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CONTEMPORARY WARS AND COLONIAL EMPIRE  
AT THE *MUSÉE NATIONAL DE LA MARINE*:  
A FADING ARCHIPELAGO?

*Jean-Baptiste Bruneau, Patrick Louvier and Thomas Vaisset*

The *Musée national de la Marine* (French national naval history museum, *MnM*) comes under the responsibility of the French Ministry for Defence<sup>1</sup>, and direction of it has been entrusted, since the Second World War, to a naval officer<sup>2</sup>, seconded by a team of researchers and curators. Although it occupies a mid-table ranking in the list of major national museums (more than 100,000 visitors annually), the *Palais de Chaillot*, which is the Paris headquarters of the *MnM*<sup>3</sup>, attracts a large number of visitors, 80% of them French: 175,000 visitors on average between 2004 and 2008, although this figure conceals considerable annual variations, of around 30 %<sup>4</sup>. Compared with the other museums under the authority of the Defence Department, the *MnM* is far behind the Army Museum (1.26 million visitors in 2008) and the extremely dynamic Air and Space Museum (274,000 visitors in 2008), but is ahead of the museum for the Army's health services (Val-de-Grâce, Paris), the Artillery (Draguignan) and the Colonial Troops (Fréjus) museums. The results of the *MnM* provincial establishments (the so-called "*musées des ports*") are more modest and need to be adapted to the scale of their tourist base<sup>5</sup>.

As in other developed countries, since the 1960s France has seen growing interest and enthusiasm for its maritime heritage, civil and naval. This passion has resulted in the restoration of many warships, merchant and fishing vessels, and the creation or expansion of naval and maritime museums all along the country's coastline (Douarnenez, Audierne, Dunkirk), in the major river estuary ports (Rouen, Bordeaux) and inland ports (Cosne-sur-Loire). This boom has not tolled the knell of the *MnM* which remains, in terms of numbers of visitors, the top maritime museum in France. Furthermore, no other establishment from this family of museums of the sea has comparable editorial, media and advertising means<sup>6</sup>. In its promotional campaigns (1990-2010), the *MnM* puts forward two recurrent arguments also used by the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London: the age and unparalleled wealth of its collections – in other words, its

historical legitimacy – and its appeal to as wide a public as possible – that is, its general or versatile vocation.

The naval museum, or *Musée de Marine*, was founded in Paris on 27 December 1827, receiving the nickname of “*Musée Dauphin*” the following month in honour of its patron, the Duke of Angoulême. The museum inherited extensive collections from private individuals or naval personalities, such as the Naval Inspector General, Henri Louis Duhamel du Monceau (1700–1782) whose models were housed in the Louvre to complete the training of naval construction engineering students<sup>7</sup>.

During the Revolution and the First Empire, this museum changed location several times, with partial transfers and long periods of closure. It nevertheless expanded thanks to purchases, confiscations, transfers and donations. The reconstitution of a Parisian naval museum was initially envisaged during the First Restoration (1814–1815), to be located in the Louvre with the mission of promoting the need for a large war fleet, an idea that educated opinion found difficult to comprehend a decade after the disasters of Trafalgar (1805) and Lissa (1811). The *Musée de Marine* thus participated in the efforts to reboot the Restoration’s navy by showing Parisians “the main objects associated with a major aspect of public force, about which most have only imperfect notions”<sup>8</sup>. Before the Parisian project could get under way after the Battle of Navarino (20 October 1827), the “port museums” were founded in Toulon (1814), Rochefort (1822) and Brest (1826). At the start of Louis-Philippe’s reign (1830–1848), the remaining major navy dockyards in first Cherbourg, then Lorient and other establishments, such as the Direction for naval artillery in Toulon, also set up permanent collections<sup>9</sup>. Under Louis-Philippe, the project for a naval museum was part of a vast undertaking to dispel the past, an undertaking of memorial amnesty and patriotic reconciliation as illustrated by the paintings of sea battles ordered for the naval establishments and historical galleries in the museum at Versailles (“Battle of Ushant” (1778) by Gudin), the publication of expedition travels or the commemoration of the return of the Emperor’s ashes (1840). Throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the collection of model warships built in the naval dockyards, the donation of trophies and military relics, the order and purchase of military paintings and dioramas, all pursued a navalist propaganda initiated under the Restoration. After a period of uncertainty (1900–1944), marked by the evacuation of its ethnological collections, the debates centred on its move and the impact of the war, and the *Musée de la Marine* was reborn.

The propaganda function was relaunched with the museum’s move to the Palais de Chaillot in 1943, which was followed, in 1944, by the organisation of its first temporary exhibition (“*La Marine au combat*”, The Navy in combat). The *Palais de Chaillot* thus had the whip-hand

over the museums developed after the war: Toulon in 1949, Brest in 1954 and Lorient in 1955. The *MnM* was rather discreet before the war, but had now won over a large public: 142,000 visitors (annual average) between 1958 and 1965. The development of seaside tourism and the democratisation of pleasure-boating encouraged the *MnM* to create a national network of museums that is particularly dense in Brittany, Charente and on the Côte d'Azur. To the admittedly commercial motivations was added a corporatist and patriotic ambition that would certainly not have denied Paul Chack and his epigones: "... and we do not tire of showing the interest of our Museums in maritime propaganda and the training of our Youth"<sup>10</sup>.

The 1990s were a time of serious turbulence, with the legitimacy of the museum and its future at Chaillot brought into question. A major flood in 1999 revealed the need for an extensive renovation work. During these difficult years, the complex network constituted in the 1960s and 1970s retracted, with the *MnM* retaining the whip-hand over the *Palais de Chaillot* and the "port museums" in Brest, Lorient and Toulon. This geographical concentration was nevertheless balanced by a strong partnership with several maritime foundations, learned societies and institutions, and around forty national maritime museums<sup>11</sup>. In parallel, the *MnM* undertook a campaign to modernise, the main principles of which were reorganising the permanent exhibitions in Paris, extending the storage space (in the Fort de Romainville, 1998), rehabilitating the large gallery in the *Palais de Chaillot* and reworking the museums in Rochefort, Lorient and Toulon (1998-2011) which the current refitters at the Brest annex would complete<sup>12</sup>.

For now, there are two dominant museum ambitions co-existing. First, the promotion of the ethnological and technological naval heritage<sup>13</sup>, which goes beyond the simple context of maritime societies and worlds to reveal all the traces of a maritime past in national and international culture, through permanent collections and exhibitions: "*Les bateaux jouets*" (toy boats), "*Les marins font la mode*" (sailors and fashion) or "*Le France*". The aesthetic display of maritime and naval works of art – long considered to have been used solely as documentary supports – is the second scientific axis of the *MnM*<sup>14</sup>. The sumptuous room devoted to naval decoration (the "sculpture gallery"), like the maritime (or "marine") paintings gallery, are further evidence of this aesthetic rehabilitation in which, in the 1990s and 2000s, the exhibitions on orientalism and the major contemporary maritime artists played a key role. The programme is thus ambitious and widely approved<sup>15</sup>, but there is nevertheless an absence of the words that historians (as well as novelists, film-makers and poets) generally associate with the Navy and the maritime world: "war", "conflict" and "colonial empire".

One brochure, edited in 2011, clearly shows the stern of the *Réale*, the most famous French galley, but contains almost nothing (just a few words on the construction of the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*) about the missions, fighting or not, of the contemporary Navy or its involvement in past conflicts in Europe and overseas. The brochure talks of a maritime museum (“the oldest maritime museum in the world”) and not a naval museum (that is, military), and even less of a museum concerned about conflicts, past or present. We can thus underline the richness of the collections which “tell of the construction of ships and navigation around the world from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day”<sup>16</sup>. The other official documentary sources move, to the best of their ability, towards an exclusion of whole pages of war history (colonisation, decolonisation) or at least tend to confine the combative dimension of the collections to a distant past. In the 2006 catalogue (*Trésors du Musée national de la Marine* (Treasures of the National Maritime Museum)), there is just one chapter (“*Combats navals*” – Naval engagements) devoted to the armed conflicts of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the French Wars, without giving any visual production from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, whereas the gouaches by Marin-Marie illustrating the Second World War or the military dioramas by Georges Fouillé, still on show until recently in Toulon, were clearly relevant to the contents of the catalogue<sup>17</sup>. The relative silence (world conflicts) or almost total silence (decolonisation) surrounding the Navy as a fighting force is not limited to this single aspect. The social disorders of the revolutionary era, the mutinies that rocked the French squadron in the Black Sea (1919-1920) and the stereotyped representations of the Ponant and Levant sailors remain on the other hand absent from the display cases devoted to the contemporary Navy in Paris and in the Provinces. These themes are also absent from the temporary exhibitions.

Concealing contemporary wars in terms of their anthropological, cultural and political aspects is not a simple tactical procedure to distance the museum from any suspicion of militarism. If we compare the catalogues published forty and fifty years ago with the current rooms, there is no doubt that the *MnM* has retracted the scenographical space devoted to contemporary wars, particularly the First World War. The colonial wars and fight for decolonisation, clearly present in the 1950s and 1960s, can now be glimpsed in fragments. This chapter aims to shed some light on these scenographic metamorphoses, how they came about and their political and sociocultural context, by using the naval archives from the history department at the Defence and printed sources, particularly the press, specialist journals and the catalogues of the *MnM*.

MARS AT THE MUSEUM OF NEPTUNE: THE WORLD WARS  
AT THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM IN PARIS

The “thirty year war”<sup>18</sup> in the 20<sup>th</sup> century subjected the French Navy to violent pitching and rolling movements. It joined the First World War with a fleet that was outpaced by decades of doctrinal errors, and it consumed its forces against the German submarines. The decisive surface battle, for which the French units were eminently prepared, never actually took place. The lack of interest shown by the country as a whole found its echo in the officers, as seen in this disenchanted remark by Lieutenant Louis Guichard, “Is it our fault that the enemy never showed up?”<sup>19</sup>. What, indeed, did the 11,500 sailors killed between 1914 and 1918 – barely 0.8% of all French losses – represent in the eyes of their contemporaries? After coming out of the war seriously weakened, the French Navy then went through one of the most serious moral crises in its history, and the unprecedented waves of resignations and the Black Sea mutinies each show this in their own way. The inter-war period was nevertheless destined to correspond to a time of unexpected renewal. The reconstruction and modernisation of the fleet were such that it became standard practice to speak of the “wonderful Navy” in 1939<sup>20</sup>. Between July 1940 and December 1942, a large majority of the naval officers served Maréchal Pétain’s government and foreign policy, while the small minority that joined General de Gaulle’s “*Forces navales françaises libres*” (free French naval forces, FNFL) went on fighting the Axis forces. In November 1942, the victorious anglo-saxon landing in North Africa, despite a brief and intense struggle, along with the scuttling of the *Forces de Haute Mer* (high seas forces) following the invasion of southern France by the Germans, definitively brought an end to the “wonderful Navy” of 1939. After that, the fleet was reduced to its most insignificant role in its history, whilst all its overseas bases were handed over for the use of the Allies, and those in France itself were used by the *Kriegsmarine*.

