhaps the most influential is that of Glissant, for whom relationality is pivotal (see *Poetics of Relation*, 1997). Neither thinker, however, has considered questions of gender, though of interest to this discussion is the fact that both are

also perhaps known equally for their creative writing.

4 See, for example, essays by Viv Golding (2013), Mina Karavanta (2013) and Karina Smith (2013), each of whom, in this volume, elaborates upon what Karavanta describes as 'text bodies that stage and perform the work of affective memory' (2013).

5 See Smith in this volume who, in examining *Janie Cricketing Lady*, comments on the writing of silence (Smith, 2013).

6 I use Caribbean and Creole interchangeably. The former refers to the region and the latter to the culture.

(2001). In these, the authors set their creolised subjects in action within an imaginary that is constituted intersectionally, 'by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class and sexuality' (Nash, 2008: 2) to render a distinct gendered subjectivity and community. Furthermore, each text is representative of and theorises a stage or aspect of the development of the affective community that emerges, and as auto-theorising texts they release a plurality of voices that *speak to* traditions of the culture and 'the collective self' (Anim-Addo, 2007a: 278). Furthermore each text functions as a narrative and meta-narrative of affects in and against the economy of the slave plantation. By this means, the texts in their gendering of creolisation also theorise against consolidated, universalising and Eurocentric conceptualisations of affect.

gendering creolisation

To illustrate from the texts' gendering of creolisation, I propose to interrogate their racial and gendered landscape and, drawing from Glissant's ideas concerning the historical relationality central to creolisation, I consider relationality—benign or not—in terms of both race and gender. I acknowledge that the attempt to separate a gendered creolisation from its affects is artificial and I address this in my attempt to simultaneously explicate an understanding of affect as silence, masking and disruptive performance, each represented in Caribbean poetics of relation as opaque and complex.⁵ I posit that a consideration of the complexity of the performative politics of affects within the matrix of power relations on the slave plantation allows us to gain an understanding of the relation between affects and community making that differs from current debates about affect.

While Scott (1988: 42) does not refer to Caribbean or Creole women,⁶ two questions based on her theorising connect with my concerns, namely, how 'relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes' are represented, and how these 'signify relationships of power' within the space of the plantation and the affects that arise. No attempt is made here to define affect. Rather, I adopt Brennan's (2004: 6) description from her writing on 'the transmission of affect':

[T]here is no reason to challenge the idea that emotions are basically synonymous with affects (if more an evidently physiological subset), or that moods and sentiments are subsets referring to longer-lasting affective constellations. What does need to be borne in mind is that all affects, including even 'flat affects,' are material, *physiological things*. (my emphasis)

Brennan's 'physiological things' are appropriate to my discussion of the creolising of affect in plantation culture, which denied or restricted emotions and feelings to the enslaved. In that space, affect was not only an irrelevance, for whether as brutish and considered apt for the enslaved, or refined and believed to be

inappropriate, it also threatened survival. The way in which these 'physiological things' functioned historically in creolised space is by being masked, disguised often from the self. Nonetheless, attention to such a space, especially in relation to its affective restrictions, is crucial to an understanding of affect that is creolised as glimpsed through the region's writing. I am also mindful of Ahmed's (2004: 119) emphasis that in 'affective economies, emotions do things' in that 'they align individuals with communities'.

Concerned with problematising that engages the selected texts' representation of creolised gender relations and, as I argue, attendant creolising of affect, a central question to be addressed is: What constitutes transformative knowledge of sexual difference on the plantation? Transformed cultural knowledge provides the substance of literary texts, and for the purposes of this discussion Morejón's 'Amo a mi amo'/'I Love My Master', even in the epigraph alone, above, demonstrates this knowledge viscerally in terms of plantation gender relations. In Morejón's poem, the enslaved—and in the circumstances of the Caribbean plantation—creolised woman mobilises a distinctive agency.⁷ Yet, Morejón's I-narrator represents the enslaved creolised woman for whom, as historian Beckles (2003: 147) underlines, 'sexual violation' was not recognised since 'under the slave-laws, property could not be raped'. It should be stressed that sexual violation constituted an important component of the 'seasoning' that creolisation entailed for women, and Morejón recognises that 'sexual violation' effectively constituted a crucial component of 'sexual difference'. While all black bodies were subject to labour—and women laboured equally in the fields—the enslaved women were also coerced into sexual labour. This situation ensured the white master's gain since, if his black concubine became pregnant, he gained another slave by her reproduction, and in any event his sexual appetite was appeased. Notably, in plantation history, the black woman's body was constructed in specific ways relative to concerns with production and re-production: she was c(h)attle. To cite Beckles (1995: 135) again: 'Her sexuality was projected as overtly physical (no broken hearts here!)—hence brutish and best suited to the frontier world of the far-flung plantation'.

