

COMMUNICATING HISTORY:
FORGETTING COLONIALISM AT THE INSTITUT DU MONDE ARABE

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I tell three stories about cultural institutions, colonialism and memory. I tell these stories through the exploration of a well-known cultural institution in Paris, Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA). This dissertation is interested in how IMA talks about France's colonial past. First, I argue that cultural institutions have long ceased to be monolithic machines for the formation of citizens. On the contrary, the constantly shifting desires and expectations of the post-modern consumer citizen have transformed museums into spaces of spectacle, leisure and knowledge. Second, I claim that post-colonial French cultural policies, including the decision to build the IMA, carry the legacy of colonial systems of knowledge and regimes of visual display. I trace back the roots of contemporary French cultural politics to the 19th century colonial exhibitions organized by the French colonial government. Third, I discuss how memories of colonialism and of past colonial encounters exist in the most unexpected spaces within cultural institutions, which transform any spatial component of the IMA into a valid producer of meaning and knowledge.

This dissertation looks at three different spaces within the IMA: the permanent museum and a series of blockbuster exhibitions; the IMA's official magazine, *Qantara*; and the haute cuisine Lebanese restaurant, *El Zyriab*. I argue that, overall, colonial stories are silenced within the formal spaces of display but become more prominent within the spaces of the everyday, such as the restaurant. My evidence consists of documents specific to each investigated space: personal observation of the museological space, exhibition catalogues and the museum's website; all issues of *Qantara*; the menus and website of the restaurant.

My interpretative framework seeks to locate colonial contacts and colonial memories within the complex network of spaces at the IMA. My findings point out towards the absence of colonial stories from the more formal spaces of display, especially the permanent collection of the museum. The pages of *Qantara* constitute a perfect rendition of the ambiguous relation France has with its colonial past. While certain articles are openly critical of colonialism and its effects on post-colonial France, the majority of accounts celebrate the colonial contact for what it allowed Western scholars to discover about the cultural and intellectual development of the Arab world. The restaurant, I argue, is the space where colonial contacts are best represented through the composition of dishes, the vocabulary used to describe the foods and the overall culinary and cooking philosophy of the restaurant.

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To my grandparents, Olga and Dumitru Uncu

PREFACE
On a personal note...

This dissertation represents the result of almost seven years of fascination and interest with France and all things French. After my second year of undergraduate studies, I was awarded a scholarship to pursue a summer internship in Paris. In Paris, I lived in a quiet and green suburb in the South-East part of the city, Anthony. Every morning, I took the RER train towards Paris. At that time, I was unaware of the incredibly diverse immigrant communities who lived in the suburbs, the *banlieue*, separated from the core of the city. At the same time, I noticed how culture, especially music and food, brought different communities together. The post-colonial France I discovered was a nation of multiple contrasts. It was only after I started my Masters in French Studies at New York University that I was able to piece together the history of colonial and post-colonial immigration to France, the exclusionary cultural and urban policies, and the overall forgetting of France's colonial past. I returned to Paris several times after my first trip, as a Masters student, a researcher and a tourist. I visited all the museums about the "other" several times, I became a "regular" at the IMA and I tried to experience Paris post-colonially. My dissertation reflects, besides intensive academic research, readings and writing, my personal relation with Paris.

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INTRODUCTION

The Institut du Monde Arabe and post-colonial France: Telling stories through encounters

In this dissertation, I tell three stories about cultural institutions, colonialism and collective memory in France. I tell these stories through an exploration of a well-known cultural institution in Paris, the Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA). I chose the IMA as my object of study because it mirrors some of France's main social, political and cultural anxieties generated by the overarching fear of losing the republican French identity. This anxiety results in the forgetting and marginalization of colonial memories, seconded by a general mistrust in the immigrant communities with a colonial and post-colonial history. I also selected the IMA for another reason: It functions as a communicative device and a cultural remedy to the violent historical encounters between France and the Arab world. The founders of the Institut envisioned the IMA as a bridge between cultures and as a mediator between French and Arab communities. Because it exists in the post-colonial period, the IMA inevitably responds to a series of representations of the "other" inherited from colonial times. But the IMA is also representative of a series of global shifts in the structure and mission of cultural institutions worldwide: the merging of culture and consumerism.

First, my dissertation investigates the history of French cultural policy in order to situate the Institut du Monde Arabe in the context of ideological and visual discourses which pre-date the post-colonial condition. The existing literature on French cultural policy considers 1959 to be the year when French policing of culture was initiated. While there was no official body in charge with the development of cultural policies before this date, culture has long been used by various institutions engaged in colonial governance to assert Frenchness and to construct other identities in France and in the colonies. However, very few scholars have paid attention to the

intersections between cultural policy, colonial institutions and post-colonialism in France. I argue that in order to understand the nation-focused and exclusionary practices of the Ministry of Culture and the existence of cultural institutions such as the IMA, we need to connect the new ministry with previous colonial institutions.

Second, I propose a new framework for the analysis of cultural institutions as communicative spaces. Cultural institutions are composed of several spaces: art collections, publications, media installations, seminars, shops, restaurants, cafes and the architecture of the building itself. Every space and the associated practices contribute to the overall voice of the institution. While the diversity of spaces within cultural institutions has pushed the boundaries between the *cultural* and the *commercial*, I argue that the merging of everyday practices with more traditional museological strategies of display makes cultural institutions relevant communicators of culture. Every space in the institution from the architectural exterior to the restaurants and gift shops tells a different story about the cultures on display. These diverse spaces form a complex and “messy” system of communication, contradicting, complementing and completely rejecting each other. The artifacts displayed in the museum’s glass boxes, the commodities sold in the gallery shops and the dishes served in the restaurants and cafés are all significant in the formation of meaning and re-telling of history within the institution.

Third, I explore critically some of the popular paradigms associated with the post-colonial study of French colonialism. The long presence of France in North Africa, especially in Algeria, was filled with violent and oppressive instances and many scholars, writers and victims of colonialism have unearthed and explained in detail the repressive acts of the French colonial government. However, I claim that colonialism also produced other types of encounters between cultures and community, less violent and more harmonious. The exclusive focus of post-colonial

histories on political and economic aspects in the detriment of culture subscribes the colonial encounter to a pattern of relations of power that favors the colonizer. It is only in the last twenty years that a “cultural turn” took place in the study of colonial history that allows for instances of negotiation, resistance and influence to be observed in the relation between the colonized and the colonizer. It is in this intellectual context that I situate my work: in the in-between space between oppressive histories and instances of resistance, acts of remembering and forgetting and static representation and dynamic communication.

The Institut du Monde Arabe and communication

John Durham Peters (1999) called communication “one of the characteristic concepts of the twentieth century. It has become central to reflections on democracy, love, and our changing times. Some of our chief dilemmas of our age, both public and personal, turn on communication or communication gone sour” (p. 1). Further, Peters observed that “communication in much contemporary discourse exists as a sort of ill formed, undifferentiated conceptual germ plasm. Rarely has any idea been so infested with platitudes” (p. 6). In 1973, the Institut du Monde Arabe was only one of many ideas of President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing for the improvement of Franco-Arab communication in the midst of the oil crisis. Even before its construction, the IMA functioned as an inter-cultural communicator and a bridge between French and Arab cultures. The idea of the IMA as a diplomatic solution to current and past issues functioned as a promise for better communication at the political but also at the everyday level. A space like the IMA would educate the French audiences about the Arab civilization and would correct some of the popular stereotypes about Arabs in France. Great hopes were placed on the communicative role of the cultural institution. In the 1980s, when François Mitterrand and his cultural team brought Giscard d’Estaing’s idea to life, dialogue and communication were embedded in the ethos of this

grand projet. However, wrote Peters (1999), “the mistake is to think that communications will solve the problems of communication, that better wiring will eliminate the ghosts” (p. 9).

In the case of France, these “ghosts” are France’s colonial encounters with the Arab world. These colonial contacts defined by war, land expropriation or forced urbanization are often excluded from the repertoire of French collective memories. Such contacts are also situated at the basis of contemporary instances of mis-communication between French and Arab communities. While not all the countries represented by the IMA have been affected directly by French colonialism, the effects of the European empire overseas in the nineteenth and twentieth century are a constant component of present conflicts. In France, the presence of colonial and post-colonial immigrants, many of them French citizens by law, makes France’s official efforts to hide colonial memories quite noticeable. The lack of places for commemorating the victims of colonialism, such as museums, monuments, memorials, etc; the absence of compensatory policies for those affected by colonialism and post-colonialism; the survival of colonial stereotypes in everyday discourse; and various housing, educational, cultural policies with indirect exclusionary intentions; all of these are reasons for the present failure of communication between France and Arab countries. The presence of a cultural institution which celebrates the Arab world in the midst of all these issues enhances the futility of the expectation that “better wiring will eliminate the ghosts”. Therefore, building an institute about an imaginary *monde arabe* represents another strategy to avoid direct reference to France’s colonial history.

I believe that the intentions to facilitate communication between cultures in the context of the IMA happened in a context of silence and absence which rather indicates a lack of communication. Furthermore, the discourse of a healing act of communication is attractive for the promises embedded within communication. For Peters (1999), “communication presents

itself as an easy solution to intractable human troubles: language, finitude, plurality” (p. 30).

The reasons for failure to communicate in the present or for the several moments of miscommunication are not addressed. Because France’s past colonial encounter with certain Arab nations is not acknowledged as a significant transformative moment in France’s history within official venues, such as textbooks, laws, museums and monuments, France and its policies are not blamed for the failures in communication within the post-colonial period. Instead, the overall abstract notion of communication is faulty, confirming Peters’ thesis.

Historical mis-communications: The politics of French colonialism in the 19th century

Colonialism, “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods...has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history” (Loomba, 2005, p. 8). In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba (2005) explained the differences between modern European colonialism, in which France played a major role, and previous forms of “pre-capitalist” conquest such as the Crusades or the Moorish invasion of Spain. According to this thesis, “modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered – it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonised and colonial countries” (Loomba, 2005, p. 9). In the case of France, this economic flow of humans and resources was based on an ideological system anchored in a series of narratives: the civilizing mission; the superiority of the French “civilization” and race; and the integrity of the French nation. France has been a colonial power since the early 1500s, when the French made their first forays into the Americas, but the development of a coherent colonial ideology was directly connected with post-Revolutionary France. The efforts invested by the French

government in France's colonial empire at the beginning of the 18th century were motivated by the desire to solidify the French nation through economic and cultural expansion.

Most scholars of French history agree that the defining moment of French modern colonialism was the conquest of Algiers in 1830. According to Robert Aldrich (1996), "the conquest of Algiers in 1830 represented a response to a domestic political situation more than a direct start to commercial expansion of colonialism" (p. 25; see also Ageron, 1991; Stora, 1991; Ruedy, 1992). The invasion of Algiers was orchestrated by the government of Charles X as a distraction from the political crisis in France but, in the end, it was not able to prevent the 1830 revolutions which resulted in the establishment of the July Monarchy. At a larger scale, colonial expansion was used by the French government in the *métropole* to solidify the French nation at home by rallying the citizens around a common project, colonialism (Girardet, 1969; Peabody & Stovall, 2003; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2009). The first phases of Algeria's colonization marked France's colonial debut in Africa, which would result in further acts of conquest¹. By 1920s, greater France or *la plus grande France* controlled the second largest empire in the world, second only to that of Britain.

The strength of the French empire consisted of a strong military system, a complex bureaucratic network and a well developed ideological basis. While the French overseas colonies were at first considered purely economic sources for the *métropole*, by the beginning of the 19th century, these vast territorial possessions have been assimilated to France *une et indivisible*, became symbols of France's global stature and were used as experimental sites for policies to be implemented at home. The French empire was sustained by a solid and consistent

¹ By the 1920s, considered to be the apogee of the French colonial empire, France has colonized the following countries in Africa. Gambia, Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, Benin, The Republic of Congo, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Mali, Togo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Central African Republic, Senegal, Tunisia, Tanzania. At this time, France also had colonies, protectorates, regencies and territories in Asia, in the Caribbean, in the Indian Ocean and in the Middle East

military presence which was engaged in acts of violence, intimidation and preservation of order. The brutality of the French army was manifested through land expropriations, burning of villages, razzias, mass killings and torture (Fanon, 1961; Césaire, 1955; Ageron, 1991; Le Cour Grandmaison, 2005). Along with military domination, another form of political power spread throughout the colonies, the French bureaucracy. Aldrich (1996) described the colonial bureaucracy as the first stage of “pacification” after territorial conquest has concluded (p. 106-111). Therefore, “yet another strategy for enhancing French positions was to use local institutions as foundations for colonial control, and local chiefs as intermediaries between the French and the masses” (Aldrich, 1996, p. 107). The military system and the rigorous network of colonial bureaucracy were subordinated to a larger ideological context dominated by the *mission civilisatrice*. This mission, “justifiant l’acte colonial, une idéologie fondée sur la certitude de la supériorité de la ‘race blanche’ et de l’avance culturelle et scientifique des civilisations occidentales s’impose à la fin du XIXe siècle” (Blanchard & Bancel, 1998, p. 17). This official ideology, visible at first in official documents, policies and military interventions, permeates both academic circles and popular culture in the *métropole* through scholarly texts, conferences, research expeditions, colonial exhibitions, novels, print media or leisure activities.

In the 1940s, France witnessed the first signs indicating the end of its colonial empire. Weakened by wars, divided by the German Occupation, critiqued by anti-colonial movements and “conquered” by more and more immigrant communities with colonial origins, France *une et indivisible* experiences “la crise coloniale”. In May 1954, the French colonial army is defeated in Indochina at Dien Bien Phu, resulting in Indochina’s independence from its colonizer; only six months later, the Algerian War was initiated, concluding after eight violent years with the independence of Algeria in 1962 (Betts, 1991; Clayton, 1994; Shepard, 2006). The aftermath of

decolonization which coincides with the beginnings of the post-colonial period proved to be a painful and “messy” time for France. According to Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (2006), the post-colonial efforts to forget colonialism and deny its effects on France are futile as the impacts of colonialism are visible in “l’extension, dans les quartiers, de la comparaison entre les situations de relégation et la situation coloniale; la législation sur la bonne manière de construire et transmettre le ‘bilan globalement positif’ de la colonisation; ...la montée du ‘sentiment d’insécurité’ face aux immigrations postcoloniales...; les dénonciations médiatiques d’un ‘racisme antiblanc’...; les phobies anti-islam” (p. 11). All these represent post-colonial signs of the former colonial empire which generated a crisis of memory in France visible even today.