The history of the French Navy between 1914 and 1945 is complex, as its historiography shows, given that whilst today it is relatively well indicated for the Second World War, it still remains partial and dated for the First<sup>21</sup>. Its museum representations, which are important vectors for its memory, remain poorly known, particularly those proposed by the *MnM* in Paris, the “flagship” of the network of French Naval museums. However, the number of display cases – half of one for the first world conflict, *versus* two, with a unique scenography, for the second, alone deserves that they be questioned.

In this chapter we propose a first interpretation of the museographical transposition of the world wars through the prism of the fundamental question raised by Jean-Yves Boursier, that is, the

question of what is memorable in a museum<sup>22</sup>. The sources available, the Museum's contemporary scenography<sup>23</sup>, the catalogues for the permanent exhibition<sup>24</sup> which make it possible to retrace the finer points and the archives conserved at the Defence historical department, invite us to try and respond in three stages. First, by studying the modalities for introducing world conflicts into the collections, to understand the motivations of the institution to museify them so quickly. Next, the evolution in the objects on display, which modifies the image of war proposed to visitors. And, finally, what the display cases present as a means of understanding how Neptune sees his relationship with Mars.

Despite a different context, the museification of the two world wars comes from similar motivations, that is, to show everyone that the French Navy fought hard, and fought well.

By the decree of 28 April 1919, the Naval Museum, which then became known as the Museum of the French Navy, was attached to *rue Royale* and placed under the aegis of the Naval history department (*Service historique de la Marine*, SHM). The decision to place it under the responsibility of the SHM was logical, as the missions of the department consist in collecting the archives of the Navy, learning from its actions and making it popular<sup>25</sup>. After 1920, the Secretary of State reflected on creating a permanent collection devoted to the Great War. He sent a classified list of objects to be collected. *Rue Royale* first of all wanted "trophies" taken from the enemy, souvenirs of French ships lost in battle, elements concerning the marines ("*fusiliers marins*"), documents concerning the submarine war (anti-submarine warfare ships, models or drawings of camouflaged units, examples of materials used and reproductions or photographs concerning French Naval aviation). Finally, it requested paintings or photographs evoking the "officers or sailors who were distinguished for their heroic conduct"<sup>26</sup>. Requested by the institution that thus promotes the elements of its choice, with the objects brought together having a considerable memorial vocation. They were destined to attest that the Navy had fought gloriously during the conflict. Between the lines, they responded to the accusations of inaction which, like the "*rumeur infâme*"<sup>27</sup>, weighed on the French Navy. After the war again, Vice-Admiral Bienaimé, in a work with a programmatic title (*La guerre navale 1914-1915, fautes et responsabilités*), denounced:

"the offensive action of the Navy [which] was completed in oblivion. It remained, till the end, in the same passive attitude that it continued to use without profit, without glory, but not without risk"<sup>28</sup>.

The lack of space at the Louvre did not make it possible to display the exhibits in 1920. After consultations, the Secretary of State for War agreed to house them in an annex of the Naval Museum at the Invalides, within the Army Museum, to present naval war. The room

was christened “Sénès”, to honour the memory of the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> light squadron of the Navy who died on 27 April 1915 when the *Léon Gambetta* was torpedoed. By invoking the memory of an officer who died in combat, the museum thus respected the ministerial desire to commemorate the navy in its fighting capacity. The name chosen evokes both the units destroyed during the war, particularly the submarine war, and the officers who distinguished themselves. The memory of Rear-Admiral Sénès was magnified further just a short time after, by Paul Chack. In his romanticised account of the torpedoing of the *Léon Gambetta*, the director of the SHM – and thus of the Museum – brought almost to a paroxysm the exaltation of a form of ethics based on the chivalresque code of honour traditionally accorded to naval officers. In this account, Sénès became an almost Christ-like figure. He accepted the inevitability of his death, consubstantial with that of his vocation as an officer. According to Chack, Sénès did not hesitate to sacrifice himself with his officers, shouting to his crew from the upper-deck of the *Léon Gambetta*, “In order, my children [...], no pushing. There are lifeboats for everyone. We shall remain on board...”<sup>29</sup>. At the inauguration of the room in the Invalides by the President of the Republic, the press also celebrated the memory of the gallant admiral. Thus, one of the models focused on in the description of the collections is that of the former German destroyer *S 113*, transferred to the Navy after the war and rechristened *Amiral Sénès*<sup>30</sup>. This installation at the Invalides perfectly suited the Navy, which thus benefited from the reputation of the Army Museum and its visitors, especially as the objects on display – war trophies or relics in memory of naval losses – were in perfect harmony with the nature of the commemorations practiced in the Invalides<sup>31</sup>. When it came under threat, *rue Royale* tried to preserve the visibility of its annex. A note from the assistant curator of the *Musée de la Marine*, Georges Clerc-Rampal, clearly indicates that this room was designed to “remind the public of the role played by the French Navy in the Great War. This work of public education is essential and can only be fulfilled at the Invalides [underlined in the original document]”<sup>32</sup>.

Unlike the First World War, the Second did not even wait until the Germans had capitulated to appear in the museum because even as early as December 1943, the Naval chief-of-staff for the *Comité Français de la Libération Nationale* put together an exhibition in Algiers to show how the French took part in the naval operations. Focusing on models of warships in the reference scale used by the museum, its organisers spontaneously reproduced the Parisian canons<sup>33</sup>. After the Liberation, the material conditions for installing the collections, as well as the legal status of the museum, evolved considerably. The role of governance played by the SHM came to an end with the decree



of 2 August 1947. As a result of this decision, the Secretary of State placed the museum under its own direct authority<sup>34</sup>. In practice, this meant that it thus enjoyed very considerable autonomy as the department only paid it very occasional attention. In addition, it moved to the Passy wing in the new *Palais de Chaillot* because of the lack of space at the Louvre, and the inauguration was held in August 1943<sup>35</sup>.

After the tragic years which, with the exception of the FNFL minority, saw the Navy fight alongside the forces of the Axis to regularly combat first the British–Gaullists, then the Americans, after the years of the “blue tide”, which suggested that the Navy was more interested in matters of home politics than in the struggle, the Secretary of State wanted to turn the page and state clearly to the country that the French Navy was an efficient fighting force. To do so, Louis Jacquinot imposed the organisation of an exhibition celebrating the Navy in combat<sup>36</sup>. At the entrance of the Palais de Chaillot, a quote by the Secretary of State on the very first panel shows the intention, “The Navy fights, and fights well”<sup>37</sup>. Examination of the exhibition as a whole reveals that this navy that fights, after the Norway expedition and the evacuation of Dunkirk, was exclusively that of the FNFL. All the events of rather ambiguous memory, such as Mers el-Kébir and Dakar, or even the existence of a navy under Vichy, are carefully set aside, except when it is a question of fusion, which is then presented as a restoration of the unity of the institution. In the construction of the image of a fighting navy, a non-negligible place is given to the sailors in the home Resistance. A panel is dedicated to them and a photograph of Lieutenant d’Estiennes d’Orves is highlighted. Thus, like the collections relating to the First World War, the museum depends, for the Second, on the Secretary of State’s wishes in its choice of elements to exhibit.

However, the early entry of the two world wars did not fix the museography in any definitive manner, to the extent that the memory of the wars had not yet been crystallised. Its evolution reveals this successive amnesia or hypermnesia, resulting in certain elements being highlighted one day, and then thrown into oblivion the next.

#### *Depersonalisation and Europeanisation of the Great War*

The transformations in the collections concerning the First World War can only be fully understood after 1945, via the various catalogues from the permanent exhibition. Studying them reveals great loyalty to the orientations defined in 1920, with two key exceptions. The first is the depersonalisation of the war, a phenomenon that is well-known in the history of the conflict<sup>38</sup>. This is particularly true in light of the fact that the original process was carried out in the name of the “great men” such as Admirals, considered as the “winners” of the war<sup>39</sup> or the commanding officers seen as martyrs after their deaths in battle. In 1950, the permanent

exhibition praised six of them. Three had died in the course of the war: Rear-Admiral Sénès<sup>40</sup>, Lieutenant Morillot<sup>41</sup>, who died in the submarine he commanded, *Monge*, and Captain Rageot de la Touche<sup>42</sup>, commander of the battleship *Bouvet* when it hit a mine in the Dardanelles on 18 March 1915. The other three officers honoured as the “great leaders” of the Navy: Rear-Admiral Ronarc’h<sup>43</sup>, who distinguished himself at first Diksmuide then in the “Zone des Armées du Nord” (Z.A.N.), Rear-Admiral Lacaze<sup>44</sup>, Secretary of State for the Navy from 29 October 1915 to 10 August 1917 and one of the main instigators of anti-submarine warfare, and, finally, Rear-Admiral Guépratte<sup>45</sup> who led the French squadron in the Dardanelles offensive. The second inflexion concerns this very same combined operation. Today, there is nothing to remind us that in 1950, in addition to the portraits of Guépratte and Rageot de la Touche, there were five other pieces that featured them<sup>46</sup>. Only a small wooden plaque which provides some additional explanation mentions them. The human losses are presented and the text explains the consequences of this “poorly prepared campaign”. This sudden amnesia is one of the keys to the evolution in memory of an operation which, from an example of exceptional bravery (the British nicknamed Guépratte “fire-eater”), has become a sort of naval “*Chemin des Dames*” in terms of its human losses. The consequences of the disappearance of the Dardanelles from the display cases is that it offers a Europe-centred vision of the naval war, at the expense of the battlegrounds in the Pacific and Indian Oceans which, whilst certainly secondary for the French Navy, were non negligible for all that.

The current museography of the objects relating to the contemporary war navy dates from 1998–2000 and the lay-out of the themed area (“From Glory to Charles de Gaulle”). On the eve of the centenary of the First World War, the permanent collections at the *Musée national de la Marine* in Paris are still steeped in the vision that dominated when they were put together. Two scale models, the submarine *Monge* and the battleship *Danton*, remind us of the ships lost during the war. The former was sunk on 29 December 1915 after having been accosted by the Austrian cruiser *Helgoland*, the latter was torpedoed on 19 March 1917 by the *U-64*. Two paintings, *Le convoi* by Paul Morchain and *Le Lutétia, bateau camouflé en rade de Toulon* by Pierre Gatier, as well as a poster by the Maritime and Colonial League<sup>47</sup>, evoke, through the prism of camouflage, the anti-submarine war. This war is also evoked thanks to a commemorative plaque with the Croix de Guerre for the trawler *Capucine* whose card specifies that, on 29 September 1918, it tracked and grenaded an enemy submarine. In 2011, three of the eleven objects in the case were devoted to the marines, the memory of whom was placed in third place in the list in 1920. More specifically, they evoke the Brigade of marines

commanded by Rear-Admiral Ronarc'h who, from 16 October to 10 November 1914, was engaged in Diksmuide. They maintain the myth surrounding this battle. The bronze by Géo Maxim, the diorama of the Admirals Lacaze and Ronarc'h and the standard bearer, as well as the painting by Charles Fouqueray *Fusiliers marins au front des Flandres, 1914* are, moreover, characteristic of the dated vision that the institution has of the battle. In the *Palais de Chaillot*, only the action of the 6,000 men in the Brigade fighting 50,000 Germans is highlighted, ignoring the presence of the Belgian and Senegalese troops. Finally, the diorama fits in perfectly with the lyrical flights of fancy of Pierre Loti on the flag of the "girls with a red pompom"<sup>48</sup>.