Beckles' argument concerning the 'brutish'—unfeeling—creolised woman is useful in relation to Morejón's I-narrator's choices. Without intending to suggest that these represent Creole circumstances for all, even in Atlantic slavery, what are her realities within the entrapment that Morejón's Creole knowledge represents? Borrowing Scott's term, key signifiers of the attendant 'relationships of power' (Scott) are the 'plantation', 'the lash', 'the sugarmill', 'his splendid coach', each, in turn, indicative of possibilities of 'petticoat rebellion' that also constituted women's resistance to their gendered conditions (Shepherd, 2002: 17).⁸ How Morejón's narrator responds is of crucial significance since she unsettles the binary between the physical and the physiological. She speaks a body that feels and thinks past silence and counter to the ravages of the 'lash'

7 See Susan Thomas's essay in this volume for some discussion of the sexual 'seasoning' involved in gendered creolisation (Thomas, 2013).

8 Shepherd's writing of a journal entry describing a reported 'petticoat

to the social processes of creolisation, particularly a gendered creolisation. Furthermore, her experience underscores important differences concerning the register of affects available, the means of expressing them and their mutation.

Wynter's (1990) notion—after Luce Irigaray—of the 'demonic ground of Caliban's woman' affords this discussion a means of further demarcating the space in which the enslaved, creolised women found themselves. A space conjugated by race, gender and a specificity of history, familiar in some degree to later creolised women, the demonic ground might be interpreted as referring to the space where 'Caliban's woman', the black woman (before or after the master's attentions), unsettles the prevailing power dynamics by performing counter to them. She unsettles with her paradoxical performance by, for instance, turning her silence against the ones who would possess her. She refuses to make her feelings and self totally available for interpretation by refusing to be categorised even as she is colonised. Moreover, her being resists full domestication by the master's language and meaning. So, the 'demonic ground' is underscored here as a precarious zone between oppression and resistance, being restrained and yet using masked or repressed affects to develop resistance from below, past the restraints and the shackles. Thus, the space of rape for the master is transformed by the narrator into a space of his death. She has already creolised it by inscribing it with her affects. This act is also the source of a counter-politics, a counter-imagining, a counter-metaphysics, not originating from the master (and his world) but from the outside space she possesses as the 'other'.⁹ Notably, too, the demonic carries associations with the divine/the sacred, understood here as the realm of affects that resist the master's reason. Importantly, her act is related to what his reason represses, that he cannot fully possess the body, as a site of the sacred, of opacity and liminality. In threatening him with her dangerous imagining, she resists the binary between evil and good, since in her case the demonic is the human's sacred force that persists even under the most dehumanising conditions.

Meanings of this space still remain 'outside' the dominant, or what Wynter (1990: 356) calls, 'governing systems of meaning'. That Wynter's articulation of the demonic ground seeks to highlight 'the contradictory relation of Sameness and Difference' (*ibid.*: 363) is useful to this discussion in that hers is a reminder of the erasure that follows exclusion through non-engagement of qualitative 'difference' such as the Creole context reveals. She warns, in effect, that insistence upon 'Sameness' leads to women of the 'demonic ground' being 'doubly silenced' (*ibid.*: 365), first by the lived experience in which, like the I-narrator, the Creole subject, as woman, is silenced, and then by our inability to include her experience within the discourse. Wynter also helps to underscore an understanding of the ways in which the gendered creolised body located in the plantation, or in plantation-like circumstances, is also a body at risk. Morejón's (2001: l. 53) I-narrator is at risk of violence to her master/lover and to herself