Colonial memories and the memory crisis in France

In my dissertation, I analyze the Institut du Monde Arabe in the context of the contemporary *crise de la mémoire coloniale* in France. In 1970s, when the project of the IMA was first proposed by the Giscard d’Estaing government, France was in the midst of the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism. A time of economic crisis, which marked the end of the *trente glorieuses*², the seventies were also the decade when immigration from former French colonies became permanent. The law of *regroupement familial*, voted in 1976 by the French government, allowed the immigrants residing temporarily in France to bring their families and demand French citizenship. Faced with large numbers of new comers, the French government established new housing policies sending the immigrant communities towards the margins of the city, in the *banlieue*. Instances of racism targeting especially North African

² “Trente glorieuses” is an expression coined by French demographer Jean Fourastier which refers to the period of 1945-1975. These three decades, after WWII, were characterized by economic prosperity, high productivity and high wages.

communities intensified in the 1980s and culminated with the rise of the Jean Marie Le Pen's right wing National Front Party and the first riots in the Parisian suburbs. The eighties is also the decade of the *génération beur* who spoke in the name of their parents and demanded the breaking of "silences coloniales". It is in this post-colonial climate that the Institut du Monde Arabe was inaugurated. However, its mission and content were far removed from the contemporary social and cultural realities. Former IMA Presidents Edgard Pisani and Paul Carton have spoken publicly about the non-political nature of the institution without mentioning the word "colonialism". This rhetorical strategy has been used by other museum directors in the last few years. For example, Stéphane Martin, the president of the Musée du Quai Branly, stated that "we are not in the business of buying ourselves a clear conscience vis-a-vis the non-Western world or becoming an "apology museum,: relaying messages based on the heritage of cultural/ethnic communities in the way museums in Canada or the United States do for Indians" (Martin cited in Price, 2007, p. 125). Likewise, the presence of a cultural institution about the Arab world in 1980s in Paris was not an apology for France's colonial past but it was presented as an attempt to educate the French audiences about Arab cultures and an act of extreme generosity from the part of France.

Housing *le monde arabe* in a glass and steel building designed by star architect Jean Nouvel brings back the rhetoric of colonialism. However, the desire to "own" *le monde arabe* also comes from the realization that Arab cultures and communities are not passively present in France but are changing its cultural and political structures. In fact, many scholars argue that a colonial culture was developing in France since the nineteenth century, fuelled by ethnographic museums, exotic gardens and zoos, colonial exhibitions and the everyday exposure to colonial products and cultural practices. After decolonization, these spaces, products and practices

remained in France but were disconnected from the previous context of colonial domination and control. From primitive and exotic, the “other’s” cultural productions become legitimate and valuable and cultural institutions such as the IMA or Quai Branly represent the background for the battles over the changes in meaning and display of formerly colonized cultures. Therefore, analyzing and comparing the stories told by these cultural institutions reveals the difficult and ongoing transition from a colonial to a post-colonial discourse.

French historian Marc Ferro wrote about the “histoire inaudible” of French colonialism as a consequence of collective practices common for nations “dont l’action a touché la légitimité de leur comportement – au regard de normes morales, éthiques, culturelles” (Ferro cited in Bancel & Lemaire, 2006, p. 134). Countries such as Germany, Russia or Poland “ont des difficultés avec l’écriture de leur histoire” (ibid.). In France, wrote Pascal Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (2006), the postcolonial condition was characterized by a double narrative of censorship, or forgetting: “autocensure des citoyens” and “censure des autorités (p. 134). The acts of hiding colonial histories is a result of the inability to admit that “la République a trahi ses valeurs” (ibid.). The majority of scholars who investigate the crisis of memory in France agree that national identity and history are at the center of this collective forgetting. Paul Ricoeur (2004) adds the problem of forgiving to the discussion on forgetting, asking if peoples are indeed capable of forgiving once a past event has been remembered. It is only in the past twenty years, that scholars, journalists and civic communities have opened the floodgates of colonial memory through academic books, conferences, public manifestations, etc.³ Cultural institutions are caught in the middle of these debates because of their “in between” position as representatives of the French nation and spaces of critical inquiry of colonial history. I argue that the Institut du

³ A great overview of the literature that generated great debates about colonial memory in France can be found in Ana L. Stoler (2010) *L’aphasie coloniale française: L’histoire mutilée*. In Bancel et al (Eds), *Ruptures postcoloniales: Les nouveaux visages de la société française* (pp 62-79) Paris La Découverte.

Monde Arabe despite its clearly depoliticized mission hides colonial stories from its main exhibitionary and educational spaces. These absences are contradicted and challenged by other spaces where colonial memories come to life. Such contradictions also emerge from the diversity of communities with which the IMA communicates: politicians, donor countries or diasporic communities.

The impossibility of remaining neutral to struggles over memory in France comes from another aspect of the colonial heritage: the representation of the “other”. During colonial times, the French in the *métropole* encountered the “other” in three main circumstances: in exhibitions, in print culture and in leisure activities. Education about the cultures and traditions of the colonized communities was at its height during colonial exhibitions. Information about the culture and society of the colonized countries was filtered through racial ideologies in order to promote the superiority of the French “civilization”. For example, towards the end of the nineteenth century, “colonial subjects” were displayed in public parks, often caged and instructed to perform traditional crafts. The strategies of display formulated during these events which were highly informed by Orientalist scholarship and scientific studies of race, were disseminated through several venues: exhibitions of images, products and even people from the colonies; printed materials such as catalogues, pamphlets or postcards published for the purpose of the exhibitions by mainstream magazines and newspapers who dedicated special issues to colonial exhibitions; and leisure activities, such as dance and music shows, demonstrations of local crafts and food, which was one of the most popular aspect of the events.

The popularity of these colonial stereotypes and their infiltration in French culture even today has two main implications for this dissertation. First, the usage of culture to create a cohesive French national identity is an example of cultural policy before the establishment of a

Ministry of Culture in 1959. Most scholars who analyze French cultural policy do not consider the relevance of such events for the development of contemporary cultural policy. Second, all post-colonial cultural institutions today, including the IMA, must respond directly or indirectly to these prior strategies of representing the “other”. The IMA’s founding documents refer to the mission of correcting the stereotypes that the French might have about the Arab world. While these documents which will be analyzed in the following chapter do not refer to the history of such stereotypes, I argue that they have a clear colonial connection.

Post-colonial cultural institutions in France

In my dissertation, I refer to the Institut du Monde Arabe as a post-colonial cultural institution. While cultural institutions are significant components of the social and cultural fabric of any society, there are very few concrete theorizations of the cultural institution. Often, the museum is the preferred site of investigation for those interested in the study of cultural institutions. The difficulty to define the cultural institution stems from the general and inclusive definition of culture promoted by cultural studies scholars. According to Terry Eagleton, “the phrase ‘cultural institution’ is a tautology, since there are no non-cultural ones” (p. 35). Similarly, continued Eagleton (2000), Raymond Williams’ definition of culture as “the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions...the characteristic form through which members of society communicate” is “excessively generous, leaving almost nothing out” (p. 35). David Carr (2003), in reference to museums and libraries, provided a more specific definition of cultural institutions as, “places *to hold* and preserve objects and texts, *to expand* the boundaries of public knowledge associated with these artefacts and words, and *to open* the possibilities of learning in the context of everyday life” (p. xiii, emphasis in original). The application of the concept “cultural institution” must take into

account three aspects: “the presence of a collection”, “a systematic, continuous, organized knowledge structure” and “scholarship, information and thought and a culture of inquiry and not consumerism” (Carr, 2003, p. xiv-xv).

The Institut du Monde Arabe conforms to some of these requirements. While it houses a permanent museum which displays Arabic artefacts, the IMA is not the owner of the collection. The collection displayed in the museum contains objects on loan from the Musée du Louvre, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Musée des Arts Decoratifs and the former Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens. Many controversies surrounding the institution in the past years are related to the opening of a new wing of Islamic art at the Louvre in 2012, which will require the restitution of many objects to the lending museum. This process would leave the IMA without a proper collection. The “continuous knowledge structure” is challenged at the IMA by the multitude of spaces where different versions of history are told or displayed. The main mission of the institution accomplished in the main exhibitionary spaces is to depict the greatness of Arab culture to French audiences. However, the linear and chronological story of Arab history, void of colonial encounters with France, is questioned in the pages of the IMA’s publications, in the context of seminars and conferences and in the restaurant. The IMA does promote a “culture of inquiry” but similar to most contemporary museums, it also includes spaces for consumption such as restaurants and shops.

The difficulty of defining a cultural institution such as the IMA or to categorize it is a result of the very specific historical context which produced it. The Institut du Monde Arabe is dedicated to Arab culture and history but the past encounters between France and many Arab nations have been marked by colonialism. The unresolved memory of colonial history is a major component of current relations between the French state and the immigrant communities in

France. Moreover, the IMA exists within a very rich museological context and communicates with other museums in Paris but also with previous cultural productions such as colonial exhibitions and ethnographic museums, where the “other” was represented and constructed. The strategies of display developed during colonial times exposed French audiences to the colonized communities through three main types of public communication: exhibitions, print culture and re-enactment of local cultural practices. Despite the official efforts of the administration to de-politicize the content of the IMA, these techniques of display represent a constant point of reference for the presentation of Arab cultures in post-colonial France. An institution such as the IMA and the debates around it are rooted in the specificity of French museological landscape, political culture and history. Along with other cultural institutions catalogued as “post-colonial,” the IMA should be read in the context of post-colonial culture and politics.

But what exactly is a post-colonial cultural institution? The existing literature on post-colonial museums such as Quai Branly or Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration (CNHI) does not provide a clear explanation of what a post-colonial museum should do. There is a general consensus among museum studies scholars that Quai Branly and the CNHI, which is housed in the former museum of the colonies, continue some of the museological practices inherited from colonial times. In “Le musée colonial impossible,” Robert Aldrich (2005) asked if these museums should be or can be “decolonized” (p. 97). Likewise, Sarah Froning Deleporte (2006) posed the question “est-il concevable que la transformation de trois nouveaux musées nationaux puisse amener la République à se confronter à la différence mythique entre un ‘nous’ et un ‘eux’ qui semble peser sur la solidarité nationale en France?” (p. 110). In a recent volume on “museums in postcolonial Europe,” Robert Aldrich (2010) looked at the transformation of colonial museums into post-colonial institutions. His conclusions about the French case imply

an overall erasing of colonial imprints as “the French tried to hide colonialism – closing rooms, mothballing paintings, revising labels, erasing the now offensive sentiments about the civilising mission, trying to embrace postcolonial art and politics” (Aldrich, 2010, p. 27). While all these findings are relevant and timely, it remains unclear what a post-colonial institution is and what it should achieve.

In my dissertation, I consider post-colonial institutions to be spaces where reflections on colonial history are incorporated in the discourse promoted by the specific institution. A true postcolonial institution does not hide colonial encounters but places them at the center of its practices and stories. None of the contemporary museums in France, including the IMA, are critical enough of the colonial past to be called post-colonial. What makes these institutions post-colonial spaces is simply their existence in a temporal period which follows after decolonization. Therefore, when I refer to the IMA as a post-colonial cultural institution, I do so in the context of my second definition. At the same time, I recognize that the complexity of the IMA and other post-colonial museums allows for the incorporation of critical instances vis-a-vis the colonial past. However, such instances are not obvious and are not part of the mainstream dialogues which happen within the museum.

Conceptual framework: Colonial encounters in post-colonial spaces

In this dissertation, I use the notion of encounter as my main theoretical concept. According to Sara Ahmed (2000), “encounters are meetings...which are not simply in the present: each encounter reopens past encounters. Encounters involve, not only the surprise of being faced by other who cannot be located in the present, they also involve conflict” (p. 8). The Institut du Monde Arabe is representative of a series of encounters, both past and present, between: Arab cultures and French audiences; spaces of display, spaces of education and spaces

for consumption; French colonialism and postcoloniality; colonial memories and instances of collective forgetting; and different regimes of display and representation. Further, the IMA constitutes a transitional moment in the French museological context, from colonialism to post-colonialism. Ahmed's definition of encounters suggests that any present encounter has a history of conflict. In the case of the IMA, the encounter between Arab and French cultures is marked by the legacy of colonialism even if the main spaces of display are void of any colonial references. The two cultures which meet in the context of the IMA have encountered each other in the past and those previous contacts, according to Ahmed's definition, influence the different types of encounters which take place in the post-colonial present. Another definition of "the encounter" claims that "performative encounters [represent] a type of encounter that coincides with the creation of new subject-positions rather than treating preexisting (pre-imagined) identities as the reason for, and justification of, the protocol of encounter" (Rosello, 2005, p. 1). According to Mireille Rosello's interpretation of "encounters" the past contacts can produce present situations which escape the patterns dictated by specific historical conditions such as colonialism.