*FNFL or Vichy: which Second World War navy should be museified<sup>49</sup>?*

Before settling definitively on the final museography for the Second World War, two radically opposite directions were taken in less than ten years. Until the temporary closure of the Palais de Chaillot, imposed by the reception of the General Assembly of the UN in 1949, the FNFL were in the spotlight in the *Musée de la Marine*. After this date, as the country entered its mourning period for the "Vichy syndrome"<sup>50</sup>, it was the navy under Vichy that dominated the collections. In 1952, the Department's official artists were invited to participate in the renewal of the collections. The subjects that the Secretary of State suggested were taken from the episodes that *rue Royale* wanted to highlight<sup>51</sup>. Unsurprisingly, the unity of the institution, despite all the crisis periods traversed, was the focus. Two periods were thus over-represented: 1939-1940 and 1944-1945. On the contrary, the years 1941-1943 are almost wholly ignored.

Today, although the opposition between French sailors is never explicitly mentioned, the war from 1939 to 1945 is the only one that has two display cases facing each other, including one simply titled "1939-1945" devoted to the navy under Vichy, a fact that can only be identified by the allusions made on the information cards. These cards nevertheless contain many technical explanations. On the other hand, it is easy to recognise the case devoted to the FNFL because it is decorated with the only painting in the museum's possession by the official artist of the Free French Naval Forces, Léopold Pascal (1900-1958)<sup>52</sup>. Furthermore, it is filled with a large number of scale models of foreign units, five Allied landing craft and a *U-boat*, which are mixed in with those of the FNFL.

Through a succession of inherited, donated or purchased objects, the *MnM* has many pieces dedicated to the World Wars, but the permanent exhibition only presents a tiny number to the public. The choices made thus provide a certain vision of the war.

Because of a memorial consensus that is characteristic of the aftermath of the First World War, the rapid introduction of elements

relating to the conflict did not give cause for debate. The only quarrel focused on the vocation of the museum, given its prestigious past, to exhibit contemporary articles. Shortly after his attachment to the Navy, the Secretary of State expressed his desire to see the collections rapidly enhanced with models of units created after the naval programmes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The curator gave a different opinion and, on the contrary, recommended enhancing the collections with older acquisitions that it might be possible to find in the arsenals<sup>53</sup>. However, as can be seen in the digital catalogue edited in 1939, the Secretary of State's wishes were what won the day<sup>54</sup>. In 1927, the presence of modern objects in the collections was the subject of a controversy in the press between the museum's assistant curator, Georges Clerc-Rampal and Jean Norel, the maritime chronicle writer for the *Mercur de France*. The former passionately defended the legitimacy of contemporary naval architecture at the museum, whilst the latter saw only "modern bric-à-brac of no interest whatsoever"<sup>55</sup>.

For the Second World War, the question did not lie in knowing whether or not the museum should acquire contemporary souvenirs, but rather which Navy should be in the museum. Poisoned by the after-effects of the internal dissension provoked by the war, Vichy is a "past that never passes" for the Navy<sup>56</sup>. The Vichy orientation imposed by the direction of the museum in the 1950s provoked the reaction of the Free French veterans who appealed to the authorities. Although the Secretary of State for the Navy admitted that the collections devoted to the FNFL era were insufficient, he nevertheless judged the scenography to be anodine<sup>57</sup>. This was not, however, the opinion of Jules Moch, the Secretary of State for National Defence. As a former engineer in the naval artillery, who signed up voluntarily in the navy in 1939, he deplored the fact that:

"on military premises it is possible to evoke the tragic periods of history in which Frenchmen fought Frenchmen or their Allies. Any presentation of this type also has the serious disadvantage of risking the revival of internal divisions, which should be consigned to the past".

As a result, he imposed the removal of all paintings or objects evoking these matters<sup>58</sup>. However, the ministerial decision did not reach the top of the Chaillot chain. The following year, Jules Moch's successor, René Plevin, a Free Frenchman from the outset, considered, with severity:

"that there is a characteristic error by the Museum's Curator to choose [...] to feature in the museums works illustrating events that are too recent to not revive old wounds"<sup>59</sup>.

*Which representation of the war?*

The models, which were (and still are) at the heart of the collections, show ships out of any naval context. With the exception of the grey colour of their superstructures and their conning towers, which are characteristic of combat units, there is nothing that allows visitors to see them in a context of war. Similarly, the information cards are, for the most part, limited to technical details about the ships. The articles relating to contemporary naval architecture, like the plaque for the flower-class corvette *Aconit*, do not make any reference to the activities of the units<sup>60</sup>. However, for this last, it would have been possible to remind visitors that this FNFL ship succeeded in sinking two German submarines on 11 March 1943 and, for this remarkable feat of arms, is one of the three Navy units to enjoy the title of “Companion of Liberty”. Finally, the scale models of weapons do not provide any indication of their effects, even though they were devastating. The 1927 model 138 mm canon, or the 1927 model four-barrel turreted canon, whose actual size made the scale model obligatory, do not allow visitors to imagine their power. In Paris, the Museum lacks parts for the 380 mm from the HMS *Ramillies* and the HMS *Roberts* which welcome visitors outside the Imperial War Museum in London, where it is also possible to visit the ship-museum HMS *Belfast*, a cruiser in the Town category, and which distinguished itself in the North Atlantic and the Arctic during the Second World War. From this point of view, it is almost regrettable that the only two large calibre objects from the battleship *Richelieu* in France are in the arsenal in Brest, under the *Pont de Recouvrance*, and at the *École navale*. The 1949 model 380 mm shell<sup>61</sup> that does exhibit the *Musée national de la Marine* does not, on its own, give any real idea of the fire power of the naval artillery. The dioramas, despite being the privileged means for reconstituting a scene, could have provided an opportunity to “show” the war, but neither the one on Admirals Lacaze and Ronarc’h and the marine standard bearer in 1915, nor that on equipping the destroyer, are used to represent combat.

The iconographic programme does not really take advantage of battle art either, even though this is an art form that has prospered in France. There are four paintings with anti-submarine warfare as their subject<sup>62</sup>. Of them, one shows a squadron in Brest bay<sup>63</sup> and another a scene from a land battle<sup>64</sup>. Only this latter one shows the paroxystic phase of combat. We see an attack on a German trench by the marines under Admiral Ronarc’h, and death is well represented: several German soldiers are shown dead or dying, and one of them has been transperced by a French marine’s bayonet. This is the only representation of death – meted out or suffered – by sailors in the course of the two World Wars. This unicity is memorable, particularly because the scene takes place in the familiar landscape of land war. Is it simply not possible to represent death at sea? Certainly, this is linked to its specificities – which historiography has

barely examined, in fact, unlike death in the trenches<sup>65</sup>. It is brutal, unexpected and instant. It often occurs in the close confines of the bowels of a sinking ship. On the other hand, scenes evoking submarine warfare are characteristic of the reality of this war – the monotony of the escort and the omnipresence of an invisible danger. However, this “silence of the painters”<sup>66</sup> is also found in the art for land wars, as most of the works represent scenes of daily life at the front<sup>67</sup>. At the *MmM*, this silence is all the more deafening because the marine warfare in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries shows dismayed ships under fire from naval artillery, or sailors agonising on the bridges of their ships.

The impression that we are left with from these display cases is that what we see is more the instruments of war than the war itself. This impression, which is further enhanced by the fact that the First World War, handicapped in terms of the space it is given, shares its display case with the inter-war years. In this case, the technical bias is total – and admitted by the curator in the 1960s; he took great pleasure in underlining the modernity of the fleet in 1939. For him, these models are “models of the most representative units in this magnificent fleet”<sup>68</sup>. This desire to celebrate French engineering in fact harks back to Darlan’s traditional, but mythified, formula of the “Beautiful Navy”. It plays a part in turning the pre-war fleet into a new golden age for the Navy. As the Admiral of the Fleet could not be honoured openly for being behind this, it was the figurehead of Colbert in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic, Georges Leygues, who was commemorated, by means of the display of a bronze bust of him<sup>69</sup>. This desire to highlight the tools, at the expense of the realities of war, is such that there is a celebration of the aircraft carrier *Béarn*<sup>70</sup>, despite the fact that the ship, which was launched in 1920, did not have any of the qualities it needed to fulfil its mission. This trend has increased today. For visitors using the audioguide, the *Béarn* is effectively the only unit in its display case that is given a commentary.

#### THE REMAINS OF THE FRENCH COLONIAL EMPIRE AND DECOLONISATION AT THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

The State’s navy under the *Ancien Regime*, the Revolution and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries took part, often from afar but sometimes from very close at hand, in colonisation, and conducted operations of reprisal and interference on the outskirts of the Western world such as South America and the Near East. Amphibious operations, river raids, blockades, naval bombardments, all punctuated the conquest of North Africa, West Africa, Indochina and island possessions in the Caribbean and Polynesia. How, in addition, is it possible to forget the role played by the defence and utility of the Empire in certain navalist circles in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when certain conquests, such as Indochina, were criticised by eminent

strategists for being useless or too exposed to regional adversaries such as first Japan, then China? When the wave of independences started to transform the imperial order in the aftermath of the Second World War, the navy was involved in all aspects of decolonisation. It took part in land and river operations in Vietnam, and launched aeronaval and naval attacks all along the coasts of Cochin China, Annam and Tonkin, as well as several hundred kilometres of the sea, as far as the border with Laos and thus taking part in the battle of Dien Bien Phu<sup>71</sup>. After 1954, and for eight years, the naval forces (air, sea, heliported and land) also played a part in surveillance of the Algerian coast, participating in the border battles and found themselves confronted with the exodus of the “*pieds noirs*” and Harkis in 1962, that followed the abandonment of the bases in Mers el-Kébir and Bizerte<sup>72</sup>. Less well-known is the non-negligible role the naval forces played in post-colonial crises – both humanitarian and otherwise.

Behind the famous collections of scale models, “sailors” and figureheads that are the pride and joy of the *Palais de Chaillot* and the Navy’s “port museums”, could we not find the museum remains of a history whose main paths are colonial conquests, the defence of the Empire and French overseas interests? This theory seems even more realistic in light of the fact that the aesthetic experiences of colonial or non-colonial overseas territories are frequently focused on by the *MnM*, such as the recent exhibition, “Georges Rohner and Guadeloupe” in 2011–2012. There was also the exhibition organised in Toulon in 2003, “Luminous Algeria, as seen by maritime artists (1830–1960)”, and, ten years earlier, the retrospective at the *Palais de Chaillot* devoted to Roger Chapelet (1903–1995), a painter closely involved in major naval (1940–1945) and colonial (colonial exhibition in 1931, Indochinese missions, 1946) operations, before working, at the time of the French Union, for the major maritime companies<sup>73</sup>. That there should be remains, or even whole scenographic elements of colonial history, in either Paris or a provincial museum, is even more likely given that foreign maritime and naval museums have either maintained a heroic representation of the country’s naval-colonial past (Madrid, Lisbon) or reconsidered this history in the light of what researchers have found in recent years regarding the slave trade, piracy, transatlantic trade and the naval peace keeping operations and anti-slave patrols (Amsterdam, Greenwich, Portsmouth)<sup>74</sup>. Despite a wide range of “encouraging” hypotheses, none of which has been confirmed by our visits in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Today, the *Musée national de la Marine* does not provide any distinct scenography for the former colonial possessions and presents only fragmented remains of colonisation and decolonisation, with no coherent discourse connecting these traces – despite them being relatively large in number<sup>75</sup>. If we take up and continue the analysis made by the Australian historian, Robert Aldrich, on this disturbing

museum amnesia, our analysis will try to understand the sometimes very old political and scientific choices that have led to the concealment of the colonial and imperial undertakings of the French navy.