9 Mina Karavanta's essay in this volume offers an extended discussion on the concept of 'counterwriting' (2013).

should she succeed in the slaughter 'without guilt' that she visualises. In this respect, it should be noted that for Wynter, within the 'demonic ground' of Caliban's woman, silence is implicated. This silence is compounded by a dearth of published texts by Creole women, and thus as Shepherd (2002: 19) reiterates, Caribbean historians must resort to texts, including literary texts 'to access the voice of the enslaved'. The project of engendering history led by scholars such as Shepherd and Beckles with titles like *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (1995) and *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (1999) offers an important springboard for opening up the debate concerning affect. Yet, particularly interesting to this paper is the representation within the neo-slavery text such as Morejón's, which addresses the silence by shaping it with the material of cultural knowledge and affective memory to give voice to the silenced and gendered Creole woman and to illustrate the workings of affect.¹⁰

10 In the context of the American plantation system, Morrison (2000: 46) refers to 'my attempt to shape a silence while breaking it'.

creolising affect

'Creolising' addresses, here, a historical specificity deriving from the plantation. Described in markers of Caribbean thought, the term indicates particular processes—social, or birth—by which one becomes nativised to Creole culture, one accepting of intermixing, if only at the level of historical precedence. I have already touched upon the sexual 'seasoning', above, through which enslaved women became acclimatised to Atlantic slavery, indicating that creolisation must necessarily acknowledge its formative plantation history, though plantation history can assuredly sidestep creolisation.¹¹ I reiterate that in historicising affects I seek to not only place them within the history of the Caribbean slave plantation, but also to delineate a trajectory and development of the history.

11 An example is the USA's 'one-drop' rule, which designates anyone with a drop of black blood as black. Hence, there is a differentiated emphasis concerning race in the US context, despite a similar plantation history out of which Morrison, for example, writes.

The creolising of affect relates to the plantation context or 'demonic ground', in which the black woman was neither allowed to show feelings nor expected to have them. Within this space, control markedly defined and distorted the ways in which those 'physiological things' would find expression. By 'spatializing'—following Linda McDowell's adoption of Massey's (1992: 31) ideas of space as a 'complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation'—important features of an affective web related to the enslaved and creolised, and patterned by silences, suppression, masked expression, disembodiment, violent outbursts and so on, come into view. Further understanding of the web requires a zooming in to highlight affects that are expressed or 'projected outwards' (Brennan, 2004: 6) in a manner so guarded that it aims to communicate only within the community, and to simultaneously enhance survival. By this I mean that attention within the community is always already focused on containing the projection of affect so that it is as unobtrusive

as possible. Silence and masking, then, were key features of that register within which was the imperative of non-availability to outsiders, such as masters and the threat to survival that they embodied. It perhaps bears underlining at the same time that as I treat it affect is not always a fixed, metaphysical concept.

To understand why, in such circumstances, *The Polished Hoe*'s protagonist, Tilda, breaks silence requires an examination of the subject position, power and affective life experience of the enslaved woman within a space habituated to 'secreting manners and customs' (Glissant, 1997: 64). Any 'projection' of affect that might be misinterpreted needed to be kept secret. In these conditions of secrecy, as Clarke illustrates, an accumulation of masked affects simmer beneath the surface of the everyday plantation, demanding acute self-control. The novel opens with Tilda's insistence upon making a 'Statement' that the community prefers not to hear and treats as ominous. She insists, 'I knew what my cause was. And I had a cause' (Clarke, 2004: 16). The irony, lost on neither author nor character, renders Tilda's agency visible despite her self-awareness and the challenging actions they prompt given that she has become the overseer's concubine. Tilda elaborates:

From the time, way back, when Ma, my mother, out of need, sent me while I was still a lil girl, seven or eight, to the Plantation to work in the fields, from that time, I had a cause. And in particular from that day, when the midwife delivered Wilberforce, I have had a cause. (2004: 16–17)

Tilda's subject position like her mother's, embedded in issues of race, gender and class, indicates how plantation realities not only contributed to creolisation,¹² but to the *creolising* of *affect* within that culture. In Tilda's statement, it is relevant that she remembers being 'seven or eight', wearing 'hand-me-down shoes' that, from Bellfeels' daughter, 'pinched like hell' (*ibid.*: 18). Most importantly, she recalls:

Then, Mr Bellfeels put his riding crop under my chin, and raise my face to meet his face, using the riding crop; and when his eyes and my eyes made four, he passed the riding crop down my neck, right down the front of my dress, until it reach my waist. And then he move the riding-crop right back up again, as if he was drawing something on my body. (*ibid.*: 19)

