‘Amarres’ [moorings] in Reunion Creole means many different things: *link, attachment, bewitchment, spell-binding, to be in love, to be captivated, to be in a relationship, to care for [amar lë ker], to enliven the senses [i amar la boush]. And a few other things as well...*

*The dwelling is an entrenched camp.*

Riel Debars

**Scenes of Subjection. A Cartography of Power**

The scene of subjection marked the territory. The apparatus of colonial slavery and post-slavery had to be inscribed again and again. It had to be repeated, to be made visible for public display. The territory was marked by this display; the territory of the masters’ houses or those of the lesser whites were distinguished from the territory of the subjected. The latter lived in a camp. As the years go by he squeezed from the master the cultivation of a small plot of land, for his vegetables, his animals or his garden, but all that remained precarious. The island was divided into territories: plantations on the coast, with the territories of the master, the freed man and the slave, then in the centre, in the mountains, the territory of the runaway, the maroon. Let’s not forget the territory that remains uninhabited, not yet entirely crafted by humans: that of the volcano, the forests, the ravines, a natural territory which has not yet come under human hands. The territory of the plantations marked out the social and cultural cartography of the island. There was a cartography of power that imitated the territory of colonial power: towns organised around the church and State institutions (first monarchical, then republican). A capital with the Governor’s square and the institutions of power—Government House, the cathedral, churches, customs houses, police, municipalities, schools—with the botanic gardens, the main street, the shops ... the other towns followed the same pattern. The cartography of counter-power, that of the maroons, shaped an island interior where the toponymy retains the traces of the warrior chiefs. The war against the maroons destroyed the vestiges of their villages, so the spatial organisation of their power remains to this day in the realm of speculation. The raids they carried out on plantations were evidence of their capacity to develop strategies of resistance. But there was another cartography of resistance: conspiracies among slaves to organise revolts, with designated targets. The time was at night, the site the plantation. What they wanted was freedom, to
take back their lives even at the risk of death. The uprisings at Saint-Leu or at Sainte-Suzanne at the beginning of the 19th century are outstanding proof of this.

*I was born over on Zanzibar
Who am I now?
I will go look from high on the cliffs
I will climb to Dimitile and be reborn*

Danyèl Waro, **Bwéo**

**Land of the banished and the deported**

This land of masters, slaves, maroons, freed slaves, indentured labourers is first of all a land occupied by *men* dominating other men. There were few women, a third of the population for centuries. Slavery, like indenture, was predominantly a masculine affair, because growing coffee and sugar cane demanded physical strength. You had to know how to wield the machete all day long, repeating the same movement: grabbing the cane with the left hand, cutting it with one blow, trimming the leaves and throwing it down. Cane dust irritated the skin, the leaves were sharp, ants bit the feet and legs, the wall of cane hindered movement, and the cane-cutting season was during the summer ... you had to go on. Then the cane had to be baled and taken to the mill ... The scenario of oppression was of one man submitted to another, possessed by the other, like his household goods, one of his *heritage items*. This was a masculine world where nature yielded to an economy of plunder. Once the war against the maroons was won, once the uprisings were crushed, once the abolition of slavery had been achieved, colonial power was in a position to put its own stamp on the territory, on the periphery of the great French colonial empire.

*Lives crouched in the grass at the water’s edge
Devour the horizon with wide open eyes*

Claire Karm, **Rue d’Après**

**Peripheries**

Reunion remained on the periphery of the Empire, despite the efforts of certain *grand Blancs*. For a long time the island did not appear on all the maps. No one was interested, no one cared. It is still somewhat neglected, of secondary interest compared to Mauritius, Madagascar, India, the Antilles. It is on the last rung of the imperial ladder. It remains in the margin, still confused with (or at best placed in comparison or competition with) the Antilles, already a minor player. Throughout

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1 The ‘big white [families]’ are big land-holders from the colonial and slave era, now mainly involved in the import-export business, marketing, banking, automobile franchises, etc
its history there were those looking to create a destiny as the ‘colonising colony’. It would work for imperial triumph in the region, they said, it would proudly fly the flag of the colonial army, and subjugate other peoples for the greater glory of the colonial empire. Men from Reunion took part in imperial conquests and won fame as colonial mercenaries. Others realised they were colonised when they encountered other colonised peoples and became anti-colonial militants: George Garros, Raymond Vergès, Lucien Barquissau, Paul Dussac.