My theoretical framework reunites ideas emerging from a series of academic fields and disciplines which directly or indirectly address the concept of encounter. Communication studies, very generally, is a field of numerous encounters, either missed, achieved, mediated, translated, lost or recycled. First and foremost, the IMA is a place which engages in acts of public communication with the diverse communities which make up France. The IMA was envisioned by its creators to act as a bridge and a potential channel of communication between cultures and peoples. The imagined audience of the IMA described in the foundational documents of the institution is primarily French and interested in Arab culture. However, the

IMA speaks through its different spaces to a much larger and diverse audience. The result of these communicative practices is the contradiction between a version of France's colonial past which mirrors official narratives and a series of stories which challenge it. To highlight and connect all these elements, this dissertation uses primarily the bodies of literature in cultural studies which explore the relations between culture, power and resistance in the context of cultural contacts. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony plays a foundational role in the interpretation of culture developed by cultural studies scholars such as Stuart Hall, Dick Hedbigge and Angela McRobbie. Hegemony implies domination exercised through consent rather than force and incorporates the social practices which oppose and fight this domination. In recent years, scholars of cultural studies have argued that hegemony "has truth-values for a particular epoch" which is now coming to an end and it is being replaced with a post-hegemonic condition (Lash, 2007, p. 55; see also Thoburn, 2007). Hegemony is a concept with a complex and shifting history. In this dissertation, in order to account for this rich history, I use the broader concept of negotiation in lieu of hegemony. I believe that the concept of negotiation resonates with aspects of hegemony without subscribing my arguments to a solidified definition of the concept. This decision was also motivated by the changing definition of culture, which constantly modifies the uses and meanings of hegemony. The cultural studies literature has transformed the definition of culture to incorporate practices of the "everyday", such as cooking, shopping and walking (Hall, 1980; Highmore, 2001). The legitimacy of quotidian practices in the formation and preservation of culture is visible in the context of cotemporary museums. Likewise, quotidian practices together with more established strategies for the display and preservation of knowledge negotiate historical accounts and sometimes resist the dominant institutional narrative.

The study of cultural contacts is an essential component of post-colonial studies, another academic field to be explored in this chapter. Acting as an official cultural institution, the IMA will inevitably inherit and express the larger narratives France tells about its colonial past. However, the spaces which compose the institute reveal the tensions between different narratives of the post-colonial experience. The incongruity between official discourses about colonialism and translations of these narratives in a post-colonial institution highlight other social and political anxieties at the core of French citizenship and nationhood, such as the failure of the integration system, the fears for the decline of *laïcité* or the anxieties caused by the changing nature of Frenchness. Furthermore, the literature on post-colonial contacts, especially Edward Said's discussion of counterpunal readings of colonial encounters in *Culture and Imperialism*, suggests a new interpretation of past intersecting histories. Said and other scholars argued for the observation of the instances of resistance, negotiation and influence which marked the colonial encounter both in Europe and in the former colonies.

My dissertation addresses specifically the nature of the colonial encounter between France and its colonies and investigates the difficulty of talking about cultural contacts outside a framework of violence and conflict. The focus of colonial histories on political and economic aspects in the detriment of culture subscribes the colonial encounter to a pattern of relations that emphasize the dominating power of the colonizer. In the last twenty years, a "cultural turn" took place in the study of colonial history that focuses on a different set of encounters between the colonized and the colonizer: negotiation, resistance and influence. I suggest that the IMA represents a sign of the increasing significance of Arab cultures in post-colonial France. The desire of knowing the cultures of the most significant immigrant community in France shows not only the high exposure of the French to these new cultural practices but the entrance of such

practices in the informal and casual vocabulary of everyday French culture. The existence of IMA is itself a symbol of the influence that various aspects of Arab cultures hold on French cultural practices and of the desire to acquire knowledge about something that changes and challenges the French cultural imaginary. The presence of “the colonies” in France today represents a site of anxiety over the decline of “Frenchness”.

The often unintentional integration of colonial stories to the overall discourse of the IMA is the outcome of diverse intersections which happen between exhibitionary, educational and consumerist spaces. This dissertation will argue that the possibility of these encounters to exist in the present represents the work of: the unintentional negotiations between the everyday cultures of the colonized communities; the contradictory systems of knowledge about the colonized cultures translated to the French in the *métropole*; and the forgotten memories which haunt both official and unofficial forums. I suggest that the Institut du Monde Arabe should be observed within the larger historical context of colonial cultural practices in order to observe the continuities and the disruptions with the previous system of knowing the “other”. The IMA proves the complexity and contradictions of cultural institutions and the ability of official spaces to escape their assigned missions and to allow conversations about colonial histories beyond narratives of violence and oppression.

Performing research at the Institut du Monde Arabe

The first time I visited the IMA in the summer of 2009 I was not quite sure where to commence my research. So just like any other undecided visitor I started my trip in the monumental glass edifice with a visit to the museum shop, where I discovered a great variety of books, on topics ranging from the history of spices to postcolonial immigration in France. The store also sells pottery and artwork inspired by Islamic art, together with postcards, bookmarks

and scarves. I noticed that the office of *Qantara*, the IMA's main publication, is located towards the back of the store, separated from the shopping area through a glass wall. The great selection of books in the IMA's shop inspired the second stop of my visit, more appropriate for my academic mission, the library. The Bibliothèque de l'IMA is spread out over seven floors, three of which (first, third and fifth) are organized around sitting areas and stacks of books and newspapers. The main architectural attraction of the library is the "tour des livres", inspired from a similar structure found in Sammara, Iraq. The book tower connects all the library floors and functions as a repository for sections of the book collection and for all the periodicals housed at the IMA. The library would become my home during the summer and the site for many encounters with various members of the IMA staff.

Being part of the community of scholars, students and visitors of the IMA's library made me aware of the absence of a coherent and accessible project to preserve the institutional memory of the IMA. Prior to my research trip to Paris, I was planning to gather a series of documents usually available for public consultation in libraries associated with cultural institutions: well documented press review files, foundational documents, administrative board meetings minutes, curatorial notes, exhibition files, annual reports and quantitative data about the IMA's visitors. The IMA is very active in organizing seminars, symposiums, conferences and round table talks, which I was also planning to use as part of my dissertation, but there is very little information systematically preserved about such events. Used to the highly structured and digitized North American system of institutional documentation, I was surprised to find such gaps in the IMA's collection. After spending some time at the IMA, I discovered that some members of the IMA staff share this frustration and are working to make public the history of the IMA and to open a comprehensive archive with all IMA's past events.

From this new position, I had to re-think my project in light of the little information I had available and I decided to use these “absences” as the starting point for my research. First, I pieced together the sporadic information I could find in the library about the IMA’s history: (1) two volumes documenting depictions of the IMA in the French and Arab media, covering the period from 1980 until 1999; (2) a series of foundational documents available to the public – “La mission de l’Institut”, “Statuts de la Fondation”, “Décret du 14 octobre 1980” and the text of François Mitterrand’s inaugural speech; (3) a volume published by the IMA in 2000 to celebrate “vingt ans d’activités,” which presents chronologically all exhibitions and public events organized by the IMA in its first two decades of activity⁴; (4) and four annual reports (2003-2006). All these documents were available for consultation in the Library. Some of the librarians at the IMA showed great interest and support for my research and gave me access to the IMA’s database which is not available to the public, which also made the evidence gathered from this database impossible to use as a source for my dissertation. Since the information was not officialy public, I would not be able to make direct reference to this database which includes a comprehensive list and descriptions for all events organized at the IMA, from 1980 until today. Once (and if) this archive becomes public, I plan to continue my research on the IMA.

During my “stay” at the IMA I made extensive use of the exhibition catalogues and the issues of the *Qantara* magazine available in the library. These sources were easily accessible once I learned how to use the search functions of the digital library catalogue. Each floor of the library was equipped with three computers which could be used as search portals. Often, one or more of these computers would freeze or display “error” messages, which would require a shutdown and reboot of the system. While frustrating at the beginning, by the end of the summer I embraced this unexpected side of the library’s culture. While the exhibition catalogues and

⁴ This volume was offered to me as a gift by the director of the Library.

books were properly stored in the stacks, the issues of *Qantara* magazine were chaotically stored in two boxes on the lower side of the book tower. Some of the issues were missing, while others were missing pages and covers. Once I reported this situation to the librarian on duty, she lent me copies of the missing issues from her personal collection, so, by the end of the summer, I was able to access all issues of the magazine.

Another significant gap from the IMA's archives is information about the visitors and different audiences targeted by the institution. The few available annual reports provide information about the number of visitors to the museum, which fluctuate between 900,000 in 2003 and 822,000 in 2006. Based on these four reports, I noticed that the largest number of visitors is usually registered around the time of the *grandes expositions* such as "Pharaon" (Pharaoh) or "Venise et l'Orient" (Venice and the Orient). While the IMA's Communication Department (Relations avec les publics) provides limited qualitative data available in the annual reports mentioned above, there is little publicly accessible knowledge of the demographics of the visitors, their reasons for visiting the IMA and their experience and impressions of the institution. While I was attending the cultural events at the IMA during the summer of 2009, I noticed that the participants in these events were asked to complete a questionnaire which asked for demographic information (ex: gender, age, education, residence, reasons for visiting the IMA, impressions of the visit, suggestions for improvement, etc.). Participants to this survey – including myself – were told that this information would help the IMA's staff to plan events and exhibitions based on the visitors' interests. The annual reports also include limited information about the financial performance of the three restaurants at the IMA and brief descriptions of the magazine *Qantara*'s readership. The only factual information I was able to find about the

Qantara's subscribers comes from the 2005 Annual Report, which mentions that the number of subscribers in 2004 was approximately 2800.

The different sources I was able to consult while researching the IMA and those which were missing from the institution's archives influenced the arguments I would be able to make about the formative days of the institutions, the relations between the different communities which co-exist within the IMA and the publics which utilize the different spaces of the institute. The limited information about the discussions and debates which occurred during the developing stages of the IMA among the administrative communities but also more generally within the French public sphere limited the conclusions I could make about the official place of the institution in a post-colonial context. Museums about the "other" in France, such as the Quai Branly or the Cite National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration usually generate intense discussions – in the media, in academic circles and among various communities – centered on colonial memory. If such debates existed when the IMA was still in its project phase, they have not been recorded and remembered as components of the IMA's institutional memory.

Likewise, another missing component from the IMA's story is the voice of curators and exhibition designers. Not able to find curatorial notes and minutes from different meetings which usually precede the opening of an exhibition, I had to look for the curator's voices within different exhibition catalogues. In each catalogue, the curator discusses some of the themes and highlights of the exhibition without too much room to explain the formative process of the exhibition or the challenges posed to the display of history within a hierarchical institutional context. Third, I had very limited information about the demographics of the IMA's audience. The foundational documents suggested that the IMA's primary function was to communicate the history and culture of the Arab world to a French audience. But what is a French audience? Who

is included and excluded from the definition? Such questions would be impossible to address using only the limited information provided by the IMA's archives. During my time at the IMA, I noticed that each space attracts a different audience. For example, if the main museum was mainly visited by tourists, the library was the preferred space of study and group work of students from the nearby Jussieu University. These different absences limited what I could say about the IMA but also opened up new methodological and interpretative venues which will be developed further in the analytical section of this dissertation.

Interpretative framework: The Institut du Monde Arab and public communications

The primary sources used in my dissertation to analyze the activities and mission of the Institut du Monde Arabe are components of the public communication initiated by the IMA. I use "public communication" to refer to the institutional documents and publications such as exhibition catalogues, magazines and restaurant menus, which are open for public consultation and made available to the visitors and researchers at the IMA. By analyzing various instances of public communication, I am interested in: the relation between the IMA and the history of French colonialism; the often contradictory dialogues which take place between some of the spaces in the IMA; and the representation or absence of colonial contacts. I believe that while every cultural institution tries to construct a rather homogenous image to the outside publics through a dominant discourse, the multitude of spaces within the institution, each generating a series of public communications, is a barrier to this intention. Steve C. Dubin (2007) wrote that "museums are no longer dead zones or monuments to the past...museums are now noisy, contentious, and extremely vital places" (p. 213). I believe that cultural institutions are also spaces for multiple encounters. Because there is very little academic work on cultural institutions, I use the literature on museums in order to guide my methodological framework. I

believe that this general view of institutions as capable of change and fragmented by the various practices and communities which compose them is suitable for my project.

In this dissertation, I argue that there are three different types of spaces which construct knowledge about Arab culture at the IMA: (1) spaces of display (exhibitionary), which include the main museum, the temporary exhibitions and the “Qantara” virtual museum; (2) spaces of education (educational), which consists of publications, seminars, conferences, language courses, cinema, dance shows, etc.; and (3) spaces for consumption (consumerist) which are comprised of shops and restaurants. All these spaces “speak” or remain silent about the colonial moment. I will highlight the different stories that the objects, texts and foods placed within the same museological space can tell about colonial encounters. To do so, I selected a series of representative spaces from each category – exhibitionary, educational and consumerist – which I investigate through a comparative analysis centered on the search for encounters. This dissertation proposes one way “to read” the IMA through the analysis of: (1) the main museum, the grandes exhibitions and the virtual museum Qantara; (2) the main publication of the IMA, *Qantara*; and (3) the restaurant El Zyriab. Each space requires a distinct methodological approach dictated by the organization, structure and function of the space. While my readings of these different spaces at the IMA utilize diverse methods of investigation, my interpretative framework is connected through the search for colonial encounters. I also selected these spaces because during colonial exhibitions, the French and the colonial subjects have met in three main circumstances: in the exhibition, in the print culture and through leisurely activities, one of the most popular being the culinary experiences of the “other’s” dishes.

The three exhibitionary spaces which I chose to analyze, the museum, the *grandes expositions* and the virtual exhibition, represent the central cultural productions of the IMA. The

foundational documents of the IMA, the IMA's website, the press releases and interviews with the IMA's presidents and curators highlight the importance of these spaces. Further, the museum and the *grandes expositions* attract the most numbers of visitors annually, fact revealed by the annual reports of the institution. My readings of these spaces involve an eclectic range of primary sources: personal observations of the museological space, textual analysis of informative panels, the *Qantara* website content, exhibition catalogues and commemorative publications – *Vingt Ans d'Activités: 1980-2000*, *Musée de l'Institut du Monde Arabe*, *Qantara: Patrimoine Méditerranéen: Traversées d'Orient et d'Occident*. My analysis of these spaces takes into account a series of analytical considerations provided by the field of museum studies. Generally, I consider objects and texts in and about the museum and exhibition to be both “poetic” and “political”. Henrietta Lidchi (1997) defined both terms: “‘poetics’ refers to the practice of producing meaning through the internal ordering and conjugation of the separate but related components of the exhibition” (p. 168) while “politics” refers to “the role of exhibitions/museums in the production of social knowledge” (p. 185). Therefore, the practices of display which are part of internal museum politics are also reflective of the larger social context where the cultural institution is placed. In the case of the IMA, the decision to include or exclude references to colonial history is partially influenced by the French political environment marked by *une crise de mémoire*.