During the encounter in which she acknowledges that her mother is silent, she notices also Bellfeels' riding crop 'as if it was his hand crawling all over my body; and I was naked' (*ibid.*: 20). From that first undressing, Tilda's journey to the Great House, from which she tells her story following the death of her mother years later, is neither dependent on her word nor her will, but upon Bellfeel whose riding crop reinforces the reach of his power. This silent encounter in which her mother embodies silence underscores the complexities of the will to the writing of

12 There is a growing body of work on creolisation theory. The emphases of Brathwaite and Glissant relate most clearly to this discussion.

silence. The reading of silence is also significant to an understanding of creolised affect. Focusing on the process of writing, Philip (2002: 48), poet, author and essayist, stresses:

The only way the artist could be in this world, that is the New World, was to give voice to this split i-mage of voiced silence. Ways to transcend that contradiction had to and still have to be developed, for that silence continues to shroud the experience, the i-mage and so the word.

Tilda's importance lies in her characterisation as *relational* in Glissant's sense in that she sustains a long-term 'errant' and intimate relationship with one of the dominant group, the overseer, and later manager of the plantation. That the plantation relied upon intercultural encounter was everyday, so was its habit of sexual exploitation, as the pattern of the overseer's riding crop underscores. A protective secrecy also informed and impacted upon the affective register of the community who must endure such habit, rendering it normative. Tilda's reference to her mother standing beside her that day, her eyes focused 'on something on the ground' (Clarke, 2004: 19), bears significance, for she notices her mother avoiding her gaze. In such avoidance and body language, she learns patterns of silence that constitute a holding back of those 'physiological things' at moments of acute tension. Communicated feeling between mother and daughter responded to a danger so life threatening that neither dared articulate it in the presence of the man symbolically at the apex of the plantation's pyramidal power structure. The affective imperative is self-control, positively valued for not betraying the self and others for whom you care.

Different again is a sustained intimacy, given the boundaries imposed by the plantocracy between labour and intimacy, for Tilda comes to claim an identity as the mother of Bellfeels 'outside-thrildren' and 'the Outside-woman' (*ibid.*: 42), an identity underlining the 'internal tensions and conflicts' (Massey, 1992: 276) that impact upon affectivity. Arguably, the characters offered to illustrate this argument are women who gained materially from masking to the point of shutting down their emotions. What is their desire? That desire is seldom acknowledged in relation to the 'sexual violation' of enslaved women derives as much from plantation mythology as the dominant plantocracy's desire for a successful economy of unequal bodies. Gorton's (2008: 19) elucidation of desire is useful especially regarding what desire does:

It affects the lives of characters; it marks their bodies, forcing them to move, act or react differently; and it transforms people—radically alters their being-in-the-world.

In Gorton's terms, some transformation has overtaken Tilda in her ardent desire to speak out. Referring to her 'temperriment and determination', Tilda reflects, '[a]nd I have to laugh, why, all-of-sudden, I went back to a hoe' (Clarke 2004: 14). Yet, the significance of Tilda's hoe and how it relates to the

'breeding' of plantation women informs the narrative. 'Breeding' is consistent with an understanding unquestioned at the time of the less-than-human status of the enslaved black woman. A restricted embodiment condoned such 'breeding' of the black woman c(h)attle, in connection with whom the use of the language of courtly love, for example, would be inappropriate. Conversely, 'common conceptions of savagery' might be said to have fuelled their white master's sexual appetite (Moloney, 2005: 238), especially since this was in a period when sexual activity was expected to give rise to procreation, a bonus justifying their 'breeding' of the women. It was provident, also, to believe that the enslaved 'like animals acted instinctively' (*ibid.*: 247) without understanding.

If Morejón's text portrays the demonic energy of affects as both disempowering and empowering, and thus opaque and resisting representation, Clarke's text articulates the dynamics of masking, demonstrating the play of Creole/gender dynamics in the plantation. Thus, we move from silence to the subject entering the master's house, entering signification and play, entering the economy of discourses that Tilda unsettles by masking or performing affects as the property of the gendered body. Her laughter as she gives her Statement, in line with my argument thus far, should be read mindful of plantation restrictions upon affects, even feelings of acute pain giving rise to a differentiated affectivity, and an affective register resistant to instant decoding.