*Considerable documentary resources in Paris and the Provinces, but no coherent discourse*

In *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France*, published in 2005, the historian Robert Aldrich proposes following colonial and anti-colonial discourse and clichés, embracing all the traces found in the monuments and museums for the Empire in contemporary France. As close ties have bound the Navy to French overseas territories since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the collections in the Palais de Chaillot logically fall into this realm. Robert Aldrich's analysis, which is highly descriptive, is nevertheless limited to two paragraphs – just 29 lines – because the traces of ethnological or colonial overseas activity at the *MnM* seemed so modest to him<sup>76</sup>. This specialist in the field of the French colonial empire indicates the commemoration of the great explorers of the Enlightenment and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the room devoted to explorers (“Scientific voyages”) and notes the presence of a large diorama on the removal of the obelisk from Luxor which, without being a direct colonial memento, can illustrate French interference in this almost sovereign Ottoman province just as well as the Egyptomania of the First and Second Empires. In this “maritime museum”, Aldrich also notices “other souvenirs of French undertakings, such as paintings of the capture of Algiers and Saigon”<sup>77</sup>. The origin of the almost total silence surrounding the Navy's colonial operations may be explained by the limitations of the exhibition sites, which was the argument used to hasten the evacuation of the ethnological collections at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>78</sup>. This analysis, which is very short if we consider the lengthy descriptions of the museums of the Colonial Troops (Fréjus) and the Foreign Legion (Aubagne), is largely confirmed by a more detailed visit. In the galleries of paintings, the coasts of France and Europe, merchant vessels, fishing fleets and European ocean liners, along with the French, British and Italian navies, make up the bulk of the permanent exhibition. The considerably less numerous “seascapes” of colonial inspiration barely show anything of the coasts of Indochina, the Caribbean, Africa or Madagascar<sup>79</sup>. Although North Africa, and particularly Algeria, is better represented, the paintings evoking the military aspects of colonisation are rare, whereas the 1830 Algiers expedition, along with the confrontations on the French-Moroccan coast (1844, 1851) and the conquest of Tunisia (1881-1882) provided subject matter for many paintings, drawings and engravings<sup>80</sup>. Among the naval and colonial “seascapes” on show today at the *Palais de Chaillot*, it is impossible to ignore the famous work by Théodore Gudin (1802-1880), “*Coup de vent du 16 juin 1830 à Sidi-el-Ferruch*” (1831), where the



association of an Arab chief, a muslim shrine and a large agave form the orientalist foreground of a painting mainly inspired by the unleashing of a tempest (seen from inland) and the shafts of light over the bay. Naval and military colonisation also remains in the background of other Algerian “seascapes” on show. Although the “*Vue du port et de la ville d’Alger*” by Barthélémy Lavergne (1805–1871) indeed puts the French naval and military forces in the foreground of his painting, his “*Vue du fort de Mers-el-Kébir*”, presented at the Salon in 1848, is above all a “seascape” of Romantic inspiration, with just the tiny French flag in the centre of the composition reminding us of the recent conquest of the former Spanish settlement. The same angle is the inspiration behind “*Coup de vent en rade d’Alger (1835)*” by Théodore Gudin or his “*Combat d’un vaisseau français contre deux galères barbaresques*”, painted during the Second Empire and today on show at the museum in Toulon<sup>81</sup>. If we now leave the galleries of paintings, the scenographic silence on the subject of colonisation and decolonisation remains. The scale models of ships, equipment and canons, which form the historical nucleus of the permanent collections, essentially show European vessels. Although the first French colonial empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is evoked through a few pieces and relics, few objects remind us, either explicitly or directly, of the existence of the second colonial empire (1815–1962)<sup>82</sup>. French naval and amphibious undertakings in Indochina, Madagascar, and the Pacific, as well as armed interventions in China and South America, are totally absent from the museum’s rooms. With regard to decolonisation, there is the same scenographic silence, punctuated by a few indications linked to the fact that it is impossible to eliminate French imperial history from its naval and maritime history. In the room devoted to the merchant navy and ocean liners, we thus think of a poster promoting the *Messageries Maritimes*, in the true colonial spirit of the 1930s. The technical panel accompanying the models by the *Société d’Armement et de Navigation* Charles Schiaffino reminds us that this company, engaged in French–Algerian commercial relations, enjoyed its first golden age during the interwar years, then a second boom period in the 1950s before reconverting its activities and lines following Algeria’s independence and ultimately abandoning its historic destination in 1990. Behind the very serious analysis of the events, one can understand the tribulations of an unfortunate, if not failed, post-colonial relationship<sup>83</sup>. This interpretation is nevertheless difficult to make without maps or contextualisation, and it requires solid knowledge of the events to give meaning to an information card.

Whilst we share Robert Aldrich’s overall analysis, we do not agree with him on several points. His sometimes rather allusive analysis, based on limited knowledge of the history of this museum<sup>84</sup>, does not take into consideration the provincial collections of the *MnM*. In addition, nothing is said about the museums associated with the *MnM*

or close to it, such as the tradition room at the *École Navale*<sup>85</sup>. The explanation for the colonial silence at the *MnM* based on the lack of space and volume thus seems a little dubious. First, let us consider the provincial establishments of the *MnM* and the museums sponsored by the naval authorities, whose collections could provide a complete exhibition on the empire and colonisation<sup>86</sup>.

The naval museum in Lorient, which is situated near the *musée de la Compagnie des Indes*, illustrates not only the commercial aspects of proto-globalisation and mercantilistic imperialism, but also has pieces showing the close (and highly mythified) links between the navy and Indochina. This also makes us think of the painting by Jean-Louis Paguenaud (1876–1952), “Transport type *Manche* en baie d’Along” (1931), which the naval museum in Lorient exhibits near other pieces collected and made in South-East Asia and in France. Dominating the case containing models of junks, there is the extraordinary “elephant” décor in sculpted polychrome wood which surrounds the name of the transporter *Armorique*<sup>87</sup>, similar to other naval décors in the syncretic style, like the figurehead of HMS *Seringapatam*, on view at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. In one of the rooms at the naval museum in Brest, there is a very detailed account of the history of the *Consulaire*, the largest exhibit from the Algerian coast which was built in 1833 in front of the *Majorité Générale* at the port of Brest and topped with a triumphant cockerel, a model of which in coloured wood can be seen at the museum<sup>88</sup>. At odds, chronologically, with colonial history, the same museum displays a junk used by the boat people and brought back by the Navy after one of its humanitarian missions. Less rich, the museum in Rochefort contains enough elements to illustrate European overseas expansion and the first wave of globalisation: the model of the *Great Republic*, a Boston *tea clipper* chartered by France during the Crimean war, sold back to the merchant navy and lost at sea in 1872 and a red wax figurehead from 1820–1830 showing a Native American chief. Before the 2010–2011 renovation, the museum in Toulon had an alcove devoted to Indochina, with a few very “evocative” elements regarding the Empire. Following the dispersion in 1964 of the collections from the Franchet d’Esperay Algiers military museum<sup>89</sup>, Toulon received a large painting from the Second Empire, “*L’arrivée du maréchal Redon à Alger en 1857*”, the figures and composition of which corresponded to the principles of Napoleon III’s Arab policy: the prosperity of the imperial order and equity with regard to the Muslims. Through these elements, to which can be added Gudin’s “*Le combat d’un vaisseau français contre deux galères barbaresques*”, it would be possible to form the core of a section devoted to the links between France, Provence, the navy dockyard in Toulon and North Africa. On naval bases and military institutions – which are thus difficult to visit<sup>90</sup>, several modest-sized establishments have documentary resources on

colonisation and decolonisation. The conservatory of the *Commissariat de la Marine* thus welcomes its visitors with an impressive relief-model of the Mers el-Kébir base in the 1950s and 1960s, which the Navy at the time envisaged fortifying against nuclear attacks. The site of the *Amicale du Musée de l'Aéronautique Navale* indicates amongst the airplanes on show aircraft that participated in the Algerian War, such as the P2V-7 "Neptune". At the *École Navale* one can also see several exhibits linked to the Empire, such as the model of the *Sphinx*, one of the few steamships engaged in the Algiers expedition in 1830<sup>91</sup>. Other relics on display also evoke the decolonisation of North Africa.

However, and whilst there is no lack of material for an area devoted to this aspect, the colonial and imperial history of the Navy is omitted or disjointed almost everywhere. In the provinces as in the *Palais de Chaillot*, there is no indication of any distinct scenography; the artefacts and accompanying objects (the models, for example) are too separate to retain any thematic line, with a few exceptions<sup>92</sup>. For somewhat different reasons, the naval museums that are linked or sponsored by the Navy ignore its colonial undertakings. The tradition museum at the *École Navale* focuses on the daily lives and training of the naval cadets (the "bordaches") and relegates to the background the geopolitical circumstances that impacted the missions of the naval forces. The conquests of Indochina and Algeria, along with the war-ridden decolonisation of these same territories, is summarised in relics which, in this context, indicate more heroism than imperialism<sup>93</sup>. It is true that in the crypt there is a list of all the "bordaches" killed in Indochina and North Africa, but it is a memorial, designed by the former naval cadets and destined, by vocation, for a reduced public. In summary, the display of the links (real or mythified) between the navy and the colonial empire are reduced to two museums with a modest visitor pool, and which alone bear the pedagogical and memorial vocations of the overseas combat history of the fourth navy in the world. While the *Musée des Troupes de Marine* in Fréjus sheds some light on river warfare in Indochina, the *Musée des fusiliers marins* in Lorient provides, for the wars in Indochina and Algeria, a wealth of photographic documents and relics in a very conservative scenography that differs considerably from the current museum canons<sup>94</sup>.

