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► To cite this version:

Géraldine Barron. Revealing maritimity in 19th century France. *Artefact : techniques, histoire et sciences humaines*, 2021, Histoire de la maritimé. Une comparaison franco-russe (XVIIIe-XXIe siècle), 14, pp.269-291. 10.4000/artefact.10175 . hal-03381555

HAL Id: hal-03381555

<https://hal.science/hal-03381555>

Submitted on 17 Oct 2021

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Revealing maritimity in 19th century France. Representations, heritage and history

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Artefact : techniques, histoire et sciences humaines, 14, 2021

Résumé: Le terme de maritimité, défini par les géographes au début des années 1990, offre un cadre conceptuel intéressant pour analyser l'évolution du rapport au monde maritime pendant le XIX^e siècle. Siècle des révolutions, cette période est marquée par des changements profonds et durables concernant le rapport à la mer, en particulier en matière de pratiques culturelles, sociales et artistiques. Elle n'échappe pas à l'émergence des préoccupations patrimoniales qui ouvrent la voie à de nouvelles disciplines telles que l'archéologie navale ou l'ethnographie nautique. Les représentations du monde maritime s'en trouvent bouleversées.

Summary: The term maritimity, defined by geographers in the early 1990s, offers an interesting conceptual framework for analysing the evolution of the relationship with the maritime world during the 19th century. A century of revolutions, this period is marked by deep and lasting changes in the relationship with the sea, especially affecting cultural, social and artistic practices. It was also affected by the emergence of heritage concerns which paved the way for new disciplines such as naval archaeology or nautical ethnography. Representations of the maritime world have been fundamentally changed as a result.

Mots-clés: art, mer, littérature, littoral, musée, patrimoine maritime, politique navale

Keywords: art, coast, literature, maritime heritage, museum, naval policy, sea

Despite the length of its coastline, France has always maintained ambivalent relations with the sea and the maritime world. It has never quite represented itself as a maritime country and geographers were the first to take an interest in this topic. Historians for a long time focused on war and trade and only more recently oriented their research towards seafarers ¹ and representations of the sea ². A large investigation was collectively led by geographers and historians into the complex and two-way relationship that the French have established with the sea over the course of history and how the sea has shaped many aspects of French culture ³. As Sylviane Llinares points out, French maritime history still lacks a « total » history of the maritime fact. This paper does not intend to fill the gap but the author hopes to make a modest

¹ Cabantous, 1995.

² Corbin, 2010.

³ Cabantous, Lespagnol, Péron (éd.), 2005.

contribution to the research on the historicity of the concept of maritimity by exploring emerging representations of the maritime world.

The concept of maritimity was developed by geographers in the early 1990s as an incentive to qualify social and cultural approaches to the sea and sensitivity about the maritime world ⁴. Even though, as the authors accept, the word «can be accused of being vague and ambiguous ⁵ », it nevertheless offers a useful conceptual frame to analyse the representations of the maritime world from different points of view : from that of seafarers, of inland citizens or of the State. Arts, literature but also institutions like the Naval Museum in Paris provide an interesting starting point from which to observe these representations and images induced by a growing awareness of the maritime environment. This investigation focuses on the 19th century because it is a time when public as well as political interest towards the maritime world began to change deeply and the concept of maritimity appears perfectly relevant to underline this phenomenon. The aim is not to discuss whether a museum, literature or arts really mirrored the maritime world of the time, the sea, the shore and its inhabitants and workers, but to focus on the vision of maritimity they convey.

A maritime revolution

Despite some great naval designs, French military strategy had always mainly been one of defense and the Boulogne fleet ended up as a failure. France had won very few naval battles since Louis XIV and had lost its main overseas possessions when the monarchy was restored in 1815. The reintegration of *Ancien Régime* navy officers who had not sailed for 25 years, symbolized by the shipwreck of the *Méduse* immortalised by the painter Géricault ⁶, did not help to restore the image of the navy or confidence in this armed force. The State nevertheless aimed at rebuilding a powerful fleet and at showing its flag on all the seas of the globe but failed to develop a coherent and sustainable policy before Napoleon III came to power ⁷. Under the Second Empire, the fleet and harbour infrastructures were modernized and strengthened, the navy knew technical as well as military successes and served as a support to colonial conquest. The development of the press and international exhibitions enabled the population to take part in these glory days, when France could boast of employing the best engineers in the world like Stanislas Dupuy de Lôme, and of being able to launch innovative vessels with the first screw battleship *Napoleon* built in the 1840s and the first ironclad *Gloire* a couple of decades later. Naval policy also became a strong topic of public debate on technical and strategic options after France lost the war against Prussia and during the first decades of the 3rd Republic. Interest in

⁴ Péron et Rieucan, 1996.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶ Musée du Louvre, Paris, Théodore Géricault, *Le Radeau de La Méduse*, 1819.