Key to an understanding of the creolising of affect is that the power of speech was not granted to the enslaved. Furthermore, since to speak is to render one's thoughts open for inspection, such a potentially dangerous practice for the enslaved or subjugated offers up a masking through silence, as both a refuge and a space of possible protection, less open to continued misinterpretation. Does Tilda's mother, promoted to the position of a maid on the plantation, maintain her silence as a wish that her daughter might enjoy better fortunes? That her silence represents also a maternal fracturing symptomatic of the plantation does not itself indicate that she has nothing to say. When she breaks silence on her deathbed, she charges her daughter to 'never forget' and to 'bear witness' (Clarke, 2004: 73), a significant cultural means for the transmission of affect. The keen impetus to active memory is all the more charged for its engendering within the intimate domestic space between mother and daughter.

Undeniably, the plantocracy and their agents held the upper hand in an affective economy of extreme fear in which the black enslaved body was capital (it could depreciate with age or deformity) regulated by fear. At the same time, the enslaved c(h)attle, not fully human, also inspired fear (of withdrawal of labour) in individual or collective revolt that would threaten the collapse of the plantation economy. Correspondingly, the economy of the plantation also stimulated the harshest punishments in which the powerful white elite dominated

13 Ahmed's distinctions, though useful, do not entirely overlap my own here where enslaved bodies are actually capital that can be and was exchanged.

14 For a more detailed treatment of women's punishment on the plantation, see Anim-Addo (2004).

15 Examples are the eighteenth-century historian Edward Long and the 'Lady of Quality', Janet Schaw (see Anim-Addo, 2007a).

the enslaved through fear of brutal punishment. In terms of punishment, what this economy of fear meant—qualitatively different from Ahmed's (2004) conceptualisation¹³—particularly 'the whip', and how it affected women who were both labouring bodies and reproducers of *bodies that labour* is more thoroughly treated elsewhere.¹⁴ Yet, my reading also challenges Ahmed's by indicating how enslaved women's affects, analysed through these texts, impact upon future diasporic Creole communities. They do not only enable enslaved subjects to align with existing communities.

Tilda, her mother and community might be considered justifiably affected by the fear deliberately instilled to achieve control and compliance, as much in terms of sexual labour as in the field. Giving her Statement, Tilda remembers the death of another member of the community, Clotelle, an event memorialised in song, and chilling for what it reveals. If Tilda's move to the Great House as concubine signifies success, Clotelle's demise confirms how the underlying threat of plantocratic violence demarcates a geography of violence marking the black woman's body as subject to sexual exploitation and violence. Momsen suggests that women's restrictions on the plantation were marked (Momsen and Kinnaird, 1993). At the same time, women's individual mobility often proved perilous, as Clotelle's death (or murder as the community considers it) confirms. Favoured by the powerful Bellfeels, Clotelle's promotion to work in the Great House brings with it the unwanted sexual attention of the master, a tragic end, 'hanging from the tamarind tree in the Plantation Yard' (Clarke, 2004: 22), and the permanent disfigurement of her preferred lover. At the same time, while fear and violence were ruthlessly deployed in favour of the powerful, the contradiction remained that though fear was supposed to keep black and white bodies apart, it did not, as many commentators lamented.¹⁵

The violence suffered by Clotelle points to affect entangled with repressed emotions within the community. Handed down through socialisation, they become, in part, learnt responses. Clotelle's story, silenced by the powerful, is nonetheless voiced, highlighting, too, relations of power that appear to be erased until critical or dramatic action triggers affective memory. Beckles (1995: 135) tellingly emphasises, 'the predominant image associated with the representation of the black woman was that of great strength—the symbol of blackness, masculinity and absence of finer feelings'. In other words, it bears emphasising that black women were obliged to *pretend* to have no feelings, to mask them and not articulate 'those physiological things', thus effectively occupying a space of affective ambiguity open to misinterpretation. To reiterate, in the clarity of its showing of this phenomenon, Clarke's text powerfully auto-theorises these meanings.