After the abolition of slavery the territory was reorganised for further colonisation. The freed slaves and poor whites [petits Blancs] were moved off the more fertile and easier to cultivate lands to the high parts and isolated corners of the island. The island was divided between les Haute$$e$$s et les Bas. Sent to the margins of public colonial space were the labourers, the small plantation owners, the laundresses. Our modernity was shaped by this territorialisation of wealth and power. Shanty-towns transformed the urban areas, marking the territory of the poor and the excluded around the centre of the city. In the course of the last fifty years the invention of new territories—the beach, the road, the shopping centre, the far South, the East and the West—compounds the phenomenon of territorialisation. Spaces disappear or are marginalised: the large plantation, the factory, the railway, the boutik sinwa$^{2}$ ... The social, imaginary, cultural and economic space has been deeply changed by all this.

\[
\text{Signs of the cross at the great division of the world}
\]
\[
\text{between fidelities and humilities}
\]
\[
\text{a house}
\]
\[
\text{only}
\]
\[
\text{so the evenings might pray}
\]
\[
\text{passage with passengers towards unknown lands}
\]

Alain Lorraine, *Sur le black*

**Writing Histories**

Our past, even though it is the object of commemorations, studies and reappropriations, still remains a polemical field. Colonialism remains a minor research topic, and if slavery is indeed studied, it still has not become part of the common story even though we might assume that the voices of victims, the place of genocide, of crimes against humanity in politics and the law, within the development of international criminal law, would be integrated without too much controversy. What is at stake with this resistance? While France, despite everything, was still able to finally confront Vichy or the Algerian war, in Reunion,

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$^{2}$ [boutique chinois] Local grocery shop which also doubled as a bar. For a long time this was an essential social and economic space, before the appearance and development of supermarkets.
it still seems too dangerous to confront the past because that would threaten either the ties that bind (‘dangers of communitarianism’) or the ties to France (asking the question about ‘being linked to those who subjected you’) and would bring about a rereading of notions such as citizenship, equality, and national identity starting from the position of who is in or out.

Along with this resistance is a tendency to mythologise. There is an absence of evidence, and there is difficulty in accessing the archives (neglected for a long time, totally abandoned, some even no doubt destroyed). The fact that the majority of the eye-witness accounts are those of the masters, of the magistrates or other administrators of the colonial and slave-owning society, has promoted a compensatory history which rejects complexity, grey areas and complicity in order to highlight only suffering and heroic deeds. The absence of concrete traces paradoxically brings about an inflation of memory, as if only this inflation could make sense of the suffering. As Paul Ricoeur has pointed out, the imperatives of memory run the risk of sitting in opposition to the imperatives of history and lead to what Régine Robin defined as ‘saturated memory’ which no longer knows how to sort out myth from history. From our point of view, it is the writing of history which is crucial. It is accompanied by memory, but it is not reduced to it, because memory is a social construction following its own logic. In any society we can observe memories superimposing themselves on each other or opposing each other. Our proposal is to build a ‘common story’ which would make place for memories, pointing out at every turn that the story can be subject to critical revision. We want to do an inventory of the places of memory, of which too many have already been lost, defend them against destruction, preserve them, make them known. We want to inscribe the historical threads and genealogies so that transmission can occur. We want to confront gaps in memory and continue to develop scientific rigour in the research. We want to reconstitute this particular history of violence, of plunder and of dehumanisation in the general history of violence, plunder and dehumanisation. We want to live with absence, so that this history stops being the history of lost souls, but rather gives meaning to the lives of the women and men who have lived in this land, and to the present.

**Figures of Exclusion**

Work must be done to locate the figures of exclusion in order to deconstruct them, to make an inventory of the stereotypes and insults: l’argent bragouët [social security cheques], l’assisté [someone on the dole], le léspérkui [parasite], parents in retirement, les cagnards3, la tantine larou4. The descendants of slaves and indentured labourers do not have the same fate as those descended from the masters. This is a fact, and we need to study the effects of that heritage today, showing the various discriminations, stigmatisations, and racial stereotypes. We have to think about the social politics of reparation, already begun thanks to political and social movements (unions, women’s movements and political parties).

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3 Pejorative and discriminatory term used to designate rough young men, particularly those from the suburbs
4 Pejorative and discriminatory term used to designate young women who are supposed to like riding around in flashy sports cars.
and put into practice through social welfare. To speak of welfare dependence or of parasitism, as certain kinds of well-known discourses like to, returns to a denial of the need for reparation; it stigmatises people already in a precarious state, and excludes a significant number of Reunionese from citizenship. But we should also analyse the lethal consequences of aid which is not accompanied by responsibility, and which organises a life predicated on the wait for the next dole cheque or piece-meal job. The growing vulnerability of a sector of the population, hidden by welfare and a kind of getting by, can nevertheless be read in the daily violence which articulates the anxiety of a present going nowhere and a future which appears absent.

**Indianocanics**

_We plough the waves of the Indian Ocean, searching for the most marvellous clouds, the most enchanting breezes the most iridescent flasks, songs, the subtlest colours, blue is our idol, and we know how to break waves on the sand and the reefs_

Jean Albany, *Fare Fare*

**Seascapes**

Our understanding of land includes the ocean. The notion of seascape, untranslatable into French, is useful here: the ocean is an immense, imaginary landscape, a space of slave-trading, of forced migrations, of deportation and of ties. It is a place of crime, of separation, but also a place of primary transformation, of the first creolisation that unites diversities.