⁷ Battesti, 1997.

maritime affairs did not only concern the war fleet and policy but also the merchant navy and the intensification of trans-oceanic trade flows. The progress made in steam propulsion and shipbuilding produced larger, safer and faster liners, shorter routes were opened by cutting through isthmuses in Suez and Panama, giving the impression of a shrinking world. Jules Verne perfectly represented this feeling in his novels *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *A floating City* ⁸. (Fig. 1) The development of steam navigation induced a shift in the sociology of seafarers. The sailing navy, be it military, merchant or fishing, recruited mostly – if not exclusively – amongst coastal communities ; the need for mechanics attracted workers from industrial areas who rapidly merged with locals in coastal cities and generated more exchanges between the coast and the interior ⁹. Intensification of sea trade and trans-oceanic exchange of goods also created a link and the implementation of multimodal interconnection connected the coast to inland territories ¹⁰.

The emptiness of the oceans was filled by accurate cartography, even though the effort had already begun in the 18th century with Cook settling the question of the Austral continent and clocks enabling precise calculation of longitudes. 19th century sailors nevertheless were still trying to eradicate phantom islands from the maps and early oceanography endeavoured to people the oceans with science and get rid of fantasies ¹¹. (Fig. 2) Danger was not totally tamed but hazardous navigation was gradually giving way to clock-ruled ocean crossing. The 19th century was a time of technical and scientific conquest of the sea within which the national shore became the new frontier to be conquered by cartography and occupation. Main hydrographic campaigns were launched to draw an accurate map of the French littoral ¹² and the conquest of the coastal border was symbolized by a string of signposts, lighthouses and harbour infrastructures ¹³. Beyond ports and industrial infrastructures, the seaside came to be seen as a healthy and leisurely place to rest body and soul from a hectic, industrialised and polluted city life ¹⁴. The train opened up the seaside to inland inhabitants while the sea was used for seashore activities such as bathing or sailing in regattas. Sea bathing in cold and turbulent water was at first a medical treatment imported from England for respiratory ailments, and thus strictly codified. The Anglomania in vogue among the elites led to the discovery and adoption of new usages, flooding the shores with the fashionable *villégiatures* and seaside resorts, « *les stations balnéaires* » such as Deauville with their peculiar architectural design ¹⁵. (Fig. 3) Formerly uninhabited shores become urbanised, reshaping the landscape together with the

⁸ Verne, 1873 et 1871.

⁹ Cochard, 2016.

¹⁰ Marnot, 2005.

¹¹ Péton, 2016.

¹² Chapuis, 1999.

¹³ Guigueno, 2001.

¹⁴ Corbin, 2001.

¹⁵ Hervier, 2014.

development of industrial and commercial ports. Sailing also became a recreational activity with its rules and organization : the Yacht club de France founded in 1867 brought together at first aristocrats and former naval officers but rapidly expanded towards the upper-middle classes ¹⁶. The sea was no longer reduced to food and work production, nor a space for communication, a world of toil and turmoil, it became a place of leisure and sports, of pleasure and entertainment.

A kaleidoscopic vision of the maritime world

As Alain Corbin pointed out, until the early days of the 19th century, the sea was seen by French people as the territory of emptiness ¹⁷, hostile, dangerous and peopled with monsters that map makers often used to fill the blanks of unknown territories ¹⁸. The sea could nevertheless be associated with a few essential functions : food provided by fishing, trading with inshore and seagoing navigation, and military functions which include defense and conquest. If fishing waited longer to modernise, trading and naval forces rapidly evolved during the century ; so did awareness and interest in the maritime world as well as cultural representations of the sea. The repulsive images, however romantic, of tempests and the loneliness of man facing an overbearing nature, turned into attraction.