Robert Aldrich suggests (without really believing, in our opinion) that the small size of the galleries at Chaillot is the explanation for the silence surrounding colonial imperialism. This hypothesis is barely convincing when we consider the height of certain walls in this museum and the emptiness of certain areas, such as the area situated between the discovery room, which is the end of the visit of the museum, and the room devoted to naval construction in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. There is also the large room with the Emperor's lifeboat, officially devoted to the transition from sailing ships to steam ships<sup>95</sup>,

where the paintings illustrating colonial river and maritime operations in the Second Empire and the III<sup>rd</sup> Republic could, quite appropriately, replace paintings as irrelevant (in our opinion) as the reconstitution by Eugène Isabey of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch fleet. How can we believe that the lack of space in the contemporary navy gallery (1860–2011) is the explanation for the silence regarding the navy's colonial (and post-colonial) missions when a diorama by Georges Fouillé or the reproduction of drawings by Sahib, alias Louis-Ernest Lesage (1847–1919), illustrating amphibious colonial operations, would take up barely any more space than the fascinating models of Russian circular battleships (Popovkas), completely off the subject in a room devoted to the French Navy<sup>96</sup>? The explanation based on spatial requirements, which may certainly be true in the museums in Lorient and Brest, whose exhibition areas are indeed limited and fragmented, comes adrift in Toulon, which has a permanent exhibition area of respectable size, on two levels. The renovation of this museum in the early 1980s, thus left enough elements to illustrate naval overseas campaigns (Indochina, Morocco), the remains of which, like others (First World War) have been swept aside with the new scenographies (“*Honneurs et cérémonies au port de Toulon*”)<sup>97</sup>. Here, as in Paris, the information cards accompanying the “colonial” seascapes often ordered by the State, give no information concerning their ideological aspect. The card for the “*Combat d’un vaisseau français contre deux galères barbaresques*” by Théodore Gudin (1858), an improbably Romantic “seascape” could thus, taking as its inspiration the works of Daniel Panzac and other specialists in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Arab seascapes, mention the Western fear of attack from Barbary rovers, a fear that dissipated after 1815, but the memory of which played a part in justifying the expedition in 1850 and subsequent colonisation. How thus can we explain the omission of the strong, old links between the Navy, port cities and arsenals, and the informal, colonial empire, to use a well-known, if not actually in use, distinction? The fear of controversy and attacks by the media obviously come to mind, particularly given that the *MnM* has adopted in the last couple of decades a policy of openness to the general public. This explanation is not to be totally pushed to one side, but we will not pursue the theory of a strategy of camouflage and evasiveness.

However comfortable this theory may be, it is effectively based on no sources whatsoever. It also suffers from a few (rare) counter-examples, such as the scenography of the room on the *Consulaire* (Brest). Although the newly opened room to celebrate the centenary of aeronautics does not give any particular visibility to the overseas warfare operations of the fleet air arm, looking at the cinematographic archives and comments superimposed by the researchers from the *Service historique de la Défense* highlights the struggles for decolonisation. This clue, the popularity of the “new battle history”, the probable

renovation of the contemporary naval gallery may thus prefigure the future rediscovery of imperial naval undertakings. The theory of voluntary amnesia, used to turn the Navy away from colonialist disapproval, is finally convincing only if it had been preceded (before 1960–1970, say) by the explicit and heroising exhibition of its links with the Empire, on the model of Spanish naval museums, or through permanent collections or temporary exhibitions. Yet the catalogues from the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries do not confirm the image of a great naval and colonial museum before the 1970s. The colonial empires of the *Ancien Régime* and the contemporary period certainly find a commemorative framework at the *MnM* in 1945–1965. The *Salon de la Marine*, held in June–July 1945, when the French presence had just been inversed, devoted a retrospective to the role of the Navy in establishing the French presence in the Far East<sup>98</sup>. An exhibition at the Palais de Chaillot in 1962 celebrated the French presence in Canada using a tone of voice that was reminiscent of the right-wing novelist Jean de la Varende<sup>99</sup>. The catalogues for the 1950s and 1960s mention a multitude of trophies, models of colonial dispatch boats and commemorative objects that were used to illustrate the role played by sailors in the conquest and defence of the Empire. The information sheet for the model of the *Bougainville*, exhibited in 1949 at the naval museum in Toulon, thus associates in a few lines the exaltation of “our far-away colonial stations”, the quality of the materials used overseas in the inter-war period in the homage paid to this colonial dispatch boat “sunk in combat by the canons [of the FNFL] before Libreville in September 1940”<sup>100</sup>. There is nothing very surprising in this, it is true, if we remember the spirit of the myth of the navy that conquered an empire, perpetuated by Jacques Mordal and his epigones<sup>101</sup>. A handful of articles from *Neptunia* on the pacification missions in Algeria<sup>102</sup> like the poisonous chronicles against Nasser also show, in circles close to the museum, the indignation that decolonisation provoked. These mood swings, like the museum traces, are however of little importance in the face of other themes that are much better represented, such as the Royal Navy in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, distant expeditions and naval battles in the West. Naval colonial history thus never seems to have reached beyond the display case stage, or that of the wall panel or an article in *Neptunia*<sup>103</sup>. A naval and colonial museum prior to 1970, no doubt, from the origin of the objects on display (trophies, relics, commemorative objects), but not an imperialist museum in which naval and overseas history would have been superimposed. We believe that this ellipsis is linked to the choice of themes, close to colonial imperialism for sure, but very much distinct: the transoceanic naval adventure, the exploration of new worlds – particularly North American, polar and Pacific, knowledge and non-European maritime heritage.

*From a passion for ethnology to the colonial collection: overseas territories at the musée de la Marine (1827-2011)*

The creation of the naval museum coincided with the increase in the war navy which took over the major exploration programmes conducted in the Pacific between the second half of the 18th century and 1804<sup>104</sup>. The undertaking, which the monarchy continued for the same reasons (and more colonial considerations), made it possible to bring together large ethnological collections. As this *Oceania*<sup>105</sup> could not find any other State museums at the time ready to house them, the naval museum in the Louvre and a few provincial institutions<sup>106</sup> found themselves the beneficiaries of these collections, enhanced with donations and acquisitions<sup>107</sup>. The *Musée de la Marine* was thus, *ab ovo*, an ethnology museum, a mission that was reinforced by the failure of rival projects<sup>108</sup>. Throughout the century, the flow of ethnological objects remained significant thanks to donations from Navy Officers and a few explorers<sup>109</sup>. On the initiative of Léon Morel-Fatio, who took over the inventory (unpublished), the ethnological exhibits (2,740 in 1856)<sup>110</sup> were collected together in a section which, at the end of the century, occupied six of the nineteen rooms in the *Musée de Marine*<sup>111</sup>, although the purely maritime colonial objects were included in the naval section<sup>112</sup>.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the opening of the Ethnology Museum in the Trocadéro, the emergence of the ethnology gallery at the Invalides<sup>113</sup> and conservation problems resulted in the dispersion of the ethnology collections from the *Musée de Marine*<sup>114</sup>. The naval tradition of ethnological collecting did not, however, come to a brutal end. Thus, in 1965, we learn of the donation of “two beautiful paddles from Madagascar that belonged to Maréchal Galliéni” and, three years later, the reception of a “curious model pirogue from Raevavae (Tubuaï Islands or the Austral Islands) made by an old native” and whose naval officer donated it to the *Palais de Chaillot*<sup>115</sup>. In the 1960s, *Neptunia* also devoted several articles to the Pacific world and the impact of colonisation<sup>116</sup>. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the scientific tradition of the *MnM* was given new life when a small group of specialists (Eric Rieth and Alain Niderlinder) put the focus back on nautical ethnology. The museum work of Admiral Edmond Pâris, and the work of his son and their epigones, was rediscovered in the 1990s when the *MnM* had the ambition of becoming a major museum of maritime heritage. Models of Arab ships, made in the workshops of the *Musée de Marine* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were thus presented in 1994 at the exhibition on the silk trade routes<sup>117</sup>. The most recent Lapérouse exhibition did not fail to present other models made under the aegis of the Admiral Pâris, as well as objects collected by French sailors from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, the ethnological and archeological work of Admiral Pâris was the subject,

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in February 2010, of a temporary exhibition<sup>118</sup>, accompanied in the review *Neptunia* by several well-documented contributions on the founding fathers of naval ethnology and their heirs<sup>119</sup>.

A RELIQUARY FOR THE COLONIAL WARS,  
BUT NOT A MUSEUM FOR THE NAVY'S IMPERIAL ACTIONS

In a study devoted to ethnological and colonial museums, Nélia Dias reminds us of the proximity between these two types of establishment, “created during the colonial period as an activity of colonialism, or even a simple tool for European expansion”<sup>120</sup>. This final remark fits well, it seems to us, with the original ethnological collections at the naval museum in the Louvre, acquired through exchanges and donations. To this series, particularly under the Second Empire and the Third Republic, were added the artefacts “produced” by the armed interventions, raids and colonial conquests. By this, we are referring to the trophies brought back from Indochina, Madagascar and Tunisia that we have been able to identify thanks to the 1909 catalogue and the museum’s collections of antique postcards (1909–1939). Generally grouped under the heading “miscellaneous, historic or commemorative objects”, these items form a relatively vast family in which North Africa, Indochina and Madagascar are the dominant sources, doubtless influenced by Admiral Paul-Emile Miot (1827–1900), the only director of the *Musée de Marine* (1893–1900) to have taken part in the colonial campaigns and brought back several trophies, such as the keys to the casbah in Sfax. After the change of premises in 1943, other artefacts were added, such as the models of landing craft for infantry (*LCI*), used during the Second World War before being deployed in Indochina<sup>121</sup>. Despite the end of decolonisation, the colonial campaign trophies remained well-represented in the display cases devoted to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1962, the scale model of the *Consulaire* was on display next to a bronze canon taken in 1845 from Argentine forces, two canons brought back after the fall of Saint-Jean-d’Ulloa on 27 November 1838 and the bell from the same Mexican fort<sup>122</sup>. Trophies and commemorative objects are also found in the following rooms. The keys to the casbah in Sfax are displayed alongside relics of naval heroes from French Indochina (Courbet, Duboc, Rivière), as well as the conquests of New Caledonia and Madagascar (Bienaimé)<sup>123</sup>. The role played by the Navy in the defence of the Empire during the inter-war period, the Second World War and post-war conflicts are honoured by a handful of commemorative objects<sup>124</sup>. The notice in the 1962 catalogue describing the bronze bust of Vice-Admiral Battet (1893–1950) thus reminds us of the role he played at the head of the first division of cruisers in Indochina (1945) then the “French maritime

forces in the Far East, where he created the naval attack divisions”<sup>125</sup>. Although the war in Algeria is invisible, its conquest is represented by the model of the *Consulaire* and certain paintings, such as “*L’Escadre au large d’Alger en 1930*” by Jean-Louis Paguenaud<sup>126</sup> and old engravings, the information cards of which highlight the anarchy and cruelty of the barbarian regencies.

Although it was a genuine reliquary for the colonial wars, the *Musée de la Marine* in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not provide a separate room for the colonial-civilising role played by the naval forces. The memory of the Navy’s colonial campaigns was included within a broader framework (Restoration, the July Monarchy, operations during the Second Empire and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic) whereas from the inter-war period on, the Army museum had an area specifically dedicated to colonial conflicts (“Aumale room”) in which the Navy was honoured. In the 1970s to 1990s, new museological imperatives ended up dismantling this historical framework and separating the colonial past of the Navy, now covered by the *Musée des Troupes de Marine* or the *Musée des Fusiliers Marins*. What still needs to be explained is why the *MuM* was only a reliquary for naval and colonial glories and stuck with ultramarine themes which, whilst undoubtedly linked to the colonial Empire, were nevertheless distinct as well as being of a lesser range and political benefit.