The stories told by the museum and the exhibitions at the IMA resonate in other spaces of the institution, such as the magazine *Qantara*. *Qantara*, the main publication at the IMA was first published in 1991 under the direction of Edgard Pisani, who was also the President of the IMA at that time. The publication was described as one of the many initiatives to end the financial and identity crisis of the institution. The inaugural issue of *Qantara* opened with the

promise that the IMA would surpass these problems and “c’est en adulte qu’il aborde son avenir. Il le fait avec un sens accru de ses responsabilités, en sachant que ça ne sera jamais facile parce que deux civilisations ne se rencontrent jamais sans se heurter. Mais il y a dans ce heurt même une infinie richesse. Ce magazine en sera l’expression” (p. 3). The proximity between the main exhibitionary spaces of the IMA and the magazine is reflected in the content of *Qantara*, which features in each issue a *dossier spécial* dedicated to or influenced by a cultural event organized by the institute, usually the *grandes expositions*. However, the richness of popular and academic voices included in the pages of the magazine prevent the formation of a strict narrative about colonial history. My analysis of the magazine includes a close examination of the 77 issues of *Qantara* from 1991 to the present with a focus on the development of a discourse around the colonial encounter between France and the Arab world. My interpretation of *Qantara*’s content combines textual and critical analysis with an observation of themes which refer directly or indirectly to colonialism. For example, my analysis will include articles where colonialism and the crisis related to colonial memory is directly critiqued by French historians and sociologists but also interviews and dossiers where Orientalism is celebrated.

The third space to be analyzed in this dissertation is the restaurant Le Zyriab which is situated at the top of the IMA and it is credited with one of the best views of Paris. The restaurant will be investigated through an analysis of the menu, the architectural space and the techniques of plating and preparation of available dishes. While the restaurant is a space of consumption and it can be argued that its placement in the museum has a financial purpose, I look at restaurants as spaces of cultural encounters where knowledge about the “other” is produced. In this dissertation, I apply the definition of restaurants as “total social phenomena” developed by David Beriss and David Sutton (2007) to explain the myriad of relations, histories

and memories which can be uncovered by the exploration of eating spaces. Restaurants with an international focus mediate culinary encounters through a very intimate exposure to the cultural practices of other cultures. In museums, restaurants represent extensions of the museological content and reflect the overall “image” of the institution. At the IMA, the Lebanese *nouvelle cuisine* restaurant allows for the observations of encounters between ingredients, cooking techniques and plating styles which go back to colonial history. The encounter between dishes and foodways during colonialism produced changes in both France and Lebanon and the restaurant at the IMA is a relevant space for the observation of such encounters.

Throughout the dissertation, I also use two other bodies of primary sources, both internal and external to the IMA: a group of documents which I categorize as “foundational documents”, available for public consultation in the Bibliothèque de l’IMA; and French print media coverage of the IMA’s development, *grandes expositions* and restaurant. I refer to these primary sources in order to establish the official mission proposed for the IMA by the teams of administrators and curators in the 1980s, when the institution was first opened to the public. Also, I use these materials to explore the popular discourses around the IMA and to observe what voices are prominent in the public communications about the institution. While I am aware that foundational documents which outline proposed missions for public institutions are often bureaucratic texts with little relevance to the general development of the institution in time, I argue that it is important to observe the types of questions and issues which were circulated within the administrative community at the time when the IMA was created. The analysis of such documents in relation to the intended audiences for the IMA allows for the observation of future changes in ideology and practice.

One significant challenge posed by the contemporary historical analysis of past events is the critical point of view utilized throughout the analysis. Reflexive methodology and interpretative research pose the great challenge of balancing objective field research with the interpretation of the primary materials (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg (2009) stated that “in reflective empirical research the centre of gravity is shifted from the handling of empirical material towards, as far as possible, a consideration of the perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, (inter)textual, political and cultural circumstances that form the backdrop to – as well as impregnate – the interpretations” (p. 9). Contemporary discussions of colonialism are inevitably critical but criticism has been shaped by decades of research and academic literature, a changing system of values and the language of political correctness. Modern accounts of previous tragic and traumatic events are done outside the original political and cultural context which produced that specific event. Writing in 2011 about a historic period which commenced at the beginning of the 19th century is difficult precisely because of the significant time gap between the scholar and her object of study and the ethical standards used throughout the analysis.

A few notes on language

Throughout this dissertation, I use frequently a series of terms: official, in reference to discourse, story or narrative; space, in relation to the structure of the cultural institution; and the “other” in order to refer to cultures and communities with a colonial history.

In the following chapters I will make the argument that the Institut du Monde Arabe mirrors the official version of colonial history in post-colonial France. By official, I refer generally to specific versions of France’s history promoted through laws, commemorative places (museums, monuments, memorial or street names), speeches, publications and diplomatic acts,

initiated by the French government and associations related to the government. This version of French history is often told without a strong critical understanding of the colonial past and the effects of this past on post-colonial realities. I am also aware that official discourses and practices are diverse and full of conflictual and contradictory stories but the scope of this dissertation is not to identify such inconsistencies.

Second, I use the concept of space to identify the components of the IMA's structure. I refer to galleries, magazines, seminars, restaurants and the architecture of the building as spaces where Arab culture is represented. I also use "space" to categorize the main activities – exhibitionary, educational and consumerist, which take place within the IMA. While I address these three categories as separate, they all intersect in the context of individual experiences of the IMA. For example, the permanent collection of the museum is intended to both please and educate the public; at the same time, visitors can purchase from the museum's shop objects inspired from the collection, such as postcards, pens, bookmarks or jewellery.

Third, I use the concept the "other" in quotation marks in order to signify my critical approach to the concept and the charged meaning of the concept itself. In *Contested Representations: Revisiting "Into the Heart of Africa"*, Shelley R. Butler (2008) explained her usage of quotation marks, "I practise a form of cultural criticism that seeks to examine how such terms are constituted and deployed. In a similar vein, I use quotations marks to highlight terms that I am exploring in a critical fashion...my use of quotation marks is similar to the practice of using them to signal irony" (p. 16). I also use quotation marks to identify that "the other" suggests a rich linguistic history across various disciplines, especially post-colonial studies, but also a real history of colonial domination.

Dissertation outline

My dissertation opens with a chapter which describes the history of the Institut du Monde Arabe, the structure of the institution and the main communities which compose the IMA – directors, curators, intellectuals – and to which the IMA speaks – the audiences.

The second and third chapters, “Communicative encounters in post-colonial France” and “Creative encounters: Collective memories in cultural institutions” represent theoretical investigations into a series of academic fields from which I borrow in order to construct my theoretical and interpretative frameworks. The second chapter defines “the encounter” across several academic fields and discusses the cultural turn in the context of colonial and post-colonial studies. The third chapter explores two academic fields, museum studies and memory studies in order to explain the changing nature of cultural institutions in specific national contexts and to highlight some global shifts in the structures of museum.

The fourth and the fifth chapters, “Inevitable encounters: From colonial exhibitions to post-colonial institutions” and “Political encounters: French cultural policy and the post-colonial condition” provide context for the development of the IMA in post-colonial France. Chapter 4 presents a history of colonial exhibitions, ethnographic museums and residual colonial architecture in France and explores the different forms of representation developed throughout these cultural spaces. This chapter also describes the main contexts in which the French people encountered the cultures of the colonized countries: exhibitions and museums, print culture and leisure activities. In Chapter 5, I describe the history of French cultural policy since 1959 in parallel with the development of exclusionary housing policies which send the immigrants to the margins of the city. This chapter also explores some connections between post-colonial French cultural policy and colonial institutions.

Chapter 6, 7 and 8, “Spaces of display: Silencing colonialism,” “Spaces for education: Writing fragments of colonial history” and “Spaces of consumption: Encountering the colonial ‘other’ through food” form the analytical section of the dissertation. In Chapter 6, I analyze the IMA’s museum, the recent Qantara virtual museum and some of the *grandes expositions*. In Chapter 7, I analyze the content of the *Qantara* journal, the main publication of the IMA. And in Chapter 8, I investigate the restaurant El Zyriab. These three spaces within the IMA will be discussed in relation to the incorporation or exclusion of colonial history and encounters within the overall discourse of the specific space. The dissertation ends with “Conclusions: Becoming post-colonial”, a concluding chapter which highlights my main findings and provides some thoughts on future projects related to the IMA and more generally, with cultural institution in post-colonial contexts.

Translation notes

1. In this dissertation, I use numerous primary and secondary references in French. Because of the diversity of voices and nuances expressed in these references, I decided to include in the text of the dissertation the original quotes in French. In Appendix 1, I provide English translations for all the French quotes from the text. All the translations included in Appendix 1 are mine. The quotes are listed according to each chapter.
2. Further, I employ a series of Gallicisms (words or phrases borrowed from French) which I will indicate in my dissertation through the usage of italics. In Appendix 2, I will list all the Gallicisms found in my dissertation with a short explanatory note or definition.
3. The names of French cultural institutions and those of exhibitions organized in French museums will be left in French. The translation of the museum’s name or exhibition title, when used for the first time, will be included in parenthesis after the name.

4. To differentiate between Qantara, the IMA's publication and Qantara, the virtual museum, I will use the following distinction: I will refer to the magazine as *Qantara* and to the virtual museum as Qantara.
5. The names of restaurants and dishes will be capitalized and the descriptions of dishes in French will be translated in English through a parenthetical reference following the description of the specific dish. The names of some dishes such as Tabbouleh or Baklava are spelled differently by different authors and in restaurant menus of diverse restaurants. This is due to the popularity of certain dishes in multiple cultures and countries.

CHAPTER 1

Institut du Monde Arabe: The history of a post-colonial cultural institution

In September 2007, French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced his intentions of creating a new “grand Paris” by restructuring the transportation system to improve circulation between the city center and the suburbs. Since the 1970s, it has become a presidential tradition to add something “grand” to the city of Paris. In 1977, the Centre Georges Pompidou named after the president who orchestrated the construction of the edifice in the center of the 4th *arrondissement* in Paris opened a new page in the history of French culture. Jean Baudrillard (2008[1982]) described Renzo Piano’s architectural masterpiece as “a carcass of flux and signs, of networks and circuits...monument to the games of mass simulation” (p. 58), hinting to the populist dimension of the building which exposes the content “in order to make clear that no barrier was interposed for accessing culture” (Proto, 2005, p. 574). In the early 2000s, Jacques Chirac announced his intentions to support the building of a new museum on the Quai Branly to house the national art collections from Africa, Asia and Oceania. Around the same time, plans for a museum of the history of immigration, the present-day Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration, were set in motion. With a focus on democratizing culture and providing access to art and history, such projects would also become the focus of François Mitterrand’s presidency in the 1980s.

Grands projets or *grands travaux* are two popular terms coined by the French press in the 1980s which refer to a series of major architectural developments built under the leadership of François Mitterrand and his Minister of Culture, Jack Lang. These *grands projets* are: Ieoh Ming Pei’s glass pyramid at the Musée du Louvre; Opera de Bastille; Cité de la Musique; the Cité de Science et de l’Industrie; the headquarters of the Ministère de l’Économie, de Finance et

de l'Industrie at Bercy; la Défense; Parc de la Villette; the Musée d'Orsay; and the Institut du Monde Arabe. While some of these projects were launched during the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, it was under Mitterrand's governance that these *grands travaux* reached their fruition. The Institut du Monde Arabe was a reflection of the overall foreign policies of Giscard d'Estaing, who aimed to improve relations between France and the Arab world in the midst of the 1970s oil crisis (Collard, 2008). The very few academic inquiries into the history of the IMA favour this interpretation which fails to take into account the cultural significance of the institution in post-colonial France.

It is true that the idea of an institution devoted to Arab culture in France has started from diplomatic and economic premises. However, by the time the IMA was inaugurated in November 1987, it would become a symbol of *la crise de mémoire coloniale* in France and of the difficult transition from colonial to post-colonial cultural policies. At the same time, the IMA reflects changes in the structure of cultural institutions, especially art museums, common in the 1980s. The merging of high art and consumer practices within the art museum corresponds with the modernization of museums worldwide in an effort to democratize culture and access to artistic creation. The inclusion of spaces of consumption such as shops and restaurants in the museum is an outcome of this process of cultural democratization.

The history and mission of the Institut du Monde Arabe

In December 1974, the French Council of Ministers adopted the creation of an institution for the Arab world in Paris. On 23 June 1980, nineteen Arab nations⁵, members of the League of Arab States and la République française signed the document which set up the legal foundations

⁵ The countries that signed the agreement to establish the IMA, together with France, were Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Djibouti, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the Arab Republic of Yemen, the Popular Democratic Republic of Yemen. Two other nations, Egypt and Libya, joined subsequently, together with Palestine

of the IMA. It was only a few months later that the *Acte de fondation de l'Institut du Monde Arabe* was signed into law by the Décret du 14 octobre 1980 and ratified by the French Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This document recognized the IMA as “établissement d'utilité publique”. According to the *Acte de fondation*,

Le but de cette Fondation est de développer la connaissance du monde arabe, d'animer une recherche en profondeur sur sa langue, ses valeurs culturelles et spirituelles, ainsi que de favoriser les échanges et la coopération, en particulier dans les domaines des sciences et des techniques, entre la France et le monde arabe, contribuant par là au développement des relations entre celui-ci et l'Europe (p. 1).