While the bourgeoisie discovered the seashore and its resorts, there was less and less need to travel in order to become aware of its landscape and way of life which were depicted by writers and painters throughout the century. Since the 17th century, the Navy had ordered pictorial representations of major naval events, but in 1830 two painters were officially registered in the ministry's annual directory as « peintres du département de la marine », an appointment that was given to 43 painters in the 19th century and still exists today. The first official painters, Théodore Gudin and Louis-Philippe Crépin, were former sailors. They represented battles, shipwrecks and many other aspects of maritime life. The topic featured in all art movements, from romanticism to naturalism, impressionism and realism. The classic seascape and naval battles gave way to life painting and new topics. None eluded the canvas of official and unofficial painters : open sea, calm or rough, waves, shores, beaches, vacant or inhabited by tourists or seafarers ; shipbuilding, fishing boats and men, steam and sailing vessels, naval battles, *ex voto* and portraits of ships, etc. For many painters, it became a recurring subject but also a way of life : Eugène Lepoittevin, another « peintre de marine », lived by the sea and depicted scenes from everyday life of fishermen and sea bathing ; Eugène Boudin preferred beach sceneries scattered with crinolines and parasols. Louis Garneray, Gustave Courbet,

¹⁶ Hoibian et Jallat, 2019.

¹⁷ Corbin, 2010, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Hofmann, Richard, Vagnon, 2012.

Claude Monet are today the most famous but only a small sample of the numerous artists who lived or made regular stays on the northern, western or mediterranean coast of France and offered a variety of representations and interpretations of maritimity ¹⁹. Even photographers chose the sea and ships for a setting, the most famous being Gustave Le Gray and his *marines* that represented both a technical and artistical innovation ²⁰. Seascapes and their variety of light effects and colours, waves and foam, sailing or steam boats, fishing boats and gears, working men and women as well as tourists had both artistic and documentary value. They were displayed in Paris' art exhibition (le Salon), in museums, but also circulated in the form of engravings which popularized these images.

Writers also contributed to the popularization of maritime topics. Alain Cabantous dates the emergence of the French maritime novel back to the mid-18th century with Alain-René Lesage and his *Aventures du chevalier de Beauchesne*, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, even if the genre really expanded during the second half of the 19th century ²¹. Some of the greatest authors of the time dedicated at least one major work to this theme, like Victor Hugo and his *Travailleurs de la mer*, but also Honoré de Balzac, George Sand or Prosper Mérimée. The passion for the sea and its shore spread into popular literature, riding the wave of adventure novels imported from England or America by authors such as James Fenimore Cooper or Herman Melville. French maritime novels were very popular ; authors were quite prolific and their books widely disseminated thanks to newspapers where they were serialized, and to cheap editions. Louis Garneray (also a marine painter), Gabriel de La Landelle, Édouard Corbière or Eugène Sue's maritime novels did not have as long-lasting success as Pierre Loti's, not to say of Jules Verne ²². Many of Verne's novels are related to the sea and make the reader travel from the depths to polar seas or islands, in a submarine or a floating city, with the thrill of scientific discoveries or the dread of perils of the sea ²³. In these fictional maritime worlds, many aspects of maritimity were disclosed to the public : variable weather with gales or dead calm wind and sea, mists, relentless sun ; perils of the sea with groundings, shipwrecks, fires, etc ; high-sea navigation, fishing, whaling, trading and discovery of alien or exotic cultures ; but also technical and scientific dimensions of navigation. Different social groups were portrayed and gave a hint of maritimity to inland readers : pirates and adventurous captains of course, natives from the other side of the world but also from French coasts, all magnified under the pen of writers by the breath of adventure, the exaltation of danger and the attraction of exoticism.

¹⁹ Corbin, Richard (éd.), 2004.

²⁰ Aubenas (dir.), 2002.

²¹ In Cabantous, Lespagnol, Péron, op. cit., p. 415-420.

²² Brosse, 1983.

²³ Demarcq, Frémond, Tromparent de Seyne, 2005.

(Fig. 4) Readers eager to dive into the atmosphere of these novels could find a good setting right in the centre of Paris, in the musée de Marine located in the Louvre palace.