*Explorers, the figureheads of a great, though often unfortunate, navy*

In the *Musée de la Marine*, explorers occupy a place which, whilst not unique to this establishment<sup>127</sup>, dates back a relatively long time and is sufficiently significant and recurrent to be characteristic of the *MuM*. The very first parts of the naval museum are associated with the tragic adventures of the Lapérouse expedition, of which there was no news for almost four decades (1788–1826). The discovery and reception in France of the first relics collected in Vanikoro in the Santa-Cruz Islands in 1827 by Peter Dillon then, the next year, by Jules Dumont d’Urville, allowed the museum to become a memorial site for this unfortunate expedition, the memory of which was kept alive through *oceania*, engravings and models of ships. The debris from the expedition was thus given a place of honour at the inauguration in 1829. Although the memory of other “great sailors” of the high seas, such as Rear-Admirals Suffren de Saint-Tropez (1729–1788), Roze (1812–1883) and Courbet (1827–1885), is honoured with busts, portraits and relics<sup>128</sup>, the devotion shown to Lapérouse and his companions of misfortune is in another league. For a century, visitors arriving in the memory room – in the middle of the museum – were thus invited to pay their respects before an obelisk dominating the bust of La Pérouse, surrounded by the debris from the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe* which, as was written in 1932, “took on, in such a site, on



this funeral pyramid, an emotional significance and a deep meaning”<sup>129</sup>. This collection of diverse objects (wheels, hooks, clamps, bell), which is reminiscent of the instruments of the Passion decorating certain large memorial crosses, disappeared from the museum after it moved in 1943, although the celebration of the great explorers from the late Enlightenment and their immediate successors remained a constant theme throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 1960s, the memory of the expeditions of Lapérouse and Dumont d’Urville, about whom there were long explanatory descriptions<sup>130</sup>, was conserved in zone XXI of the *MnM* (“Hydrography and exploration”), not far from the area currently dedicated to explorers. In 1962, the museum organised an exhibition on the scientific voyages undertaken between 1760 and 1850<sup>131</sup>, which was followed, twenty years later, by three events (in Paris, Brest and Toulon) dedicated to the “generous and tragic Lapérouse expedition” with the support of the highest naval authorities. In addition to these events, there were also several books, including a history of the expedition by the director of the *MnM*, François Bellec<sup>132</sup>. Two decades later, in 2008, the expeditions of the Enlightenment were once again the subject in Paris of a much-publicised exhibition, “Le mystère Lapérouse”<sup>133</sup>. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the museum associated these great sailors from 1760–1850 with famous figures in the exploration of the polar (Charcot) and deep sea (Cousteau) worlds, as well as the first solo navigators such as Alain Gerbault. In December 1960, a brief exhibition celebrated the work of Henry the Navigator and the Portuguese explorers. In 1962, the catalogue from the Palais de Chaillot lists in its “Polar expeditions” section, seven items exhibited, including four on the *Pourquoi-Pas ?*<sup>134</sup>. These themes reappeared regularly throughout the next few decades.

The exhibitions devoted to polar explorers (“Charcot: la passion des poles” in 2006), submarine archeology<sup>135</sup>, non-European maritime cultures<sup>136</sup>, scientists of the maritime realm (Ifremer), and the pioneers of the exploration of the abysses (“*Jules Verne le roman de la Mer*” in 2005) form a framework that is too restricted to be a simple desire to attract the general public. Far from being the lance-holder for a museum struggling to attract visitors, ultramarine expeditions – in all their various learned (hydrography, cartography and ethnography) and cultural (orientalism, exotism) dimensions are ultimately one of, if not the, first original traits of the *MnM*. We thus believe that we can identify an institutional and learned tradition, the roots of which are associated with the genesis of the museum itself and the naval issues of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The creation of the naval museum raised the problem of associating it, in a process of pantheonisation, with uncontested heroic figures. Regardless of their talents, neither the heroes of the American

War of Independence (Suffren, du Couëdic<sup>137</sup>) nor the best officers of the Revolution and the Empire (Casabianca, Dupetit-Thouars) could, during the Restoration, be the models in which learned opinion, the political elite from Emigration and the naval institution could recognise themselves without reserve and celebrate together the virtues of both the Sword and the Nation. By positioning themselves in the shadow of Lapérouse, whose disappearance had haunted the *Ancien Régime*, the Revolution and the Restoration, the creators of the naval museum at the Louvre solved this memorial Gordian knot. Honouring the memory of the tragic fate of Lapérouse and his companions, whose remains were given to the *Musée Dauphin*, the glory of a transoceanic, scientific and pacifist undertaking was restored to the Ancien Régime whilst giving the liberal bourgeoisie – the main source of naval officers – the model of a learned, patriotic sailor, imbued with the spirit of the Enlightenment. The Navy, which was too frequently unfortunate in its battles against the British, could, in addition, adopt this brilliant hero of the American War of Independence and who disappeared heroically at his post, like Cook and Nelson<sup>138</sup>. Far from diminishing, this corporatist and museum cult was maintained by the subsequent regimes, which developed, in other memorial sites (Versailles), past naval and colonial glories of the nation<sup>139</sup>. This dissociation of naval and colonial memory – which Adolphe Caillé fought vainly against in 1839, remained a constant feature of a resolutely ethnological and technical museum, to which were added, between the Second Empire and the 1950s, a few relics from distant campaigns<sup>140</sup>.

Although the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave the museum other figureheads of colonial undertakings more conform to military heroism (Courbet), the image of Lapérouse resisted the ups and downs of contemporary history better. Lapérouse represented the spirit of scientific adventure of the Enlightenment and was not suspected of trying to impose any form of imperialism. His memory thus survived decolonisation and came to represent, successively in the exhibitions of 1962, 1985 and 2008, scientific passion, humanist generosity and human and maritime adventure. “A hero for us all”<sup>141</sup> then, or the founder of a long line of daring conquerors of the impossible such as Pâris, Charcot, Monfreid, Cousteau and Tabarly, whose photographs, relics and letters form an appealing museum heritage that is sufficiently polyphonic to attract a varied and politically safe public in these times of memorial, national and community conflicts and guerrillas.

Although it has the ambition to become a maritime and art museum, the *Musée national de la Marine* nevertheless remains, to a great extent, the museum of the French Navy. The scenography of its permanent exhibitions – speaking only of the *Palais de Chaillot* – shows

this quite clearly. The portrait of Richelieu (now no longer on show) which welcomed visitors for half a century in the Emperor's lifeboat room, in which the accumulation of scale models and models, the pre-eminence of technical considerations<sup>142</sup> over the human, social and regional aspects of maritime life, put the emphasis on a certain image of national naval power, as well as on a volunteer approach to naval affairs enamoured of modernity and technical excellence whilst France's maritime and naval destiny, in the country's darkest hours, depended less on the most daring units (*Surcouf*) and more on the consequent strategic and political choices. This way of representing naval and maritime greatness is not particular to France. With their information cards bursting with technical detail, fleets of models can be found as much in the *Deutsches Museum* in Munich as in the Science Museum in London, whose naval gallery has barely changed since the 1960s. For all that, the renown of these two magnificent museums is not enough to approve an approach that the authors of this chapter believe to be dated, insufficient and contradictory.

A technical approach suggests that it benefits from political neutrality, whereas it is heavy with meaning: no sailors, no destruction, no mutinies, no human labour or mutineers, and the dramas of the sea and the nation are reported in the information cards and paintings on the walls<sup>143</sup>. By striving to be a museum of technical adventure and great maritime undertakings, the *MnM* has allowed other institutions – the *Musée de l'Armée* (Second World War room) as well as the *Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération* (FNFL room)—to write its contemporary history. By forbidding any attempt to update its past, the *MnM*'s technical approach also forbids it from being a maritime museum as that would require a geographical and culturalist dimension like the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich or the *Musée de la Compagnie des Indes* in Lorient, whose scenographies bursting with maps and “ethnological” objects reposition maritime facts in a context of early globalisation and transatlantic, or even transoceanic cultural history. The sea is not a timeless given, and the maritime world is even less so. It is from this historical, but not historicist, perspective that a discourse could be established that is both coherent and reflective with regard to the past divisions within the Navy, as well as its involvement in French imperialist and colonial undertakings, taken from every point of view. This reminds us of the retrospective of the fight against the slave trade and its current forms that can be visited in Portsmouth since 2007, and that we would like to see reproduced in our country given that France has participated, for two centuries, in the pacification of the oceans and the establishment of human rights. A century ago, the Navy came to the assistance of the Armenians; in the 1970s and 1980s, French sailors rescued the Vietnamese Boat People and today, the Navy fights against piracy and organised crime<sup>144</sup>. This peace keeping tradition and these humanitarian

engagements are dear to the Navy, and should be highlighted, without glossing over the cost and limitations of these Sisyphean tasks! Can museum promotion of a great maritime power be limited to models? The *MnM* exhibits the physical beauty of a frigate or a nuclear submarine, but against which enemy, which threat? Archive films on the missions of an aircraft carrier, like the one on a loop in Toulon before the 2011 renovation, accounts by sailors and naval shipyard workers, relics from past combat and the latest overseas missions (“OPEX”), large maps, even simulators, all form a tried and tested body of scenographic means (Leeds, Gosport, Le Bourget) that the imaginary museum presented here should use, with no need to abandon the models, which are the oldest and most remarkable perfect supports for naval museums.

#### NOTES

1 Prior to 1919, the naval museum (or *Musée de Marine*) came under the Direction of the National Museums before subsequently being placed under naval authority, which the decree of 2 August 1947 confirmed.

2 Commander Jacques Vichot (1906-1990) directed the *MnM* almost continuously between 1943 and 1971. He was succeeded by Frigate Captain Luc-Marie Bayle, (1972-1980), Rear-Admiral François Bellec (1980-1998), Rear-Admiral Georges Prud’homme (1998-2005), Rear-Admiral Jean-Noël Gard (2005-2011), and, most recently, Rear-Admiral Jean-Marc Brûlez.

3 Besides Paris, the *MnM* has four “museums of ports” in Brest, Lorient, Toulon and Rochefort.

4 Observatoire économique du tourisme parisien, *Fréquentation des sites culturels parisiens en 2009*, Paris, Août 2010.

5 Between 55,000 and 66,000 visitors in Lorient, Brest and Toulon in the mid-2000s.

6 For example, the French national newspaper *Le Figaro* regularly mentions the main events and projects at the *MnM*.

7 Alain Niderlinder, “Le musée de la Marine et ses collections, *Historiographie du Musée de la Marine*”, *Neptunia*, n° 193, p. 45-52; *idem*, “Le Musée de la Marine et ses collections. Éléments chronologiques”, *Neptunia*, n° 194, p. 49-57; and n° 195, p. 41-50. See also Albert Chatelle, *Le musée de la Marine de ses origines à nos jours, Essai historique*, Paris, Éditions de l’Institut Maritime Colonial, 1939, p. 30-33.

8 *Service Historique de la Défense*, Naval archives kept in Vincennes (later SHD-MV), BB1 55, *Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, Rapport au Roi*, Avril 1819.

9 Jean Boudriot and Alain Niderlinder, “Modèles disparus du musée de Brest”, *Neptunia*, n° 226, 2002, p. 34; Musée national de la Marine, *Le château de Brest*, 2007, Musée national de la Marine, p. 34.