Very generally, the establishment of the IMA in France coincided with the effort to promote communication between French and Arab cultures in the name of “cooperation” and diplomacy. This cooperation was highly desired by France also because the presence of a monumental edifice such as the IMA might hide the absence of dialogues and initiatives related to colonial history. At the same time, this cooperation was desired by the Arab states, many of them recently decolonized and engaged in efforts of national reconstruction. What seemed like a potentially successful form of intercultural collaboration resulted in several financial crises, which define the public perceptions of the IMA even today.

The majority of the press coverage of the IMA revolves around the constant financial crisis caused by the unequal division of power among the member states. Because the IMA is a partnership among multiple nations, the costs incurred by the institution were to be divided among France, who would contribute 60% of the costs and the other Arab nations, whose contributions would add up to 40%. These costs were estimated to approximately one hundred million Euros per year. However, the fact that France was the ultimate decision-maker in the IMA – the institution was catalogued as an “institut du droit français” – opened old wounds related to colonialism and imperialism. Only a few months after the inauguration of the IMA,

Hélène Cases (1988) wrote critically on the “monopole de la France dans un lieu où la collaboration de deux mondes est le mot d’ordre”. In 1989, the *Quotidien de Paris* reported on this issue: “les états arabes veulent qu’il devienne une institution internationale ce à quoi le gouvernement français s’oppose” (“Institut du Monde Arabe: Admission”). According to the Agence France Presse (1989), “l’IMA est pratiquement paralysé faute de moyens. Les états arabes s’abstiennent en effet de verser leur quote-part au budget de fonctionnement en attendant que soit résolu le problème de la répartition des pouvoirs entre la France et ses partenaires arabes” (“Institut du Monde Arabe: Egypte”).

The constant financial crisis at the IMA extended into the 1990s, when the IMA was in danger of being shut down for lack of funding. Michel Guerrin (1993) wrote for *Le Monde* that “asphyxié par le manque d’argent, paralysé par les pressions politiques, l’IMA a connu deux premières années pénibles” (“La vitrine”). The author explained that this financial crisis was the outcome of the refusal by certain countries, which were not named, to pay their annual fees due to the imbalance of power at the administrative levels of the IMA. In *Humanité Dimanche*, Franck Argan (1992) called the IMA “un bateau à la dérive”, showing his pessimism about the financial difficulties of the institute. The same story followed the IMA into the 2000s, when the countries with highest debts were identified as Iraq and Libya (Bietry-Riviere, 2007). While the guilt is mainly placed on Arab nations for refusing to pay their contribution, there is close to no inquiry into the reasons why Arab nations might be unwilling to finance an institution where the ultimate power is in the hands of the French government. No French newspaper article consulted so far discussed the past colonial relations between France and Arab nations, which might explain the current skepticism of Arab nations to be under the control of an “institution du droit français”. Furthermore, it was implied by several journalists, such as Michel Guerrin, that Arab

diplomats were unable to disconnect their political views from artistic creativity. For example, wrote Guerrin (1993), “certains pays confondaient d’ailleurs allègrement culture et relations publiques: comme l’Arabie Saoudite, organisatrice de l’exposition ‘Lieux saints’, ou l’Irak, qui exigea qu’on retire une caricature syrienne pouvant faire penser à Saddam Hussein”. However, there was very little discussion about the potential biases of the French leadership of the IMA in representing Arab cultures at the IMA or deciding to eliminate colonial stories from the content of the IMA.

The focus on the financial problems of the IMA and on the history of debt caused by Arab nations without any historical context downplays the really important questions which should be asked in relation to the IMA: what is the place of the IMA in the current debates about France’s colonial past? How is the IMA responding to regimes of display inherited from colonial times? What is the institution communicating to post-colonial immigrant communities about their culture? These are some of the questions I will address in this dissertation.

The spaces and structures of the Institut du Monde Arabe

The building which hosts the Institut du Monde Arabe was designed by star architect Jean Nouvel together with a team of French architects composed of Gilbert Lezenes, Pierre Soria and Architecture Studio (see Fig. 1). Generally, the building is commonly associated with Nouvel’s modernist style and his conceptual ability to merge visual elements from different cultures, which is also visible in another Parisian museum dedicated to the “other,” the Quai Branly (see Fig. 2). The IMA building is situated on the quay of the Seine in the fifth *arrondissement* very close to the Campus Universitaire Jussieu which houses some of the science facilities of Université Paris 7 and to the Grand Mosquée de Paris, the largest mosque in Paris. The current location of the IMA has great historical significance in Paris, having been previously the site of

two Parisian historical landmarks, the Saint-Victor Church in the twelfth century and the Halle aux vins in the sixteenth century. The building occupies a central position within the French architectural landscape as it is situated at the end of Boulevard Saint Germain and adjacent to the Jardin des Plantes, the main botanical garden in France.

The website of the Institut du Monde Arabe describes the building as “une synthèse allégorique entre conceptions architecturales d’Orient et d’Occident” (“Historique”, para. 2; translation mine). In fact, the selection of the project proposed by Jean Nouvel was founded on the belief that an institute dedicated to the Arab world must promote a modern vision of Arab cultures. The IMA’s leaders and founders wanted to promote a culture of progress, of movement toward modernity without eliminating the aesthetics associated with Islamic art. Along these lines, a 1988 Rapport Interne of the Haut Conseil d’Administration stated in regards to the architecture of the IMA, “un projet trop marqué par l’aspect arabe ne peut être accepté. Il faut arriver par une concentration entre architectes français et arabes à une symbiose, alliant l’art à l’esthétique et qui puisse être compatible avec le site. Il faut aussi que dès l’entrée, on sache qu’il s’agit d’un bâtiment consacré à la culture et la civilisation arabe”⁶. From the first contact with the building, the visitor would discover a world both foreign and familiar, both modern and traditional. The IMA website reads, “au-delà de l’apparence résolument moderniste de la construction de verre et d’aluminium, le visiteur découvre que toute une série d’éléments architecturaux issus de la tradition orientale font l’objet d’une réinterprétation: moucharabiehs de la façade, ryad (cour intérieure), ziggourat de la tour des livres (“Historique”, para. 3; see Fig. 3). This merging of modern materials with Islamic architectural elements is primarily visible in the South side of the building, which is composed of an innovative system of 240 moucharabieh, a

⁶ I found this Rapport Interne in the first volume of the *Dossier de Presse 1980-1999* (IMA, 1999). This was the only internal rapport which was made publicly available in the documentation available at the BIMA and the names of the participants to this meeting of the Haut Conseil which produced the report were blanked out

common element of Islamic architecture⁷. Each individual moucharabieh is divided into diaphragms and it is part of an electronically-activated system which is adjusted hourly to capture the outside light in order to create a spectacle of lights inside the building (see Fig. 4 and 5).

The building and the activities of the institution are centered on the museum, which the IMA website qualifies as “le musée des musées arabes”. The museum occupies three levels of the building and it invites the visitors to “un parcours chronologique, que le visiteur aborde comme un voyage à travers le temps et dans l’espace” (Institut du Monde Arabe [IMA], 2002, p. 19). The collection on display, composed of approximately six hundred artefacts such as sculptures, ceramics, miniatures, carpets and manuscripts, is only partially owned by the IMA, while the majority of the objects are on loan from the Louvre and from various national museums of the Arab member-states. The museum traces the history of the Arab civilization, “la civilization arabo-musulmane”, from the pre-Islamic period until the rise of the Arab-Islamic art. The museum’s display strategies are based on “brassages et échanges entre les peuples” which have contributed to the formation of the Arab culture and civilization (IMA, 2002, p. 19). To do so, “le musée tente d’en approcher la diversité et les influences mêlées, grâce à des objets appartenant non seulement au monde arabe, mais aussi à l’Iran, l’Inde ou l’Asie centrale” (IMA, 2002, p. 19). Despite the efforts to present a culture in motion, the journey throughout the museum ends without any mention of colonial and pre-colonial intersections between Arab and European cultures. At the end of the last exhibit hall, the visitor is left wondering what happened to the Arab world after 1830. The answer to this question, as I will show in my dissertation, is not easy to find at the IMA.

⁷ A moucharabieh (or mashrabiya) is a type of projecting window enclosed with carved wood latticework located on the second storey of a building or higher, often lined with stained glass. It is an element of traditional Arabic architecture used since the middle ages up to the mid twentieth century.

Complementary to the museum, the temporary exhibitions represent another significant space for the representation of Arab culture. Different types of exhibitions, some more important and popular than others are organized at the IMA: *grandes expositions* displayed in the main temporary galleries; smaller exhibitions focused on contemporary art and photography, usually displayed in the three restaurants of the institution; and travel exhibitions in partnership with other museums and institutions. The *grandes expositions*, the equivalent of North American blockbuster exhibitions, are highly mediated, centered on well known themes and objects and designed to attract large numbers of visitors. The tradition of *grandes expositions* started with the 1989 “Égypte-Égypte: Chefs d’oeuvre de tous les temps” (Egypt-Egypt: Masterpieces across time) a selection of twenty seven Egyptian artefacts exhibited for the first time in Paris. What makes an exhibition “grande,” besides its contents, is the series of related events organized at the IMA to complement the visual display: conferences, round table seminars, debates, music and dance concerts, movie screenings, activities for children, audiovisual consoles, special sections in the museum’s publications and catalogues. These exhibitions are usually centered on themes related to the museum’s content and, likewise, cover pre-modern periods of time.

The Institut du Monde Arabe is also focused on educational initiatives which are visible in the many spaces dedicated to learning and research: the Bibliothèque de l’IMA, the Espace Image et Son (the audio-visual center), the Centre de Langue et de Civilisation Arabes (the center for Arab language and civilization) and the Médiathèque Jeunesse (youth multimedia library). The mission of the Bibliothèque de l’Institut du Monde Arabe “s’inscrit ainsi dans l’un des objectifs que s’est fixé l’IMA: développer et approfondir en France l’étude, la connaissance et la compréhension du monde arabe, de sa langue, de sa civilisation et de son effort de développement” (“Missions”, para. 1). The collections of the library reflect this mission by

providing classical works on Arab culture, many of them in Arabic, and resources on contemporary Arab society and culture. The library is intended for academic researchers but also for a larger public. Besides a vast collection of books in French, Arabic, Spanish, Italian or German, the library also offers more than fifty magazines and newspapers in both French and Arabic. The library is also used extensively by students from the nearby Jussieu Campus, who utilize the study areas rather than the library collection (see Fig. 6). Situated within the library, the Espace Image et Son provides a rich collection of photographs, documentary films and music about the Arab cultures and the history of the IMA. The Centre de Langue et Civilisation Arabes offers intensive Arab language courses and workshops on different themes related to Arab culture, “en répondant à une forte demande du public français désireux de mieux connaître la culture et la langue arabes” (IMA, 2002, p. 21). The educational initiatives extend to the younger publics through the Médiathèque Jeunesse, where children up to 12 years old can learn about Arab culture through books, storytelling and images.

The artistic and educational projects organized at the IMA are complemented by a very diverse and active program of cultural events ranging from academic conferences to movie screenings and publications. Regular events, such as the popular *Jeudis de l’IMA* (Thursday at the IMA), the *Mercredis du Café littéraire* (Wednesday at the literary café) and the numerous “visites-conférences” bring to the IMA some of the most renowned international scholars, writers, musicians and filmmakers from the Arab world. The focus of these cultural events is on both classical and contemporary aspects of Arab society and they cover a very vast area of issues and topics, which sometimes contradict each others. For example, a recent session of *Jeudis de l’IMA* (November 2009) featured the well known Orientalist scholar Robert Irwin, who is very critical of Edward Said’s interpretation of Oriental thinking. Only one year later, in December

2010, the same series hosted a round table discussion on the topic of “penser le post-colonial”. The three scholars invited to discuss the influence of post-colonial studies, especially of Edward Said, on French thought, were established French intellectuals and critics of colonialism and Orientalism – sociologist Ahmed Boubeker, literature scholar and vice-president of Comité pour la mémoire de l’esclavage, Françoise Vergès and historian Marc Ferro. Such instances are not uncommon at the IMA and I will argue in the following chapters that the institution is characterized by a chaotic and “messy” system of communication, full of contradictory versions of history and collective memory, especially in relation to colonialism.

The numerous publications – exhibition catalogues, academic books, fiction, poetry and periodicals – produced by the Institut du Monde Arabe in collaboration with French and Arab publishers enhance the educational mission of the IMA. The institution publishes three magazines, one in French – *Qantara*, and two in Arabic – *Al Moukharat* and *Min al Ma’had*. Among the three, *Qantara* is the most popular publication and the most closely connected with the activities and missions of the IMA. The magazine “constitue une invitation au voyage, une incitation à découvrir les pays arabes à travers des dossiers, des reportages, des critiques de livres et de films. Elle est aussi le reflet des activités de l’IMA” (IMA, 2002, p. 22). The diversity of voices featured in *Qantara* makes impossible the telling of one coherent story about the Arab world and its encounters with France. The IMA is also very active in the area of exhibition catalogues and scholarly books inspired by the main conferences and public seminars organized at the institution.

In addition to these educational and exhibitionary spaces, the IMA offers visitors experiences of a more “everyday” nature: shopping, eating and walking. The Librairie-boutique, situated at the entrance to the IMA, includes a rich collection of books, magazines, postcards,

book signs, jewellery and Islamic-inspired ceramics. Temporary bazaars are also set up in the medina, a recent addition to the IMA, situated across from the South facade of the building. The medina houses temporary exhibitions and includes, besides the bazaar, a café which is situated in the center of the building, which serves mint tea and Middle Eastern pastries. However, the main eating spaces which serve Lebanese cuisine are situated inside the IMA: on the first floor, Le Café Littéraire; on the ninth floor, Le Moucharabieh; on the top floor and terrace, El Zyriab. El Zyriab is a well rated restaurant in Paris which, not unlike the architectural structure of the building, re-interprets traditional Lebanese dishes through the lens of modern French gastronomy.