The Marine Museum in Paris

Ship-modeling is a dockyard tradition that goes back to Colbert in 1679, who asked that a model of each type of war ship be kept in each dockyard for building and teaching purposes. Duhamel du Monceau, an inspector of shipbuilding and member of the Academy of Sciences, established a school for naval engineers in Paris in the middle of the 18th century and donated his collection of models to be stored next to the Academy and to the school ²⁴. Half a century later, Napoleon gathered a collection of ship models in Versailles ²⁵. After Napoleon's Empire was defeated, the first Restauration intended in 1814 to open a naval museum in Paris in order to house the collections of ship-models scattered in various places, and to give the Navy a showcase that could bring to the capital knowledge of the maritime world. It intended to brighten the rather damaged image of the naval forces after Napoleon's military defeats. When the Naval Museum at last opened to the public in 1830, it was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Navy and the Maison du Roi, and under the protection of the king's son, the Dauphin who was also bore the title of Great admiral of France. First named « musée Naval » or « musée Dauphin », it eventually got known as the « Musée de marine ». With such a vague name, it conjured neither the military navy nor the maritime world, but something in between, not quite definite. Besides the naming, the museum suffered from other difficulties and ambiguities. Its collections were provided for by the dockyards and model makers paid by the Navy, but its budget was extracted from the civil list. It lost its last link to the Navy in 1848 when it was attached to the Home Office and fine arts administration. From a geographical point of view this change was relevant because the museum was housed in the Louvre with the fine arts, paintings, sculpture, etc. But the administration of the Louvre considered the naval collections as a thorn in their side, and the conflict dragged on as the *Musée de marine* did not come back under the supervision of the ministry of Navy before 1919 and left the Louvre in 1939.

The museum's initial goal was quite wide and embraced an open-minded but straightforward view of the maritime world:

- war and merchant ships
- harbours, dockyards, machines, gears and instruments
- famous seafarers from war heroes to explorers
- whatever sailors and ships could bring from all over the world

²⁴ Niderlinder, 1994.

²⁵ Benoît, Tromparent de Seynes, Niderlinder, 2014.

The French Restoration aimed at giving the state a powerful Navy and wanted to fight against the images of defeat and despair attached to the sea and to the navy, hence the importance of exalting them through monumental paintings and the figures of national heroes like Jean Bart or Duquesne, which were supposed to help the country regain confidence in its navy. The Navy needed money, ships and sailors but for that matter had to win over public opinion, especially within the capital. The *Musée de marine* was founded in Paris on this very purpose ²⁶. It therefore displayed paintings representing great naval battles, portraits and busts of war heroes, but also shipbuilding industry led by science and reason in order to arouse vocations for maritime careers and to encourage Parliament to vote increasing budgets for the Navy. The French Restoration also took up with the tradition of round the world voyages and the museum housed more and more artefacts from far away civilizations and their populations. Naval officers and diplomats tended to give the museum what they brought back from their voyages. Extra-European artefacts became the metaphorical identity of French maritimity, romantic and idealistic, with its heroes of civilization, over-shadowing the realities of the maritime world, much cruder and coarser.

The museum was confronted with the withdrawal of the Navy from its management at the end of the Monarchie de Juillet and during the 2^d Republic : in consequence, fewer and fewer specifically naval artefacts entered the collection. In the 1850s, 73 % of the collection was of ethnographic nature, a fact that led to the creation of an ethnographical museum within the museum. The maritime part of the museum seemed to shrink because of the lack of room in the Louvre. Strangely enough, this was a time of great achievements for the Navy : the neglect in which naval issues were kept was well redressed by Napoleon III's naval policy. But these technical rather than military achievements (except maybe during the war against Russia) had a new and popular showcase with the international exhibitions. With the French military defeat and the beginning of the 3rd Republic, military and naval matters were increasingly publicized and openly discussed, and the museum could prove an adequate place to nurture the passion for the Navy. But the gap between political and public expectations tended to widen.