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10 “Chronique des musées et de l’association”, *Neptunia*, n° 90, 1968, p. 24.

11 Dominique Morel, “Musée de la Marine. Mémorial Amiral de Grasse”, *Neptunia*, n° 208, 1997, p. 63-67.

12 François Bellec, “Le nouveau musée de la marine. La recherche d’une information modulable”, *Neptunia*, n° 153, mars 1984, p. 40; Georges Prud’homme, “Un grand musée national de la Marine et de l’aventure maritime”, *Neptunia*, n° 189, 2000, p. 16-19.

13 *De la Gloire au Charles de Gaulle*, journal d’exposition, n°1, 1998, p. 3.

14 Marjolaine Mourot, “Le musée national de la Marine”, *Neptunia*, n° 228, 2002, p. 67.

15 André Goetz, “L’Amiral Marquet”, *Le Figaro*, 1 December 2008.

16 *Musée national de la Marine, 300 ans d’histoires maritimes*, bilingual brochure, 2011.

17 *Trésors du Musée national de la Marine*, Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux, 2006, p. 46-51.

18 Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages, 1940-1946*, vol. 1: *Pendant la guerre. Juin 1940-janvier 1946*, Paris, Plon, 1970, p. 103.

19 Louis Guichard, *Au large 1914-1918*, Paris, Renaissance du Livre, 1919, p. 15.

20 Taken from the title of the chapter that Philippe Masson devotes to him in Guy Pedroncini, *Histoire militaire de la France, tome 3 : de 1871 à 1940*, Paris, PUF, 1992, p. 443-470.

21 Martin Motte and Jean de Préneuf, “L’écriture de l’histoire navale française à l’époque contemporaine : un modèle national ?”, *Revue historique des armées*, n°257, 2009/4, p. 27-43; Jean-Baptiste Bruneau, ““Gloria victis”. L’écriture de l’histoire navale de la Seconde Guerre mondiale”, *Revue d’histoire maritime*, n° 10/11, 2010, p. 357-366.

22 Jean-Yves Boursier, *Musées de guerre et mémoriaux. Politique de la mémoire*, Paris, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2005, p. 7.

23 Visits to the Musée national de la Marine in Paris in the summer and autumn of 2011.

24 *Neptunia*, n° 238, 2005, p. 43.

25 Jean de Préneuf, “Neptune et Clio : le Service historique de la Marine 1919-1974”, *Revue historique des armées*, n° 216, 1999/3, p. 3-20.

26 SHD-MV 1BB8 129, note “constitution d’un musée des souvenirs maritimes de la guerre de 1914”, from the Secretary of State for the Navy to the Vice-Admirals, maritime prefects, directors of establishments excluding ports and general officers and commanding officers at sea, 25 November 1920.

27 [Translator’s note] This rumour claimed that the French clergy were in support of the Prussians attacking lay France, to destroy its institutions.

28 Vice-Admiral Bienaimé, *La guerre navale 1914-1915. Fautes et responsabilités*, Paris, Tallandier, 1920, p. 149.

29 Paul Chack, *Marins à la bataille*, tome III: *Méditerranée 1914-1918*, Paris, Éditions du Gerfaut, 2002, p. 121. The text quoted was published (in French) for the first time in *Patrouilles tragiques dans la nuit*, Paris, Éditions de France, 1937.

30 *L'Ouest éclair*, 31 mars 1923.

31 Caroline Barcellini, "La commémoration de la Grande Guerre au Musée de l'Armée (1914-1925)", *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, n°212, 2003/4, p. 3-16.

32 SHD-MV, 1BB8 SHM 130, handwritten note "on the subject of the response that could be given to any request to close the room reserved for the Navy at the Invalides" by Georges Clerc-Rampal, not dated.

33 SHD-MV, TTA 199, circular n°194/EMG. Cab of CA Reboul Hector Berlioz, 24 November 1943.

34 Decree n° 47-1527, 2 August 1947, *Journal officiel de la République française* of 18 and 19 August 1947, p. 8161.

35 *Trésors du Musée national de la Marine*, *op. cit.*, p. 11-15.

36 SHD-MV, TTA 187, circular n°A 25 CAB/SE from the State Department for the Navy, 3 November 1944.

37 *Musée national de la Marine* (now *MnM*), library, R.1372, photo album for the exhibition, "La Marine au combat, 1945".

38 Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre. Un essai d'historiographie*, Paris, Seuil, Coll° Points Histoire, 2004, p. 15-50.

39 See, for example, the five brochures *La guerre navale racontée par nos amiraux* illustrated by the official artists of the Navy and published in 1927.

40 Portrait by Mascari Priov.

41 *Le lieutenant de vaisseau Morillot coule avec le Monge*, painting by L. Jonas.

42 Photograph of Captain Rageot de la Touche.

43 Portrait by Bouchor.

44 *Id.*

45 Anonymous portrait.

46 In addition to the aforementioned portraits of Admiral Guépratte and Captain Rageot de la Touche, the painting *La flotte alliée au mouillage des Dardanelles* by Frédéric Montenard, a painting by Gustave Alaux if *Le Bouvet* and a watercolour by Léon Haffner titled *Le croiseur-cuirassé Latouche-Tréville aux Dardanelles*.

47 Poster by Léon Haffner, *Les réalités de la guerre sous-marine*.

48 Pierre Loti, "Le drapeau que nos fusiliers marins n'ont pas encore", *L'Illustration*, n°3745, 12 décembre 1914. "Demoiselles au pompon rouge" was the nickname given to the marines by their contemporaries in 1914.

49 Thomas Vaisset, "L'impuissance navale au musée ? La Marine française "Royale" et la Seconde Guerre mondiale au Musée national de la Marine" as part of the conference, *Neptune au Musée. Puissance, identités et conflits dans les musées maritimes et navals*, in press.

50 Henry Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours*, Paris, Seuil, "Points histoire", 1990, p. 29-76.

51 SHD-MV, 2011 ZF 12, letter n°62 M/INF, from the Secretary of State for the Navy to the director of the Naval Museum, 26 September 1952.

52 Léopold Pascal, *Deux corvettes type Aconit en escorte par gros temps* ; Olivier Levasseur, "La guerre de Léopold Pascal, peintre officiel des Forces Navales Françaises Libres (1941-1945)", *Neptunia*, n° 235, 2004, p. 51-62.

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53 Albert Chatelle, *op. cit.*, p. 149-150.

54 *Catalogue numérique du Musée de la Marine*, Sens, Société générale d'imprimerie et d'édition, 1939, 127 p.

55 Georges Clerc-Rampal, "Questions militaires et maritimes. À propos du Musée de la Marine", *Mercure de France*, n° 689, tome CXCIV, 1<sup>er</sup> mars 1927, p. 426.

56 Éric Conan and Henry Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, Paris, Gallimard, "Folio histoire", 1996.

57 SHD-MV, 2011 ZF 12, letter n°597 M/CM, from the Secretary of State for the Navy to General de Larminat, 21 June 1951.

58 *Ibidem*, decision n°4831 DN/EMP signed by Jules Moch, 13 July 1951.

59 *Ibidem*, letter from René Pleven to Jacques Gavini, 12 November 1952.

60 Whereas the Army Museum shows this battle in an alcove devoted to the FNFL.

61 An item presented to the *MnM* by the Society of Friends of *Musée de la Marine* ("l'Association des Amis du Musée de la Marine") a much influent maritime institution.

62 For the First World War, there are *Le Convoi* by Paul Morchain and *Le Lutétia, bateau camouflé en rade de Toulon* by Pierre Gatier; for the Second World War, in the case on the FNFL: *La corvette FNFL Lobélia escortant un convoi dans l'Atlantique* and *Deux corvettes type Aconit en escorte par gros temps*.

63 In the case on "The Navy under Vichy", *Escadre dans la rade de Brest, 1939*, by Albert Brenet.

64 In the case on the First World War, the painting by Charles Fouqueray, *Fusiliers marins au front des Flandres, 1914*.

65 One fortunate exception: Olivier Gomez, "Tranchées mouvantes..." *Les équipages de torpilleurs français en Manche et à Dunkerque (1914-1918)*, Master 2, Université de Marne-la-Vallée, 2009.

66 Philippe Dagen, *Le silence des peintres. Les artistes face à la Grande Guerre*, Paris, Fayard, 1996.

67 François Robichon, "Les peintres et la guerre moderne", *La revue du Musée des arts et métiers*, n°46/47, octobre 2006, p. 81.

68 *Catalogue du Musée de la Marine*, Paris, 1962 (6<sup>e</sup> éd.), p. 57.

69 Bronze bust of Georges Leygues, by Alexis Rudier, after Auguste Rodin.

70 Painting by Albert Brenet, *Pont d'envol du Béarn*.

71 Vice-amiral R. Vercken, "L'aéronautique navale française de 1945 à 1962", *Revue Historique des Armées*, n° 172, 1988, p. 48-52.

72 Collectif, *Les valises sur le pont. La mémoire du rapatriement maritime d'Algérie*, 1962, Rennes, Marines éditions, 2009 ; Amiral Estival, *La marine française dans la guerre d'Algérie*, Rennes, Marines éditions, 2012.

73 Dominique Le Brun, *Roger Chapelet*, Chasse-Marée, Glénat, 2009.

74 Collective work, *The Art of Technology. The Navy Model Collection in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum*, Wormer, Immerc BV, 1995; *Chasing Freedom. The Royal Navy and the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, c. 1997.

75 If we consider all the collections exhibited, without mentioning the storerooms we did not visit.

76 Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France. Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories*, New-York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 238.

77 *Id.*

78 “The musée de la Marine de Paris, unlike the military museums, pays relatively little attention to colonies, which may be explained by the limited size of the exhibition rooms at the Palais de Chaillot.” *Id.*

79 Marius Perret (1853–1900), “Départ des pirogues pour la pêche à Guet M’Dar Sénégal”, (1891).

80 Christina Baron, “Lumineuse Algérie sous le regard des peintres de marines, 1830–1960”, *Neptunia*, n° 231, 2003, p. 65–67.

81 Stéphanie Debuiche, “Théodore Gudin au musée national de la Marine”, *Neptunia*, n° 260, 2010, p. 24–27.

82 The impressive display case stands (“Africa” and “America”) by the sculptor Victor Aimone (1860–1922) identify more with the allegory of the Enlightenment than with imperialism. A detail of Africa can be seen on the site of the museum [http://www.culture.gouv.fr/marine/intro\\_expo.htm](http://www.culture.gouv.fr/marine/intro_expo.htm)

83 Panel visible in 2010.

84 A single book (A. Chatelle, *op. cit.*) is cited. R. Aldrich, *op. cit.*, p. 357, note 53.

85 Rear-Admiral François Bellec, director of *MnM* between 1980 and 1997, designed the scenography for the crypt, inaugurated in October 1998. The Tradition room, after a period of reflection (2002–2005) was the subject of several projects.

86 The field of this study does not permit us to envisage a third “family of maritime museums”, but economic colonisation and decolonisation as well as cultural exchanges are dealt with regularly in port museums.