All these spaces – exhibitionary, educational and consumerist – participate to the network of communicative instances which make up the IMA. Every space tells a different story about the encounters between France and *le monde arabe* and more specifically about the colonial moment. My dissertation will analyze one space representative of each category in order to observe the intersections and contradictions between these stories.

The communities of the Institut du Monde Arabe

The story of the IMA goes back to the 1973 oil crisis which generated acts of diplomacy meant to restore the friendship between France and Arab nations. One such act was represented by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's idea of an institute dedicated to the Arab world. Therefore, the first community in charge of the IMA was composed mainly of French diplomats and governmental officials, such as Jacques Chirac and Raymond Barre. The first president of the institute was Jean Basdevant who was in charge with cultural affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at that time. The status of the IMA as an "institut de droit français" required that all presidents of the institution must be French citizens. All presidents so far have been connected

with the French government, and, many of them with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The president of the administrative council, the second position under the president, has also been, traditionally, a French citizen, with a history of diplomatic activity. Further, the position of general director of the IMA, another high place in the structure of the institution, would be held by representatives of the Arab member states, by rotation.

The presidents

These close ties between politics and culture at the IMA are embedded in the foundations of the institute which is governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other French museums which are dedicated to non-Western culture, such as the Quai Branly, CNHI or Musée de l'Homme (the Museum of Man) function under the Direction de Musées de France which is part of the Ministry of Culture and Communication. This particular place of the IMA on the French museological scene has influenced drastically the public perceptions of the institute. The media in France have focused primarily on the administrative and internal quarrels at the IMA, often between the French administrators and the Arab diplomats for matters of financing and debt. The most prominent figures portrayed in various French newspapers as representatives of the IMA are not the curators or the exhibition designers but the presidents of the institutions, often talked about as French officials acting in the name of France. Even scholars who write extensively about museums of the “other” in France, such as Nancy L. Green⁸, Sally Price, Alan Hargreaves or Robert Aldrich have excluded the IMA for their scope of research. The most recent edited volume on *Museums in Postcolonial France* does not include the IMA among its objects of inquiry. While I agree with the different status of the IMA by comparison with other

⁸ During an informal discussion, Prof. Green agreed that the IMA is not considered part of the museums about the Other in France and she suggested I try to understand why the IMA is excluded from the many heated debates around Quai Branly or the CNHI.

French cultural institutions, I also believe that the IMA belongs on the list of post-colonial museums in France. Its proximity to the political scene, which is indeed a trait of the IMA, opens discussions about the role of cultural institutions in post-colonial societies struggling with memory crises. Further, the administrative communities at the IMA, especially the presidents, who are the most visible in the mass media, have strong connections with Arab countries and culture. Often, these connections go back to colonial times.

In the 1980s, when François Mitterrand and Minister of Culture Jack Lang took over the project of an institute dedicated to the Arab world, the new leadership of the IMA tried to depoliticize the image of the institution. Paul Carton, French diplomat and ambassador, born in Turkey and a French citizen through his father's lineage, was the first president of the IMA to rule from the new edifice in the fifth arrondissement. Since 1980, when the "Décret" was signed, the IMA has been housed in a temporary location on rue du Cherche-Midi. Before Carton, three different presidents, all French diplomats or politicians, were appointed to the IMA, none of them significantly important for the overall development of the institution: Jean Basdevant (1980-1981), Phillippe Ardant (1981-1985) and Pierre Guidoni (1985-1986). In an interview for *Algérie-Actualité* Paul Carton referred to the IMA as the "Beaubourg du monde arabe" referencing the Centre Pompidou's impact on Parisian culture. He explained the mission of the new IMA as purely cultural, "il s'agit pour nous de promouvoir cette culture qui est assez mal connue dans les plus grandes couches de la population...cette culture et cette civilisation qui ont beaucoup apporté...à l'Occident" (Ferhani, 1988, p. 38). Paul Carton's presidency made very little impact on the public image of the IMA. It was only in 1988, under the presidency of Edgard Pisani, that the institution would be drastically restructured in an effort to increase its presence on the French cultural scene.

Of Maltese origins, Edgard Pisani was born in Tunis but lived most of his life in Paris. He was an imposing political figure. Pisani was a member of the French resistance during the Vichy regime and held multiple political positions since 1944, such as sous-prefet of Paris, Minister of Agriculture and Minister in charge with New Caledonia. Very soon after he was appointed president of the IMA by François Mitterrand, Pisani spoke to the magazine *Arabies* about his plan to re-launch the IMA. “Nous sommes un lieu d’échange interculturel,” Pisani (1988) told his interviewer, “donc, deux dimensions: culture et interculture. Les arabes sont ce qu’ils sont. Nous sommes ce que nous sommes. Et nous sommes ensemble en train de construire un système d’échanges dans un intérêt mutuel” (Dagher, 1988, p. 87). His vision for the IMA was that of an “authentic partnership” between France and Arab nations, which could overlook the juridical status of the institute and focus on the “le contenu culturel franco-arabe” (ibid.). Under his presidency, Egypt and Palestine became members of the IMA. Previously, the Arab states have voted against Egypt because of the Camp David accords which ended the conflicts between Israel and Egypt. In 1989, Pisani orchestrated the first *grande exposition* in the history of the IMA dedicated to Egyptian culture, which attracted more than one million visitors (Sauvage, 2007, p. 16; see also Guerrin, 1993). Critical of the involvement of diplomats and officials in the cultural business of the IMA, Pisani set up a cultural advisory board composed of French and Arab intellectuals because “les diplomates jouaient un rôle majeur, et non les gens de culture” (Pisani cited in Guerrin, 1993). While Pisani was praised for establishing the IMA on the French cultural scene as a cultural institution of highest quality, he was also critiqued for increasing the debts of the IMA and for his inability to “make” the Arab states pay their contributions.

Those who followed Pisani at the leadership of the IMA struggled to remediate the financial problems of the IMA. In 1995, Camille Cabana, a well respected *homme politique* in France, promised to better the relations between French and Arab members of the IMA's administrative council. Born in a small rural community in the Pyrenees, Cabana moved to Morocco to work as an office clerk during colonial times. Upon his return to France, he was admitted to Ecole Nationale d'Administration, a moment which marked the debut of a prolific political career and close association with Jacques Chirac (de Roux, 1998). Cabana's personal experience in Morocco and his knowledge of Arabic and Arab culture transformed him into a popular ambassador of French culture to North Africa and the Middle East. During his presidency, the financial situation of the IMA improved through a greater emphasis on the *grandes expositions* which brought significant revenues to the IMA, and diversification of cultural activities to encompass contemporary topics related to Arab culture. At the same time, Cabana was perceived as less creative than Pisani. According to a member of the IMA staff, "Cabana s'inscrit dans une logique de réduction des conts. Après les frasques de son prédécesseur (Edgard Pisani), on sent qu'il est là pour mettre de l'ordre dans la maison. Pas de folies du type exposition pharaonique... Cela étant, le départ de Pisani a enlevé beaucoup de génie et d'esprit créateur à l'IMA" (cited in "L'homme discret", 1997).

Cabana's successor in 2002, Denis Bauchard, a former French ambassador to Jordan and Cabinet Director for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, contributes to the actualization of the institution by initiating a series of conferences on "hot" international topics concerning the Arab world, such as the Gulf War or the War in Iraq. Bauchard explains, "nous exposons de plus en plus d'artistes contemporains, nous songeons même à un festival de la création actuelle...Déjà, avec le café littéraire et les Jeudis de l'IMA, nous avons créé le Club de l'IMA, à périodicité

mensuelle, où des sujets ‘chauds’ sont abordés: le plan Sharon, l’Irak après un an de guerre, le retour de la Libye dans la communauté internationale (cited in Bietry-Rivierre, 2004). The effort to open up public discussions on contemporary political and economic issues in the context of the IMA was a facet of the mission to enhance communication between members of the Arab world. Bauchard believed that “les pays arabes doivent mieux communiquer...[and] les pays arabes souffre d’un déficit de communication” (cited in Bietry-Rivierre, 2004). However, all the new topics addressed at the IMA during Cabanas’ presidency, such as the Israel-Palestinian conflict, were external to France and reflected internal conflicts within the Arab world. Issues and conflicts with a colonial component, such as immigration, integration, colonial memory, which were internal to France, were excluded from the new mission of the IMA to improve communication.

Yves Guéna, president of the IMA from 2004 until 2007, was nicknamed by French journalists “le baron du gaullisme” for his previous membership in de Gaulle’s Free French Forces in the United Kingdom during the German Occupation (Bietry-Rivierre, 2004; Garcon, 2006). His intentions for the IMA were to re-focus the institution towards cultural programs with an emphasis on *grandes expositions* and away from political-oriented events such as those initiated by Camille Cabana. During Guéna’s presidency, the IMA in partnership with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, hosted the *grande exposition* “Venise et l’Orient,” the most successful exhibition organized by the IMA after “Pharaoh” in 2004. Similar to his predecessors, Guéna has to answer to the instable financial situation of the IMA and make efforts to gather funds from the Arab countries (Bietry-Rivierre, 2004; Veauvy, 2004). One of Guéna’s initiatives, mainly rhetorical, to re-new some of the functions of the IMA, referred to the expansion of the “publics” to include “le public issu de l’immigration” (“Culture”, 2005).

Dominique Baudis, the current president of the IMA, is represented by French media as the savior of the IMA. According to Christian Makarian (2007), “on peut dire avec certitude que l’IMA est sauvé. Pour la première fois depuis son ouverture, il y a vingt ans, l’IMA terminera l’année avec un budget en équilibre. Donc pas de déficit, après vingt années de déficit, et même un résultat légèrement positif”. While Baudis participates actively to French political life as a member of the European Parliament – député européen – and former President of the Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel (High Audiovisual Council), his political allegiance to a specific party or French President is less obvious in the French press. Of all IMA presidents so far, Baudis is the most highly present and praised in the mass media as an advocate of Arab-French relations. His popularity might be an outcome of Baudis’ journalistic background – from 1971 until 1984, Baudis was a well known journalist and news anchor with ORTF and TF1. In 1975, Baudis was one of the first journalists to report on the civil war in Lebanon. In 2007, when he was named president by Jacques Chirac, Baudis declared his view of the IMA, “d’emblée je me suis senti libre de toute pression car l’IMA n’est pas le porte-parole de tel ou tel État, pas plus d’ailleurs le procureur des régimes arabes, juste un lieu de liberté, d’échanges et de débats bannissant la pensée unique” (Nicolas, 2008, p. 65). While this vision of the IMA as a space of exchanges and Franco-Arab dialogues, free from political discourse, might be unattainable considering the current battles over colonial memory in France, the Baudis presidency takes some steps towards a more inclusive institution. Several cultural initiatives propose to bring the culture of the IMA to the suburbs and to bring the young men and women from the *banlieue* to the IMA. According to Baudis, the IMA must re-focus its attention towards the publics from the *banlieue*, ignored in the past, and “constituer un facteur de cohésion nationale, eu égard aux

nombreux citoyens français issus de l’immigration, plus particulièrement du Maghreb” (Baudis cited in Makarian, 2007).

The curators

The community of curators⁹ of the IMA is not as publicly visible as the presidential teams. This is partly due to the fact that many of the curators who collaborate with the IMA work for other museums in France, such as Louvre or Quai Branly. Some curators are architects, such as Jean Nouvel, who helped curate the original collection of the museum, or designers for high profile fashion companies, such as Chanel or Hermès. For example, in 2010, Leila Mechari, designer for Hermès, curated the exhibition “Orient-Hermès”, organized in the medina of the IMA. Another factor for the absence of curatorial voices from the media is the hierarchical structure and traditionalist public communication practices of the Institut, which place the President at the highest level. It is often the president or a high placed member of the administrative team who will be asked to comment publicly about the IMA. Further, each president tends to be highly involved in the development of *grandes expositions* and cultural events, sometimes based on personal taste and diplomacy. The voice of the curators is often present in the exhibition catalogs or on the websites dedicated to more recent exhibitions.

The intellectuals

Another community whose contribution to the functioning of the IMA is vital is represented by French and Arab intellectuals. Intellectuals participate to the IMA’s events in several ways: as consultants for the main museum and *grandes expositions*; as writers for *Qantara*; and as participants to the various educational and cultural events. According to David Drake (2005), “the importance attached to intellect in French culture can be traced back to

⁹ The French term for curator is “conservateur”.

thinkers of the Enlightenment whose arguments, based on reason, underpinned the challenges to the power of the Church” (p. 2). In France, the birth of the intellectual as a socio-economic community is associated with the Dreyfus Affair, when artists, writers, lawyers and professors used their professional status to support a common cause (Ory & Sirinelli, 2004). According to Rémy Rieffel (1993), the intellectual is the individual “qui, s’autorisant de sa compétence propre en matière de création/culture, sort de son rôle initial pour s’investir dans les débats publics...il n’y a pas, dans notre pays, d’intellectuel sans engagement” (p. 17). The close connection between intellectuals and politics has transformed the French intellectual into a powerful participant to public policy and public discourse. Intellectuals are often consulted by the French government and its various ministries and councils in relation to policy making. For example, cultural policy in France is the work of bureaucrats and intellectuals alike (Ahearne, 2004; Looseley, 1995).

Starting with Edgard Pisani’s presidency, French and Arab intellectuals have been invited to participate to the cultural life of the IMA. One of the most obvious outcomes of this collaboration is the content of *Qantara*, the IMA’s main publication. In every issue, more than seventy percent of the content is generated by the writings of French and Arab intellectuals, some of them becoming regular contributors to the magazine. In Chapter 7, “Spaces for education: Writing fragments of colonial history,” where I analyze the content of *Qantara*, I will point out the specializations and areas of study which characterize the work of the different scholars featured by the magazine. What is even more relevant to note is that many of the contributors to *Qantara*, even if they belong to different generations, have connections with colonialism and post-colonialism.