The name of the museum blurred an ambiguous project and the collections evolved consequently during the century. For the museum, collection development did not only depend on supervision, on political design, on money or donations, but also depended on the personal interest of the curator, on his personal vision of what ought to be a marine museum, and also on his personal network. The Museum knew three « eras » in the 19th century, curiously corresponding to political regimes. Under the monarchy, naval engineers wished to stress the importance of ships and infrastructures and make the museum a *Conservatoire* of shipbuilding,

²⁶ « Musée naval », 1828.

both designed for instruction and preservation. The museum had its own workshop and model-makers to create and restore its collections. It nevertheless collected in addition most of the production of dockyard workshops. This was a technical era, glorifying science and achievements of the Navy to regain the confidence of the French People, but also gathering technical information from other nautical cultures. After 1815, France undertook circumnavigations, scientific expeditions and diplomatic voyages which collected and deposited at the museum numerous indigenous artefacts and exotic objects. During the Second Empire, Antoine-Léon Morel-Fatio became curator : a naval painter appointed « peintre du département de la marine » in 1853, he accurately documented major naval events in his paintings and engravings. His was the time when the museum was so overwhelmed with exotic artefacts that they were separated from the naval ones to form a museum of ethnography ²⁷. At least France was no longer striving to catch up with the British royal and merchant navies in terms of territorial expansion overseas and steam navigation thanks to its innovative transatlantic steamers and ironclad battleships. It was a time of power and speed at sea, a progress magnified by international exhibitions held in Paris in 1855 and 1867. Retired naval officers succeeded Morel-Fatio during the first decades of the 3rd Republic. They took over the forgotten prospect of creating a conservatoire and building collections of models reflecting the diversity of ships and infrastructures : sailing and steam ships for high-seas navigation from the 17th century to present, canoes from all over the world as well as traditional working boats from Europe. The museum also displayed astronomical instruments, tools, samples of rope, wood, sails, models of lighthouses, masting machines, dredgers, etc., and a great number of scale drawings, technical books and so on. The museum, by the will of its curator the admiral Edmond Pâris, followed the development of archeology and ethnography. There was a public for these various collections from the late 19th century to the first World War.

A distorting mirror ?

How can a collection of objects and artefacts mirror such a polysemic and essentially cultural and social concept as maritimity ? It certainly echoed in 19th century France an awakening sensitivity to sea and shore, a « desire for shore ²⁸ » expressed by the public who were seeking in the museum a true and accurate image of what popular maritime novels conjured up. The museum exhibited most of the five components of maritime heritage stressed by Françoise Péron ²⁹:

- landscapes through monumental seascapes
- leisure and regattas through paintings and ship models

²⁷ Hamy, 1889.

²⁸ Corbin, 2010, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Péron, Rieucan, 1996, *op. cit.*

- monuments and military infrastructures through lighthouses and scale models of military ports
- functional components thanks to the display of models of ships, dockyards, lifeboats, etc.

These last two components were of strategic importance : displaying the most modern warship, artillery or lighting system aimed at showing French naval power. It also helped citizens to appropriate the issues and take part in the political, diplomatic, even ideological debates like that around the strategy of the Jeune École ³⁰.

One component was missing in the museum : the socio-cultural approach, about seafaring people and people living by the sea. The curator Pâris had a sense of ethnography : he tried to relate boats to crafts and tools, but the human dimension didn't show through the technical approach. In the meantime, sea life was becoming attractive for Parisians and seafarers were rather idealized for their supposed genuine and healthy way of life, close to nature. The public seemed to be finding in the museum what it was looking for. Visitors used the artefacts displayed in the showcases as a metaphor of sea life and fuel for their imagination as shown by many accounts of the life of the museum which stressed the importance of children, attracted by its collection as if they were in a toy shop ³¹. A journalist perfectly conveyed the many goals of these collections, all at once an entertainment, an addition to maritime and travel novels, and an incentive to embrace a maritime career ³².

Besides the chauvinistic dimension of maritimism displayed within the museum, stressing the achievements of the French Navy and its officers, the museum and its curators were curious about foreign nautical cultures and technical traditions or innovations. The international exhibitions boosted industrial spying which was a long-lived tradition, with engineers and naval officers undertaking technical tours, or diplomats sending detailed reports on their observations. The museum housed artefacts from all over the world or information about foreign countries. If we take Russia for an example the museum displayed torpedoes, model-ships, books about Russian naval history, statues of Krusenstern and Kotsebue, etc. Despite having taken part in the war against Russia in the 1850s, admiral Pâris developed close relationships with the former foe and Russian naval officers and was able to add Russian artefacts to the collections. But it was more about opportunism made possible by personal relationships than a long-term collection development plan for the museum as the example of the Franco-Russian Alliance shows : Franco-Russian naval collaboration was strengthened within this Alliance from 1891 to 1914, a military and diplomatic reconciliation that provided an opportunity for naval displays and meetings in French and Russian harbors. Even though the Museum gathered many souvenirs from this period within an exhibition held in 2010, very few of these objects entered

³⁰ Motte, 2004.