That Tilda tells her story from her home in the Great House, 'that big powerful house, which hasn't lost its affect on me', indicates gendered mobilities interlinked with plantation life, about which little has been written to directly

address questions of affect. Tilda recognises that 'to enter the driveway ... brought in my limbs that first trembling sensation' (Clarke, 2004: 83). She also acknowledges:

In a way I enjoyed it. I was being made a woman of. And I knew the power of the man who was turning me into a force-ripe woman. I wasn't so young not to also know that the man fooping me by force was a man of means, and privilege, able to put me in a category which *not one* of the boys I grew up with, and who, later on as men, were after me, could. (*ibid.*: 80)

Tilda's use of desire to enhance her mobility contributes to a knowing agency that might be named ambition. Reflecting further on her own desire, she says, 'And you know, in spite of that, there was a certain niceness to those nights ... a sweet taste. At the beginning' (*ibid.*: 79). Thus, the basis upon which Tilda comes to know not only 'the track through the valley', but also the Plantation Houses, is to be differentiated from the mobility of her mother or Clotelle whose lives are differently shaped. Yet neither pride in her upward mobility nor satisfaction in rivalry with Bellfeels' wife, living within close proximity in the Main House, proves finally enough in the face of Tilda's 'cause'.

Yet Clarke's fiction points to another complexity that cannot be ignored, for Bellfeels' implied whiteness merits attention with reference to affect especially since historical evidence (Bush, 1990; Beckles, 1995; Shepherd, 2002) points to a type of decadence instituted by white plantocrats and their agents in the Caribbean. Although the term decadence is not associated with the Caribbean context, I use it here to refer to the new order brought to the region by the plantocracy and their agents. Central to this regime of excessive physical punishment, brutality and fear was transgressive and serial sexual practice in that it involved enforced and racially 'other' concubines, sexual partners considered not the weaker sex, but 'brutish' since they were c(h)attle. The practices were considered either outmoded or degenerate in the European society from which the planters came and to which they returned. I take the view here that decadence, as a historical term, does not necessarily mark 'the last stage before a cycle repeats itself; it may instead be seen ... as a beginning' (Morley: 574). Plantocratic decadence and its affects engendered the beginning of a culture symbolised by the whip, metissage, skin colour obsession, pigmentocracy and white domination of African-heritage people considered their inferiors, even when they were the planters' own offspring.

At the same time, since Creole plantation societies insist upon both racial divide and dispute race, especially an historically over-valued whiteness,¹⁶ the question needs to be raised as to who was white on Clarke's plantation when whiteness was not associated with poverty but with power, prestige, status and material wealth? That whiteness is contested with its attendant affects in the fictional Bimshire, then, is hardly surprising. While Tilda may be called a 'brown skin bitch', since her son's skin is lighter, his language and manners markedly more

16 The fictional Bimshire is based on Barbados. Monahan writes of his 'puzzlement' in the face of race denial when researching on the island (see *Creolizing Subject*, 2011).

refined, and he has a valued profession, he can enter at least a contested whiteness as racial identity. Furthermore, when Tilda considers that he should be thinking of marriage, her own thoughts turn to the best white clubs on the island. That whiteness is desired whether it is found in someone of the 'right colour' as Tilda or a 'red nigger' is also important, for in the local boys' competition for her Bellfeels' whiteness wins.

memory, affect and contemporary Creole meanings

To further develop my central theme of affect as silence, masking and disruptive performance, and the representing of affects in Caribbean poetics of relation as opaque and complex, I focus on Collins' *The Colour of Forgetting*, which underlines the making of history—familial, autobiographical—through affects and memory. By this means, I am attempting to further a 'literary archaeology' of affects that show how the gendered and creolised subject performs, interprets and uses affects to counter the economy of the slave plantation that relied on the economy of western reason and epistemology. In other words, I build upon a different literary archaeology of affect.

For Collins' Cassandra, generations after Tilda, the plantation is tempered through maternal or ancestral wisdom. Unlike Tilda, Cassandra's knowledge and understanding of the plantation in terms of women's painful realities is permeated by her great-grandmother's exhortation always to 'see the funny side of life' (Collins, 1995: 35), advice drawing directly from her own family history of two great-great-grandfathers, one white and the other black. That the familial interlinks imperatives of survival with the need for humour is significant, for as Cassandra's great-grandmother explains concerning 'those white Malheureuse' (*ibid.*: 35), it is 'the selfsame Malheureuse that kill my great-great grandfather' (*ibid.*: 36).¹⁷ As the author and characters confirm, this is no vengeful claim, for Creole knowledge is *about* 'mixture in the blood of the story', or, as Collins condenses that history: 'Time bring a boss-man Malheureuse to a Great House. The Malheureuse blood pass on to the slave women generation that Boss-man Malheureuse *breed*' (*ibid.*: 18, emphasis added). Collins' writing auto-theorises, like Morejón's, that memory is key to contemporary meanings. Clarke similarly underscores memory by setting his novel diachronically in the 1950s.