For example, Maurice Arama, Charles Malmoud and Maxine Rodinson are well known Orientalists and their writings are influenced by the ideologies of this intellectual system. Other scholars such as Mohamed Harbi and Benjamin Stora belong to a post-colonial generation of intellectuals who is very critical to colonialism and colonial memory in France. A recent trend in French scholarship, the study of the French *banlieue* from a sociological perspective, is also represented in the pages of *Qantara* through the writings of David Lepoutre and Jean-Pierre Goudaillier. Another community of French scholars, very popular in France and very critical of colonialism, led by Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel, is absent from the pages of *Qantara*. The two French sociologists, renowned internationally for a series of edited volumes¹⁰ which denounce colonial silences and post-colonial injustices, are very active both in academic and civil circles. The absence from *Qantara* and from other spaces within the IMA of voices which are publicly associated with strong critical discourse is telling of the relation between the IMA and colonial history.

Intersecting voices

A series of intersections happens between the different communities which participate to the display of knowledge at the IMA. These intersections, I argue, are a result of the specific positioning of the institution between the cultural and the political spheres in France. Being governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the group of Arab nations which ratified the

¹⁰ Bancel, N., Blanchard, P., Boetsch, G., Deroo, E., & Lemaire, S. (Eds.). (2004). *Zoos humains: Au temps des exhibitions humaines* (2nd ed.). Paris: La Découverte; Blanchard, P., Bancel, N. & Lemaire, S. (Eds.). (2006). *La fracture coloniale: La société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial*. Paris: Le Découverte; Blanchard, P., Bancel, N. & Lemaire, S. (Eds.), *Culture coloniale en France: De la Révolution française à nos jours*. Paris: Éditions CNRS; Bancel, N. et al. (Eds.) (2010). *Ruptures post-coloniales: Le nouveau visage de la société française*. Paris: La Découverte.

1980 “Décret de fondation”, the exhibitions, cultural events and publications of the IMA often include official voices. For example, all exhibition catalogues consulted for this dissertation were prefaced by an official representative – ambassador, Minister of Culture or Minister of Foreign Affairs – of the country represented in the exhibition. Similarly, Arab officials are sometimes invited to write articles or editorials for the *Qantara* magazine. The Qantara online museum is the result of the collaboration between official organizations in charge with culture from various member states and France. Lastly, all the directors of the IMA so far have been involved, at a certain point in their career, with the French government. Another set of intersections happens internally between the communities which coordinate events, curate exhibitions and write for *Qantara*. For example, Edgard Pisani, President of the IMA when *Qantara*'s first issue was published (1991) was also the Editor-in-chief of the publication. François Zabbal, the current Editor-in-chief of *Qantara* writes extensively for the publication, especially in the context of the *Dossiers spéciaux*, and is also in charge of the organization of *Jeudis de l'IMA*.

The publics

In 1988, Edgard Pisani spoke publicly about the publics of the IMA, “l'IMA a été conçu comme vitrine du monde arabe en France...on n'a pas tenu compte du fait que les Arabes vivant en France seraient un élément essentiel de notre public. Or, nous le constatons maintenant” (Dagher, 1988, p. 88). This lack of concern for the immigrants and French citizens of Arab origins was reflected by another document, “La mission de l'Institut du Monde Arabe,” which opens the first volume of the *Dossier de Presse* available for consultation in the Bibliothèque. According to this document, which outlines in detail the mission of the institution, “deux groupes sociaux et professionnels ne sont donc pas au cœur de ses préoccupations...d'une part, *les*

travailleurs immigrés – divers organismes ont été créés pour eux [...]. D'autre part, l'Institut ne s'adresse pas *aux spécialistes* qui étudient le monde arabe et ont, par définition, une sympathie pour lui" (La mission, 1999[1987], p. 4, emphasis mine). A general reading of this document suggests that the community identified as "travailleurs immigrés" is not meant to connect extensively with the IMA for reasons associated with their temporary presence in France, while the specialists in Arab culture need not be convinced of the legitimacy of *la civilisation arabe*. While this document is singular among the official literature available for the public in the IMA's library and it speaks very generally about the intended publics, it does highlight an issue which will reappear in public discussions at and about the IMA: the relation between the institution and the immigrant communities in France.

The IMA was primarily envisioned as a communicative space for two main types of dialogue: between France and the Arab world; and between Arab culture and French citizens. According to the "Acte de Fondation, "le but de cette fondation est de développer la connaissance du monde arabe...ainsi que de favoriser les échanges et la coopération...entre la France et le monde arabe" (1980). If the IMA's primary function is to communicate Arab culture to the French, who belongs to this community and who is excluded? Are French citizens of North African descent considered part of the French audience? If they are, they might already be familiar with aspects of Arab culture so why would they need to be educated in matters relating to their own culture? Until 2007, the multi-cultural diversity of France has not been a public issue for the IMA's administrators. Former IMA presidents Yves Guéna and Edgard Pisani have discussed in passing the lack of programs targeting specifically the youth from the suburbs and the desire of the IMA to be more open to all members of the French society. It is

Dominique Baudis who initiated “serious” conversations about France’s immigrant communities and their relation with the IMA.

A mes yeux, l’Institut a deux missions: être une scène culturelle dévolue au monde arabe, un lieu de dialogue des civilisations; constituer un facteur de cohésion nationale, eu égard aux nombreux citoyens français issus de l’immigration, plus particulièrement du Maghreb. Avec le temps, le deuxième point est devenu crucial: reconnaître la diversité, et la valoriser, aide les jeunes à se construire comme citoyens pleinement français. L’IMA reçoit chaque année 1 million de visiteurs, mais nous accueillons aussi 50 000 élèves, dont 25 000 proviennent du département de la Seine-Saint-Denis (cited in Christian, 2007).

The interest in these communities expressed by the IMA’s administrators is rather recent and it is difficult to assess if the discourse about France’s diversity has been materialized in the cultural events at the IMA. At the same time, the efforts to include *les jeunes issus d’immigration* and to motivate them to travel to the IMA, lack historical context. The inclusive initiatives of the IMA are aligned with larger European projects and ideologies of integration and not with the current struggles for colonial memory in France. Jose Garçon (2006), writing for *Liberation*, explained that “car l’IMA ne peut plus se contenter d’être une vitrine officielle du monde arabe au moment où les questions identitaires se posent dans toute l’Europe et où des projets analogues sont lancés à Madrid et Amsterdam” (p. 31). The intention to speak to the social groups which are often excluded from the public sphere, like the suburban youth in France, stems from global ideals of cosmopolitanism. In France, the urban policies which divide the city between the center and the *banlieue* have clear colonial connections¹¹ but such stories remain untold.

Le monde arabe

Le monde arabe, the “world” to which the IMA is dedicated has a double relation with the institution: the Arab states which form “le monde arabe” are members of the administrative

¹¹ The connection between post-colonial urban politics and immigration in France will be discussed in Chapter 5.

council of the IMA but they also constitute the subject of the exhibitions, cultural events and publications of the IMA. This double relation has caused a series of controversies, of a financial and ideological nature. Since its beginnings, the IMA has struggled to survive financially because of the inconsistency in contributions coming from the Arab members. The refusal to pay the annual contribution by some Arab states was a result of the judicial status of the IMA which places it under the legal control of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conditions that the President of the IMA must be French. The same legal reality has caused some Arab states to revolt against representations of historical leaders or events in some of the exhibitions organized at the institute. The French print media has focused its attention on these two aspects of the Franco-Arab relation developed at the IMA with very little to none historical investigation as to what might make *le monde arabe* skeptical to some of the activities of the IMA.

Issues such as colonialism, Orientalism and neo-imperialism are missing from most journalistic accounts, with preference given to stories about the oil crisis and cultural incongruence. For example, wrote Jose Garçon (2006) for *Liberation*, “c’était en 1974 et Valéry Giscard d’Estaing entrainé à l’Elysée. Le choc pétrolier de 1973 avait transformé les Etats arabes en milliardaires... si impopulaires qu’on parlait déjà de confrontation entre monde arabe et Occident. Giscard, qui pense à leur proposer une vitrine de prestige à Paris, contacte Hassan II du Maroc et Fayçal d’Arabie Saoudite” (p. 30). Likewise, told Pascale Sauvage (2007), IMA is born out of the 1973 oil crisis. Recently elected, “est né du choc pétrolier de 1973. Fraîchement élu à l’Élysée, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing revendiquera la paternité de cette idée auprès des rois du Maroc et d’Arabie Saoudite: accueillir en France une vitrine du monde arabe, financée par les pays arabes eux-mêmes afin de restaurer leur image, ternie par la crise économique dont l’opinion occidentale les rendait responsables” (p. 16). The Arab world was identified as the

“other” in the structure of the institution. In the content of the displays, it was narrowed down to a series of clichés based on cultural difference. At the same time, the “generosity” of France to provide such as a space for the cultures of the Arab world prevents questioning on the history of the pre-1970s relations between France and the Arab nations.

Conclusions

The history and development of the Institut du Monde Arabe suggests a series of conclusions about the role of the cultural institution in post-colonial France. First, the position of the institute in-between the cultural and the political spheres has acted as a barrier against a critical stance vis-à-vis France’s colonial past. The fact that a cultural institution dedicated to Arab culture provides very little content related to colonialism and post-colonialism is an indication of the diplomatic foundations of the IMA. Second, the multiple intersections between politics and culture within the communities which govern the institution influence not only the content – exhibitions, cultural events, publications – but also the public perceptions of the IMA. The focus of media accounts on the financial crisis of the IMA and the political connections of the Presidents is a result of the internal hierarchical structure of governance. Third, the inability of the IMA to define clearly its publics, especially the immigrant communities in France, is an indication of larger post-colonial issues in France, such as the crisis of colonial memory, the failure of the integration system and the ideological conceptualizations of the French nation as *une and indivisible*. The following chapters will explore in greater detail the historical context which produced the IMA, starting from colonial exhibitions and French cultural policy, and will analyze various instances of public communication.

CHAPTER 2

Communicative encounters in post-colonial France

Communication and dialogue are integral components of the mission of the Institut du Monde Arabe and are embedded in the ethos of the institution. In *Speaking into the Air*, John Durham Peters (1999) identified communication as one of the most overused and abused concepts of our times, suggesting that communication is nothing more than “a trouble we are stuck with” (p. 263). The role of the IMA as an inter-cultural communicator in 1980s France is fueled by a history of previously missed encounters and bad communications which remains untold, that of French colonialism. While the opening of an institution dedicated to the Arab world in France initiated acts of communication, the celebration of *le monde arabe* also acted as a site of forgetting. The different elements which make up the IMA’s public communication – foundational documents, exhibition catalogues, publications, etc. – refrain from explaining the roots of the communicative failure between French and Arab cultures. The historical contacts between France and its former colonies in the Arab world are rarely discussed openly. The possibility that France’s colonial past might be a cause of the absence of intercultural dialogue between the two cultures is only marginally addressed in the main public communication initiated at the IMA. However, communicative moments about France’s colonial past and cultural encounters can be found in some unexpected spaces.

The alternation between the absence and the presence of colonial memories at the IMA transforms the institute into a veritable network of conversations between the various spaces which compose the institution, each with a different relation to colonial history. The tension between these conversations, the communicative mission of the IMA and its existence in-between cultures transforms “the encounter” into the proper theoretical tool for making sense of

the Institut du Monde Arabe. The first section of this chapter will outline the communicative functions of the IMA, expressed in foundational documents and in the terminology used to describe some of the institute's main spaces and activities. This discussion provides context for the different types of communications within the IMA which further define the absence and presence of historical encounters from the overall discourse about colonial history. Further in this chapter, I define "the encounter" and problematize it in the context of several bodies of literature: communication and cultural studies, post-colonial theory and studies of space. This chapter places resistance, as it occurs in the context of everyday practices, at the root of the colonial encounter. Resistance and negotiation are two aspects of a hegemonic culture, another concept to be discussed in this chapter. I also pay particular attention to the "cultural turn" in the study of colonialism which makes visible historical encounters which were excluded from the political, military and economic account of colonial history. This dissertation represents a contribution to the study of colonialism from a cultural perspective and the Institut du Monde Arabe is an ideal venue for such analysis as it combines spaces of traditional display of cultural artifacts with spaces designed for everyday consumption.

Encounters and bridges: The Institut du Monde Arabe as communicator

Several moments in the history of the Institut du Monde Arabe point out the communicative scope of the institution in post-colonial France. The recently redesigned website¹² of the Institut du Monde Arabe offers a brief "Historique" of the cultural project with an emphasis on its primary objective, "étant de mieux faire connaître le Monde Arabe contemporain et la civilisation arabo-musulmane" ("Connaitre l'IMA", 2010). In "La Mission

¹² The IMA launched its new website in February 2010. The main goals of the new website are: (1) to offer access to the online library databases (information which was not accessible online before this date) and (2) to open to the public comprehensive archives of events organized by the IMA (exhibitions, conferences, public debates, lecture series, etc) Both these initiatives are still under development

de l'Institut," the leaders of the IMA highlight the need for such an institution in France, "l'Institut a sans doute le plus de chances de transformer progressivement l'image du monde arabe en France et d'atteindre son objectif qui n'est autre, en définitive, que d'être un des instruments essentiels du dialogue des cultures arabes et français" ("La mission de l'Institut", 1999[1980], p. 7). In the preface to *Institut du Monde Arabe: Vingt ans d'activites, 1980-2000*, Nasser El Ansary, director general of the IMA in 2002 explained that "l'Institut du monde arabe lui [au public] offre, non pas une belle vitrine mais, plus que toute autre institution culturelle à l'étranger, un espace de rencontre, de débat et de convivialité" (IMA, 2002, p. 12). In 2008, IMA initiated a new space of knowledge about Arab cultures, the Qantara virtual museum, which zooms in on one aspect of *le monde arabe*, "la civilisation méditerranéenne". According to the current President of IMA, Dominique Baudis, "Qantara veut construire ou plutôt consolider le pont entre le nord et le sud, entre l'est et l'ouest de la Méditerranée" (Baudis cited in Koïkas and Bouffard, 2008, p. 8). Along the same lines, the official description of the IMA on the website of the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes reads, "L'Institut du Monde Arabe constitue un instrument privilégié de dialogue et de coopération entre la France et les pays arabes" ("Réélection de M. Baudis", 2008).