³¹ Niderlinder, 2017.

³² Méa, 1893.

the collections before the 1950s, again demonstrating the ambiguous rather than accurate political vision of the Navy the museum conveys before 1914 ³³.

Building a maritime heritage

Awareness of the maritime world and major evolutions in sea and shore life developed concomitantly in the 19th century, even if neither evolved in a straightforward and uniform way that could be easily summarized ³⁴. Meanwhile, new human sciences were emerging together with a consciousness of time and historicity : archeology and ethnography questioned mankind and its evolutions and collected artefacts gathered into museum collections for research purposes. Concern about the disappearance of traces of the past had become quite acute after the French Revolution. The charge of inspector of historical monuments was created in 1830 to inventory, protect and restore symbolic markers of national history, be they buildings or pieces of furniture ³⁵, but all traces of the past regarding navigation and life on the shore had been long gone and preserving samples of the fleet, even the navy's flagships, was not on the agenda. The maritime world was however no exception to this enthusiasm and boats and ships became a topic for historians, archeologists and ethnographers.

Naval officers were eager to write French naval history, even if the minister was more reluctant to offer the structures that could make it possible. In 1830 the Navy granted them a historical section hosted by the hydrographical service, the *Dépôt des cartes et plans*. It was dedicated to the identification, housing and sorting of the navy's archives and was managed by two former officers, Jacques Parisot and Augustin Jal who became one of the Navy's official historiographers and a major maritime historian ³⁶. The organisation of the archives remained rather chaotic throughout the century but improved under the Second Empire and a classification framework was fixed during the first decades of the Third Republic. Many naval officers invested in the writing of their force's history. Some historians gained the official title of historiographer of the Navy : Xavier Marmier, Léon Guérin or Frédéric Chassériau, who was employed by the historical section and wrote a *Précis historique de la marine française* ³⁷. Novelists also committed to writing maritime and naval history, like Eugène Sue, who added a *Histoire de la marine* to his many popular maritime novels ³⁸, or Jules Lecomte who, besides many novels, published a *Dictionnaire pittoresque de marine*, but also chronicles, treatises on navigation or whaling ³⁹. History in the making was related in the form of souvenirs but also

³³ « Cadeaux de Tsars. La diplomatie navale dans l'Alliance-Russe, 1891-1914 », 2010.

³⁴ Should we write *revolution* ? See Masson, Battesti, Service historique de la Marine, 1987.

³⁵ Mainly religious buildings but also vestiges of the Antiquity, castles, but also tapestries, stained-glass windows, etc. See Mérimée, 1840.

³⁶ Taillemite, 1969.

³⁷ Chassériau, 1845.

³⁸ Sue, 1835-1837.

³⁹ Lecomte, 1835.

with the rational and source-based historical approach by several navy officers. Admiral Edmond Jurien de La Gravière is the main figure of this new naval history, together a respected naval officer, a public figure, a recognized scientist member of the Académie des sciences and a renowned writer elected at the Académie française. He wrote numerous books and articles on ancient or contemporary history and published his father's memoirs ⁴⁰. His books were quite successful even if not as popular as maritime novels. But historians thought that a good understanding of the past could provide their contemporaries with guidance, especially because, as Jurien de la Gravière put it, « the navy is not only administration, it is above all politics ⁴¹ » : it was required for decision-makers to select the right strategy, but also for citizens of a still young republic to approve of those decisions and support their navy.