87 This sculpture, made in Cherbourg in 1878, was designed for transport ship, the *Mytho*, in memory of a conquest of this Annamite town on 12 April 1861 by Admiral Charner. The ship, subsequently rechristened (first *Bretagne*, then *Armorique*) became a floating barracks for ship’s apprentices until 1940.

88 Piece 378 “La Consulaire (1 AR 1)”, *Catalogue*, Paris, Musée de la Marine, 1950, p. 42.

89 Nabila Oulebsir, *Les usages du patrimoine. Monuments, musées et politique coloniale en Algérie (1830–1930)*, Paris, Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2004, p. 203.

90 The museum of the *École Navale* has only been open to the public for two years and now welcomes tourists and school parties. The conservatory of the *Commissariat de la Marine* and the Marines museum (“*Musée des fusiliers marins*”) can only be visited with the permission of the naval authorities and are above all destined for a public composed of former marines and their families.

91 “Le Sphinx”, *Fiche de repérage. Espace de Tradition, École Navale*, 2008. Depot of the *Musée national de la Marine*.



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92 The room devoted to the *Consulaire* at the museum in Brest.

93 The tricolour flag made on the order of the sub-lieutenant Henry (1876-1900), which was given to the museum of the *École Navale* in 1996, illustrates the resistance put up by the international forces besieged in Peking during the xenophobic and anti-imperialist Boxer rebellion. In addition to the flag, the museum has the sabre and badge of Henry who was, like many other naval officers during the “*Belle Époque*”, one of the key players in French colonisation and European imperialism. “Henry (Paul-Charles-Joseph) (1876-1900)”, in Etienne Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, Tallandier, 2002, p. 242-243; [www.ecole-navale.fr](http://www.ecole-navale.fr) - focus for December: in the traces of the EV Henry.

94 [Musee.fusco.orient.free.fr/cartelgerie](http://Musee.fusco.orient.free.fr/cartelgerie). The Indochina room was not visible on the website of the museum when consulted in December 2011.

95 Marjolaine Mourrot, art. cité, p. 67-68.

96 Sahib, *Marins & Navires anciens & modernes*, 1890. Rééd. parisienne par l’AAMM, 1977, p. 26, 39, 43, 46, 66.

97 Before the removal of the two dioramas of the marine artist Georges Fouillé (1909-1994) illustrating respectively the storming of Mogador by the forces of the Prince de Joinville (1844) and the capture of the citadel in Son Tay (1883).

98 Brochure *Salon de la Marine 1945. Palais de Chaillot, 8 juin-8 juillet 1945* (SHD-MV, 3 BB8 SHM 246).

99 Although he gave up his naval career, the royalist novelist remained passionate throughout his life about the world of the sea and was a renowned modelist. Until his death, he was close to the *MnM*.

100 Pièce 110, “*Bougainville, 33 MG 13*”, *Musée naval de Toulon*, Toulon, s. e., 1949, p. 28.

101 Jacques Mordal, *Marine Indochine*, Paris, Amiot-Dumont, 1953, p. 9-17.

102 “Fusiliers marins à la frontière algéro-marocaine”, *Neptunia*, n° 49, 1958, p. 23-26; Bernard Maurel, “Fusiliers Marins pacificateurs”, *Neptunia*, n° 50, 1958, p. 25-28; “Souvenirs de la demi brigade des fusiliers marins en Algérie”, n° 67, *Neptunia*, 1962, p. 39-43.

103 On the Navy and the Empire *stricto sensu*, there are no more than a dozen or so articles in *Neptunia* between 1954 and 1968.

104 This first French discovery of the Great Ocean concluded with the mission by Baudin (the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste*), the results of which were published between 1807 and 1816.

105 This word designates artefacts from Oceanic societies in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

106 *Ancienne école de médecine navale. Rochefort*, Paris, Musée national de la Marine, 2006, p. 16-17, 31, 35, 43. 46-47.

107 “Le musée naval du Louvre”, *Le Magasin Pittoresque*, 1847, Paris, p. 11-14.

108 E.T. Hamy, *Les origines du musée d’ethnographie, Histoire et documents*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1890, p. 38-49.

109 Sylviane Jacquemin, *Rao Polynésies*, Paris, éditions Parenthèses, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1992; *Id.*, “La collecte des objets des mers du Sud” in Chantal Georgel (dir.), *La jeunesse des musées. Les musées de France au XIXe siècle*, Paris, Éditions des Musées nationaux, 1994, p. 278-286.

110 Jean-Jacques Cleyet-Merle, “L’origine des collections océaniques du Musée des antiquités nationales”, *Antiquités nationales*, n° 14-15, 1982-83, p. 110 et 112.

111 E.T. Hamy, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

112 [Admiral Miot], *Promenade au musée de la Marine*, Paris, Imprimeries réunies, s. d. [1898], p. 7-8 ; 32.

113 Nélia Dias, *Le musée d’ethnographie du Trocadéro (1878-1908). Anthropologie et muséologie en France*, Paris, CNRS, 1991; Cécile Mouillard, “La galerie ethnographique : une collection oubliée”, *Revue de la Société des Amis du Musée de l’Armée*, n° 135, 2008, p. 23-33.

114 J. -J. Cleyet-Merle, art. cité, p. 116.

115 “Chronique du musée”, *Neptunia*, n° 79, 1965, p. 47; “Chronique des musées et de l’association”, *Neptunia*, n° 90, 1968, p. 23.

116 Bernard Villaret, “Beauté Maorie”, *Neptunia*, n° 33, 1954, p. 37-39; Frigate Captain Cousot, “L’ère des amiraux dans le Pacifique austral”, *Neptunia*, n° 37, 1955, p. 26-29 ; *id.*, “La Nouvelle-Calédonie depuis cent ans”, *Neptunia*, n° 38, 1955, p. 9-11; P. de Saint-Stéban, “Kounie l’île des Pins”, *Neptunia*, n° 57, 1960, p. 20-26, Francis Mazière, “L’île de Pâques”, *Neptunia*, n° 85, 1967, p. 29-37.

117 *A la rencontre de Sindbad, La route maritime de la soie*, Paris, Musée de la Marine, 1994, p. 176-179.

118 Vice-Admiral Jean-Noël Gard and Denis-Michel Boëll, (dir.), *Tous les bateaux du monde*, Paris, Musée national de la Marine, 2010.

119 Hubert Simon and Jean G. Ceccarelli, “Dans le sillage de l’amiral Pâris ou les 600 modèles du commandant Pierre Simon”, *Neptunia*, n° 248, 2007, p. 24-26.

120 Nélia Dias, “Musées et colonialisme : entre passé et présent”, *Du Musée colonial au musée des cultures du monde*, Textes collected by Dominique Taffin, Paris, Musée national des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie-Maisonneuve et Larose, 2000, p. 17.

121 Objects n° 760-761, *Le musée de la Marine*, 4<sup>ème</sup> édition, 1950, p. 67.

122 Captain Vichot, *Musée de la Marine*, Paris, *MnM*, 1962, p. 42-44.

123 Items 1008, “Commandant Duboc à Shei-Poo, le 15 février 1885”, *ibid.*, p. 53, 1201 “Vice-Admiral Battet”, *ibid.*, p. 60 and 1211 “Admiral Bienaimé”, p. 60.

124 This recalls the diorama of land operations indicated in the 1962 catalogue: Item 1196, “Retour d’opérations de fusiliers marins et de légionnaires. Plaine des Joncs, (1953)”, *ibid.*, p. 59.

125 Item 1201, “Vice-Admiral Battet”, *ibid.*, p. 60

126 Item 1206, “Escadre au large d’Alger en 1930”, *ibid.*, p. 60.

127 Polar and Pacific exploratory expeditions were a source of

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dreams, as well as national and maritime myth. They also feature heavily in Austro-Hungarian, German and British naval museums. See Jobs Broelmann, *Deutsches Museum, Panorama der Seefahrt*, Munich, Hauschild, 2006, p. 12-17.

128 Item 33, “Suffren” in Captain de corvette Vichot, *Musée naval de Toulon*, Toulon, 1949, p. 17-18; Item 100, “Médaille de Lapérouse”, *ibid.*, p. 24-25.

129 Paul-Emile Cadilhac, “Un musée national en péril-la mansarde de Neptune”, *L’Illustration*, n° 4637, 16 janvier 1932, p. 75.

130 Items n° 1760 “La Pérouse” and n° 1761 “Dumont d’Urville”, in Captain Vichot, *Musée (...), op. cit.*, 1962, p. 82. For these 18<sup>th</sup> century expeditions, the same area also displays a watercolour, an engraving, several maps by French explorers and two plans of the journey taken in expeditions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

131 Exhibition “Grands Voiliers autour du monde : les voyages scientifiques 1760-1850”, Palais de Chaillot, 10 mars- 8 avril 1962.

132 François Bellec, *La généreuse et tragique expédition Lapérouse*, Rennes, Ouest-France, 1985.

133 *Le mystère Lapérouse*, Musée national de la Marine-Paris-Palais de Chaillot, 2008.

134 *Musée de la Marine*, Paris, 1962, p. 78.

135 *Le mystère Lapérouse, op.cit.*, p. 32-33.

136 Exhibition “Voiles anciennes du Bangladesh”, 2008.

137 SHD-MV, BB 1 54, Report to the King (approved), 3 August 1818. Order for a portrait of M. du Couëdic [Charles Ducouëdic de Kergoualer] commander of the *Surveillante*, a frigate that was victorious against the British frigate *Québec*. This portrait was ordered to be placed in “one of the rooms in the Hôtel du Commandant de la Marine” in Brest, the port in which Louis XVI had built a monument on the tomb of this hero who died of his wounds on 7 January 1780.

138 Jean-François de Lapérouse, *Voyage autour du monde sur l’Astrolabe et la Boussole (1785-1788)*, Texts chosen and annotated by Hélène Patris, La Découverte, 2005.

139 Pierre Sesmat, “Le Musée Historique de Versailles : la gloire, l’histoire et les arts”, *La jeunesse des musées, op. cit.*, p. 115-119.

140 J. -A. Adolphe Caillé, *Considérations d’art et de politique à propos du musée de la Marine au Louvre*, Paris, Dolin, 1839, p. 157 ; 166-188.

141 Here we reuse the excellent formula by Jean Martinant de Préneuf in a study of Jean Lherminier that our colleague, a lecturer at the University of Lille-III, kindly sent us prior to its publication.

142 “We have collected a multitude of models and instruments that make it possible to monitor very closely every detail of the construction of the different types of ship from the moment when, launched into the water, they receive their rigging and sails. The machines to make the sails, the ropes, how to cook the biscuits are all represented. Hanging from the



walls, artistically arranged, there are the deadly weapons used by our sailors, even the canons and howitzers that rumble during combat. Here, the instruments for astronomy and observation, compasses, that ships must use so intensely when out in the middle of the vastness of the ocean". J. Destrem, G. Clerc-Rampal, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

143 The recent renovation of the Toulon room on the scuttling of the Fleet, under the aegis of Ms Baron, clearly shows an awareness of these matters.

144 Circular from the *Balny*, 1987, in Jean-Pierre Gomane, *Les Marines et l'Outre-Mer. L'aventure coloniale de la France*, Paris, Denoël, 1998, p. 278-282.