Exchanges, encounters, commerce, new languages and cultures; all took place in the Indian Ocean long before the arrival of the Europeans. There were cosmopolitan cities, genuine global towns where Jews, Armenians, Arabs, Indians, Chinese, Malagasy rubbed shoulders... prefiguring (as evocative singular figures rather than models), contemporary global cities. If the arrival of the Europeans profoundly changed the Indian Ocean world, it did not destroy it completely. The decolonisation period, followed by the construction of nation-states consolidated the nationalisation of space. In recent years, transnational and transcontinental exchanges have undergone a renewal. They are uncovering new routes and itineraries. A new cartography is being drawn with the emergence of new global cities like Johannesburg, Dubai and Singapore. The study of such spaces presupposes the study of the ‘production’ of the space, which is a social and cultural production. The Indian Ocean is a space without any precise supranationality or territorialisation. It is a cultural space overarched by several chronotopes, where temporalities and territorialities are constructed and deconstructed. An ocean linking continents and islands. A space which is Afro-

**Time/Space-world**

The Indian Ocean contains several historic time zones. Successive globalisations have produced regionalisations which go back to Antiquity, to about the 4th to the 6th centuries. At that time this part of the Indian Ocean progressively entered a ‘time-world’ characterised by a variable multipolarity. What was often at stake was control of the routes of communication and exchange. Its vastness, via numerous seas lapping numerous bordering lands, qualify it more than any other ocean for the name of cross-roads of civilisation, with the existence also of various fringe civilisations flourishing in many archipelagos and islands. As a contact zone, the Indian Ocean still contains the most significant maritime sea-lanes linking the Middle-East, Africa, Asia, Europe and America. A lot of the crude oil and related products from the Persian Gulf and Indonesian oil wells goes through this ocean.

It is not a homogenous space. Its diversity and heterogeneity is highly visible. It looks like a transnational, transcontinental world in formation, with its inequalities, tensions, potential wars, its cosmopolitanism, its multipolarity, its dynamism and its creativity. It is piece-meal and fragmented, but also traversed by common itineraries; this ocean is marked by the different temporalities found there: nusantarian globalisation, the Muslim economic world, European thalassocracy, pre-European global empires, trade and slavery, and European empires. As a commercial vector among cultures and peoples from the earliest times, it is today undergoing a new “globalisation”. The geopolitical, cultural and economic stakes are doubled in this situation. Tensions are exacerbated by the strong American military presence, civil wars and ethnic cleansing, environmental degradation, demographic growth, pandemic diseases, the struggle to control natural resources (water, forests, oil, gemstones, minerals), and entrenched identities and religious positions. It is important to observe how changes register—those which make new exchange routes visible while submerging others—follow a broad social logic. By looking at modes of affirmation, legitimation and strategic identification, we can analyse their interaction. The renewal of diasporic identities sometimes encouraged by their nation-states of origin, new circuits of exchange and traffic, including the mafia, should be analysed. Reunion is not sheltered from reconfigurations of power or from ways of contesting it.

**Indianoceanness: anchorage and moorings**

We want to suggest an India-oceaness which comprises both anchorages and moorings. We highlight the metaphor of anchorage because it helps us think about

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5 Malayo-Indonesian.
exile and displacement, movement and flux, without forgetting about the territory we have left. We want to work with an identity which is anchored yet travelling (concretely or through the imagination) marking or recognising routes and itineraries where exchanges and meetings happen. The reappropriation of territory liberates the imagination, allows us to take leave without fear or sorrow and to set sail. The island remembers its continents. We see a to-and-fro movement, a hither and thither, between continents and the island, between the island and the world of islands. The presence of the horizon means that one cannot forget what is over there beyond it. The horizon, that which is not yet known, that which arrives, the unpredictable, the unexpected, that is to say history. This geographical line is the metaphor for our political horizon, which is always subject to modification, to new contradictions, new conflicts, new challenges. This horizon which tricks the eye by appearing curved is a good metaphor for our position: the horizon recedes, the curve approaches. Indianoceanness is not just cultural, or rather it recognises the cultural as an element of geopolitics and economics.

Our island, on the Asia-Africa axis, has been a crossing point of different economies and world-cultures. It is a space shaped by the successive territorialisation practices which cross each other, destroy each other, get mixed up and reordered. Indian ocean creolisations are always being reworked, they are never finished. Its dynamics are controlled by negotiation, as things necessarily get lost or relinquished. There is no creolisation without loss, just as it cannot happen without inequality because creolisation demands or requires room to manoeuvre where tensions and conflicts are resolved without being dissolved. Something has to be given up to find space for the other, for the stranger. To share the land, the island. We explore processes of indianoceanic creolisation on an island at the edge of the continents and situated in an oceanic space where civilisations have experienced multiple territorialisations.