In the 19th Century, a joint concern for the past and for the ship gave birth to specific archeology under the pen of Augustin Jal ⁴², later to be called « father of the French school of archeology of the ship ». His project mirrored that of Paris marine museum's : make the navy known and interest citizens in its developments. For this purpose, he studied not only heroes and battles but also the customs of the seafarers, the language and vocabulary they used to name every object, gesture and action related to their working tool ⁴³. Last but not least, Jal studied the ship, a complex machine, through a technical approach. Knowledge of the maritime world and its evolution in history grew deeper and even became a subject of experiment when Jal associated with Dupuy de Lôme in 1861 on the Emperor's initiative to build a replica of a trireme that sailed on the river Seine, the very first example of experimental archeology ever conducted ⁴⁴ (Fig. 5). Admiral Pâris, curator of the *musée de Marine*, was another figure of archeology in the 19th century ⁴⁵. As a major stakeholder in developing steam navigation, he was very aware of the pace of innovation and change in shipbuilding and of the rapid disappearance of many traditions and sorts of ships, boats and crafts blown away by the wind of change. He thus strived to arrange and compile information on ships and shipbuilding, old and new, big or small, aiming at building within the museum an archive of shipbuilding. He published several books in addition to his work at the museum and provided historians and archeologists with accurate sources ⁴⁶. He himself had travelled a lot during his career at sea : he had drawn a great number of canoes and crafts from all over the world, compiled them with maps drawn by other travelers, published them and used them to create a unique collection of models of precious ethnographic value ⁴⁷ : this work attracted the public in the *musée de Marine* and satisfied its curiosity for

⁴⁰ See Taillemite, 2008.

⁴¹ Jurien de La Gravière, 1878.

⁴² Jal, 1840.

⁴³ Jal, 1848.

⁴⁴ Rieth, 2019.

⁴⁵ Barron, 2019.

⁴⁶ Pâris, 1882-1908.

⁴⁷ Pâris, 1844.

non-European maritime cultures described by successful travel stories. A few decades later he added European boats and crafts to his collection and was joined in his project by naval officers like admiral Serre ⁴⁸ and a few amateurs like Léopold de Folin ⁴⁹ or Jules Vence ⁵⁰. Artists, ship owners or builders, also endeavoured to collect plans of ancient and modern boats in order to write the history of the boat and ship. For many seafarers, the relationship to the boat or ship they owned or served on was very strong and keeping the memory of it became a widespread preoccupation as the trend of portraying ships clearly shows with famous families of artists like the Roux from Marseille or Adam from Le Havre. Anthropomorphic descriptions of ships, their life, death and suffering, became commonplace in literature but also in very serious books claiming scientific rigour such as Jal's or Pâris'. Memory and heritage tended to go hand in hand in this matter. Besides the development of ship archeology mainly based on texts and images ⁵¹, a genuine interest for coastal communities and their traditions arose at the end of the century with ethnographers like Paul Sébillot who collected tales and legends from Breton sailors ⁵², paving the way for maritime ethnoarchaeology.

Conclusion

The marine museum of Paris can be considered as an accurate showcase for maritimity from a political, inland, urban and popular point of view, but the success of the maritime topic in arts and literature proves a genuine and global interest for the maritime world in the 19th century. This sudden interest met the definition of national heritage and the development of new human sciences to create a very original approach. In archeology as in ethnography, the work of French 19th century authors cleared the ground and laid the foundations of fields of research that have only really developed in recent decades. One must wonder why this attraction to the maritime world in all its forms and varieties, be it popular or academic, cultural, scientific, political or economic, appears to be cropping up periodically but can also be put on standby for long periods of time. It seems that maritimity is a particularly accurate concept to define what took place in the 19th century as well as in the last decades of the 20th century because there was a strong rise of concern for maritime issues in those times, while it rather blurs in between. As Françoise Péron states, « maritimity can only be cultural [and] is a form of reappropriation of legacies, according to the needs and anxieties of contemporary society ⁵³ ». People's relationship with the sea and shore is not limited to cultural aspects ; political goals and a range of technical, scientific, economic, military developments that underlie the more obvious and popular image

⁴⁸ Serre, Fincati, 1885.

⁴⁹ Folin, 1892.

⁵⁰ Vence, 1897.

⁵¹ « Archéologie du mot et de l'image » according to Éric Rieth. Rieth, 2019, *op. cit.*

⁵² Sébillot, s.l.n.d. See Cabantous, 1995.

⁵³ Péron, Rieucan, 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

can be at stake, provoking the anxieties that require the reappropriation of legacies observed during these particular periods in history.