Cassandra's great-grandmother's language is instructive in many respects, for it not only tells about Creole family history, and relative strategies of survival crucially significant when one's sexual partner literally holds the power of life-or-death over you. Her maternal ancestor's words also afford analysis of the process of affect concerning pain, so that the maternal narrative

17 There are resonances here with Guillen's 'Ballad of the Two Grandfathers' (see Guillen, 2002). The significance of the patriarch is very much at issue in plantation circumstances.

repeated through generations of women builds towards a type of closure with the words:

That is woman! Even when she come out under Malheureuse she making sure she keep in mind the man who those Malheureuse kill. Eh! Think about that. That is woman! (Collins, 1995: 36)

The admiration intoned in the emphatic, 'that is woman', repeated twice, is not to be considered applicable to women generally, but rather it is an accolade for those who engender the survival impetus so necessary for continuity of the group. In such circumstances, pain is implicit, and barely acknowledged since pain must be distanced and not dwelt upon. Reinforcing the lessons learnt on the plantation where the everyday pain of black life must be kept secret, the painful actions of the powerful can best be made sense of in terms of strategies, such as laughter, rendered explicit for later generations who must reassess plantation history.¹⁸ Thus, maternal wisdom here focuses on laughter as direct strategy made explicit in the exhortation: 'Learn to laugh, you hear, chile. Don't even wait to look see if you find a funny side. Make it up' (*ibid.*: 36). Such instruction in texts that I refer to as 'auto-theorising' afford insight into understanding of the control of black women within gendered relationships and the gendered ways in which relationships, particularly in sexual unions with powerful white men on the plantation, affected black women over time and extending beyond the plantation. I suggest that the reach—spatially and temporally—is important. It counters Ahmed's idea of representing affects horizontally (alignment of subjects with community) and explains why a consideration of the complexity of the performative politics of affects within the complex matrix of power relations on the slave plantation allows us to gain a different understanding of the relation between affects and community making. In this context, neither affect nor community remains a stable category, for each moves through history and time.

18 That masking becomes a strategy in the literature is discussed elsewhere (Anim-Addo, 2007a).

For Cassandra, it becomes evident, also, how family history and affects that accrue to that history are passed on or transmitted. The question arises: Why are Creole writers (re)turning to writing concerning slavery at this time? To ask why is to confront concerns of responsibility expressed by writers globally who care because of *lived* experience of such societies. Family stories from the larger history have been handed down together with some aggregated affects. Philip (2002: 3) writes:

For me history is not so much a dream from which I am trying to awaken as a nightmare. As a writer in the process of writing and re-writing the essentials of my reality, I use memory to awaken from this nightmare.

The transformation of cultural knowledge is important to the process involved in the finest writing, particularly the archaeological excavation required to

19 Morejón's poetry is little known to readers of English. Her literary awards include the National prize for Literature in 2001 and the LASA prize, 2012.

access lived experience, which in the process becomes transformed into the affective life of characters. Like Philip, Morejón,¹⁹ whose writing returns to the 'demonic ground', argues that the region's history remains to be confronted. She pinpoints the engagement with slavery and its aftermath as an 'unceasing battle' within her poetry (Bahr, 1997: 5). Such shared affectivity concerning slavery that, she acknowledges, continues to shape 'our lives' is considered in this discussion as Creole knowledge, whether identified in writer or character.

I referred, above, to my positionality within the discussion. Sharing a similar knowledge and affectivity with Morejón, and Philip, I am drawn to Clarke's writing of Tilda, not only because the writing is exemplary, and it is, but also because, being a writer myself, I share a keen interest in characters like Tilda, as a reading of my own protagonists, Imoinda, or Housekeeper, for example, will testify. The 'autobiographical turn' (Pearce, 2004; Koivunen, 2010: 23) is deployed here to underscore such affinity with the writing cited that is also about affectivity itself. Furthermore, the affects with which I have engaged touch not only historical but family concerns, adding another affective, frictional level to this discussion. Specifically, questions of memory, affect and contemporary meanings for the descendants of the plantation's dispossessed remain of burning importance for me on both scholarly and personal levels. This is all the more current following my writing of a series of papers about the discovery through archival research of a white great-grandfather whose post-slavery plantation appears uncannily similar to Clarke's imagined one, especially in its treatment of plantation women.²⁰ The questions how and why I found a scrap of oral family history important enough to begin an investigation, the affects attached, the concerns with contemporary meanings, all connect affectively with the present discussion.

20 'Brief History of Juliana' discovers a post-slavery plantation owned by a Scot who freely 'breeds' the women with the effect that children and grandchildren are of similar age (Anim-Addo, 2007b).

When memory, as Philip writes, together with a particularised concern with feelings and emotions come together, as in Gilroy's *Boy Sandwich* (1989), a fresh slant on the creolising of affect comes into view. Gilroy's is the view so far removed from the plantation that the novel is set in post-Windrush London, and opens with 'feelings', and with 'turbulence and frustration inside' her protagonist (Gilroy, 1989: 1). This dramatic contrast with normative feelings that must be hidden nonetheless leads to family stories that hark back to the plantation and its affects. They reveal cultural memory at work in travelling Creole subjects whose journey to and reception within metropolitan cities in the post-World War II period force a questioning and re-evaluation of history and related affects. Similarly, Riley's writing, particularly the earlier novels such as *The Unbelonging* (1985) and *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), interrogates racism and history. In other words, affects within the history of the slave plantation demonstrate the enslaved women's (s)heroic ability to make new collectivities of resistance and survival out of affects that were the result of oppression.

conclusion

Intervening in this culturally transparent and historical manner in the debate, I have tried to show affects as transformations and fluctuations that stimulate subject performativity even as they unsettle temporal/spatial dynamics where these affects are triggered. If this holds for Caribbean plantation culture, it seems to me that other specificities, of long-term war, or oppression, for example, might differently shape subjectivities and communities of affect. Borrowing from Brathwaite and Glissant the terms creolisation and 'in relation', I sought to develop them through literature, complicating questions of space, creolisation, gender and so on specifically to interrogate affects. If in the process I have unsettled what appears to be a consolidated view on affects, it is to ask that we reconsider affects also as politically and historically interpellated concepts. I have privileged movement—historical and political—at the level of both subject and community, over seemingly freezing the discussion in an either/or paradigm that considers either the subject or her community as stable categories. Thus, by questioning whose affects and when, I also suggest that 'Sameness and Difference', to draw again on Wynter, remains key to where we feminists are collectively with affects.

Importantly, I have tried to hold in view what looks like two extremes: the possibility of a preoccupation with joy and positivity as central to a discussion of affect (Koivunen, 2010), and plantation conditions decades away in an unreal space in which the 'rushed uneven pulsation of fear' (*ibid.*: 398) constantly shaped women's lives. I also hold to Tilda's conditions, imagined by Clarke precisely because scant records remain. I needed to maintain, too, the shock of recognising enough of what Clarke portrays to know that his Bimshire is not just imagined. I remember. These are the conditions that many fled in the 1950s to become immigrants elsewhere. Many are still fleeing conditions that are similar and different again.

Overall, I have sought to offer a different cartography and literary archaeology of affect, going beyond traditions of conceptualising creolisation and affect. Concerning the former, I offer a new argument about gender politics, which the poetics of Brathwaite and Glissant ignore. In addition, I have refused a reading of affect metaphysically or universally, preferring to historicise while reading closely and intersectionally within the history of gender and race on the Caribbean plantation. Underlying the discussion is a concern with accessing levels of meaning in critical practice to shed light and enrich an understanding of affect even as it points to complexity. The main points are that close attention to the literature suggests a creolising—a process approximating to that of language change—where contact that is hostile, that ruthlessly disregards as worthless one's affectivity, produces something new, which becomes normalised within a community. Masking, thus, becomes an important part of the affective apparatus

engaging a primary concern with survival. The enslaved mother or the extremely poor mother watches her child being sold, and in her total powerlessness because the child of her body is not *hers*, masks indifference, especially when fear is an important part of the currency and affective field. A daughter is taught to laugh at injustice or pain since there is no recourse to justice or human rights. The idea has not been to approach a taxonomy, but to begin some thinking in an area that may yet have wider applicability, for example, for women whose lives are bound up in long-term war or repressive regimes. I urge also a fuller articulation of gendered creolisation at the theoretical level and attention to poetics of resistance that energise standpoints other than the most familiar.

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