Since its beginnings in 1974, the IMA was imagined by various French Presidents, cultural officials and Arab diplomats as a bridge between cultures and a beginning of a new and cordial relation of inter-cultural collaboration. At the inauguration of the IMA in November 1987, French President François Mitterrand stated, "voilà, en tout cas, une réalisation qui prouve la volonté de la France d'être en mesure de servir la relation entre nos cultures, entre ce vaste monde qui est le vôtre, et nous-mêmes reliés que nous avons été à travers l'histoire par la géographie, par la mer Méditerranée, après tant de confrontations et de luttes". In December

1974, the French Council of Ministers adopted the creation of an institute for the Arab world in Paris. On 23 June 1980, nineteen Arab nations and France signed the document which established the legal foundations of the IMA. Only a few months later, the “Acte de fondation de l’Institut du Monde Arabe” was signed into law by the Décret du 14 octobre 1980, ratified by the French Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This document recognized the IMA as “un établissement d’utilité publique”. What did the “utilité publique” of the IMA encompass? How was this new cultural institution to serve the needs of the French citizens, the French government and the Arab states involved in this project? Very generally, the IMA had the task of “favoriser les échanges culturels, la *communication* et la coopération entre France et le monde arabe” (“Statuts de la fondation”, 1980, Art. 1, emphasis mine). I argue that this desire for communication is based on a previous miscommunication, unidentified yet suggested by the founding documents of the IMA. In “La mission de l’Institut” (1999[1980]), it is communicated that “les Français, en effet, connaissaient toujours mal la culture et la civilisation arabes; ils s’en formaient des images incomplètes, fausses, parfois même péjoratives” (p. 3). And whose fault might that be? It is possible that the “mauvais connaissance” of Arab cultures by French audiences was a failure of the communication processes initiated during colonial exhibitions, where colonial politics of display offered a simplified and exoticized version of the “other”? Until fifty years ago, the knowledge of the colonized “other” passed through the filter of colonial ideologies which left a strong legacy on the post-colonial systems of representation and “reading” of other cultures. Indirectly, the IMA and its communities hope to fix this mis-translation of cultures which took place during colonialism through a modern system of knowledge display.

The administrators and the curators of the IMA, when faced with the Oriental regimes of display inherited from colonial times opted for the rehabilitation and legitimization of Arab cultures for the French publics. This cultural rehabilitation, however, attributes to Arab cultures modernizing traits which speak more of France's vision of progress than of cultural developments authentic to Arab communities. "La mission de l'Institut" continues, "il a donc paru nécessaire d'améliorer l'exactitude de ces images et de montrer aux Français la longue tradition spirituelle et intellectuelle d'où le monde arabe est issu, de leur apprendre qu'il est l'héritier d'une civilisation prestigieuse, brillante" ("Mission", 1999[1980], p. 3). To prove the validity of the institute and also the necessity of this cultural space in contemporary France, the leaders of the IMA position Arab cultures in a discourse of French intellectual life, guided by a constant desire for knowledge accumulation and improvement and marked by the existence of specific spaces of knowledge making. According to "La mission de l'Institut" (1999[1980]), Arab culture and civilization "est singulièrement vivace puisque des écrivains, des philosophes, des scientifiques, des artistes témoignent sous nos yeux de sa fécondité" (p. 3). Based on these official documents which sketch the ideological goals of the IMA, I claim that the encounters between different cultures within the Institut are selected in order to reflect a certain version of progress which can be measured through artistic, scientific and technological innovations. This vision of the Arab culture is also reflected in Article 1 of the "Statuts de la Fondation" (1980), which states that the role of the IMA is "de développer et d'approfondir en France l'étude, la connaissance et la compréhension du monde arabe, de sa langue, de sa civilisation, de ses valeurs culturelles et spirituelles, et de son effort de développement".

The acts of communication which take place within a cultural institution position it within a national context of dialogues and debates. The exclusion of certain historical

encounters from the spaces of display at the IMA reflects the reality of state-governed institutions which often participate in broader political conversations in specific contexts. In post-colonial France, colonialism is an often silenced and highly controversial topic. Museums such as the Quai Branly and the CNHI have been caught in intense and often unresolved public debates around the absence of colonial memories and critical approaches to France's colonial empire. Despite its strong communicative agenda, the IMA is usually situated at the margins of the debates on colonialism in France. The focus on the IMA's financial problems or the personal profiling of the Presidents diminished the significance of the role the institution plays in a post-colonial context. Through an analysis of the IMA as a communicative space for multiple encounters, I will show that the institute is in fact a major contributor to the hiding and re-enactment of colonial memories, placing it at the center of the postcolonial discourse. It is in fact the communicative dimension of the IMA which connects it with the other cultural institutions in France. As Peters stated (1999), "but for the chattering classes of the world's rich societies...the worry about how to connect with people, near and far, has become a giving of our daily doing" (p. 263). In order to understand this desire to build bridges between cultures and communicate with other communities, "the encounter" seems the most appropriate theoretical tool.

The encounter: Definitions and theoretical contexts

According to Sara Ahmed (2000), "encounters are meetings...which are not simply in the present: each encounter reopens past encounters. Encounters involve, not only the surprise of being faced by other who cannot be located in the present, they also involve conflict" (p. 8). Encounters between cultural communities in post-colonial France are, according to this definition, conditioned by past encounters between different cultural groups. Such past contacts

occurred during colonial times, which predict a certain performance of the post-colonial encounters in the light of the histories behind them. According to Ahmed (2000), any “encounter is mediated; it presupposes other faces, other encounter of facing, other bodies, other spaces, and other times” (p. 7). For example, following Ahmed’s rationale, the encounter between a French police officer and a young Algerian in the *banlieue* must be thought of in terms of the ghosts of the colonial past. Each present encounter has a history, therefore the stories that communities and nations agree to tell about their past define the nature of present encounters.

At the same time, even when encounters reflect the complexity of colonial histories outside framework of violence, resulting in harmonious contacts, these present contacts are not void of the memories of oppression that took place during colonialism. These memories can exist in a non-manifest form or they are incorporated into public forms of retelling the past, such as exhibitions, permanent collections or publications. Therefore, the existence of non-violent encounters in the post-colonial present between communities which were in opposition during colonialism does not signify the forgetting of the colonial past. Colonialism can be remembered and commemorated without being constantly present in the spaces of interaction between different communities in France. Not every encounter that happens today must be conditioned and explained by the legacies of colonialism or observed through the lens of colonial domination. Moreover, the lack of official memories about the colonial history and the integration of positive remarks about the colonial past in French official discourse¹³ do not

¹³ Here I refer to the February 23, 2005 law on colonialism passed by the French General Assembly which generated immense debates regarding France’s colonial past and great opposition from historians, scholars and immigrant communities alike. The article 4 of the law asked teachers to “acknowledge and recognize in particular the positive role of the French presence abroad, especially in North Africa”. The law was repealed in 2006. For a detailed discussion of the law and its effects on French society, please see Liauzu, C & Maceron, G (Eds) (2006) *La colonization, la loi et l’histoire*. Paris: Editions Syllepse

indicate a complete absence of memorialization. Encounters with the colonial past happen in the context of the everyday but also in the official spaces of cultural institutions which deviate often from their intended mission. Institutions like the IMA, through their diversity of exhibitionary, educational and consumerist spaces perform unintended encounters with past histories that recall the violence of the colonial act but also allow for other type of contacts to become visible.

Edward Said (1985) emphasized the inevitable histories embedded in any act of remembering the colonial past, because “so saturated with meanings, so overdetermined by history, religion, and politics are labels like “Arab” or “muslim”...that no one today can use them without some attention to the formidable polemical mediations that screen the objects...that the labels designate” (p. 93). Ahmed (2000) agreed partially with Said but added that “post-coloniality allows us to investigate how colonial encounters are both determining, and yet *not fully determining*, of social and material existence” (p. 11, emphasis mine).

In *France and the Maghreb: Performative Encounters*, Mireille Rosello introduced the possibility for an encounter to exist outside the prescribed historical patterns. She states: “[B]y performative encounters, I mean a type of encounter that coincides with the creation of new subject-positions rather than treating preexisting (pre-imagined) identities as the reason for, and justification of, the protocol of encounter” (Rosello, 2005, p. 1). Similarly to Ahmed, Rosello (2005) argued that present (post-colonial) encounters would automatically perform the embedded binary split between the two subjectivities in contact because “most encounters rely on previously established subjectivities that function as authoritarian scripts” (p. 5). At the same time, this inflexible narrative about encounters as frozen in the colonial past is contradicted by the “performative” function of encounters which allow for “new ways of being with” to develop. Therefore, according to Ahmed (2000), the diverse histories which compose the post-colonial

encounter do not transform the identities of those engaged in these contacts but regulate the strategies and spaces of interaction. In Rosello's case, these encounters are observed in post-colonial novels and short stories, where various characters live the consequences of the Algerian War, colonialism and decolonization. Ahmed also looked at literary texts but her scope was broader as she incorporated in her methodology of "strange encounters" documents on women produced by the UN, the *Body Shop Book* and autobiographical reflections of members of groups such as the Global Nomads International.

To these inquiries, I add the dimension of memory making and unmaking as an essential component of any encounter that happens within a cultural institution. Collective memories about past events and histories, but most importantly, the possibility of such memories to exist will dictate the nature of the encounter. Official memories about violent histories must be allowed to exist in order to decrease tensions between communities and increase the potential for harmonious and peaceful encounters in the present. At the same time, stories are told outside official discourses, in instances of the everyday but also in the context of cultural institutions which are, officially, *not* meant to reflect on moments of the colonial past. Institutions like the IMA, even if distanced from colonial pasts in their ideological foundations, still embody legacies of past cultural productions such as colonial exhibitions which had the specific goal of introducing the French to the cultures of the colonized "other". Also, cultural institutions and their diverse spaces host encounters that are both "traditional" in their reproduction of past interaction and "performative" in their interpretation of past relations outside memories of violence and oppression. For such encounters to take place, various regimes of display are at work which remind the practices of representation with a colonial flavor but also open new venues for telling stories about the past.

“The encounter” across disciplines: The history of a concept

The following section investigates “the encounter” in the context of several bodies of literature: cultural studies, post-colonial theory and the study of space. I provide extensive accounts of the definitions of culture, the development of the field of everyday studies and the notion of resistance as it related to the larger context of hegemonic culture. I am particularly interested in the intersections between notions of resistance and the field of post-colonial studies, especially in the context of newly accepted paradigms of a more cultural orientation.

Cultural studies: Culture and everyday resistance

The scholars who set the foundations of British cultural studies suggested a re-definition of culture and the “cultural”. Seeking to explain the complex theoretical heritage of cultural studies, Stuart Hall (1993) described the field as “a discursive formation” and a bearer of multiple discourses, histories and “interruptions,” one such interruption being the cultural politics of difference (p. 98-103). Toby Miller (2001) defined cultural studies as “a tendency across disciplines, rather than a discipline itself”, which focuses “on the margins of power rather than reproducing established lines of force and authority” (p. 1). For Tony Bennett (1998), two central concerns of cultural studies are “how to account for the distinctive place that culture occupies within the forms of power which characterize modern societies and, perhaps more important, how to account for the distinctive *productivity* of culture” (p. 9). The diverse preoccupations and interrogations of the cultural studies scholars allow for observations on the relation that culture develops with a series of other theoretical and “real” spaces: power, governance and resistance. I argue that the encounters that take place between these “spaces” that regulate everyday existence offer agency to culture as a force of change and resistance even in the context of unstable and violent times, such as colonialism. Furthermore, according to

Bennett (1998), cultural studies “allows culture its autonomous spheres and forms of action” (p. 10). Culture itself, on the same level with politics and economics, has the power to influence and change larger structures of meaning, representation and reality.

In *Selection from the Prison Notebook*, Antonio Gramsci (2002[1971]) alluded to the significance of culture, to which he referred as “folklore”, to alter established “conceptions of the world” or philosophy. He wrote that “this philosophy is contained in:[...] 3. popular religion and, therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of ‘folklore’” (Gramsci, 2002[1971], p. 59). Culture for Gramsci is the domain of different and often competing philosophical and political views of the world disputed by various individuals which the author calls “philosophers”. For Gramsci (2002[1971]), “everyone is a philosopher” and this condition is necessary in the process of acquiring one’s conception of the world for “is it better to work out consciously and critically one’s own conception of the world, and thus, in connection with the labours of one’s own brain, choose one sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the history of the world, be one own’s guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the moulding of one’s personality?” (p. 59). This view of power relations as constantly negotiated by the members of a certain class was offered as an explanation to the socialist revolution which, despite Marxist predictions, never happened. Because society was dominated by bourgeois values, the working class was not able to perceive itself outside the bourgeois system of reference and was not capable to alter the system. However, concluded Gramsci (2002[1971]), “consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say, political consciousness) is the first stage towards a further self-consciousness” (p. 67) and the development of a counterhegemonic culture.

While the general definition of hegemony has stayed the same since it was first coined by Gramsci, its appropriation by cultural studies scholars and its usage today have transformed and challenged certain aspects of the concept. Scott Lash (2007) pointed out that “hegemony was the concept that de facto crystallized cultural studies as a discipline...in classical British cultural studies hegemony has largely been understood in terms of resistance to symbolic power” (p. 55). Edgar and Sedgwick (2005) further explained the fascination of cultural studies scholars in the late 1970s with the concept of hegemony which “facilitated analysis of the ways in which subordinate groups actively resist and respond to political and economic domination. The subordinate groups need not be seen merely as the passive dupes of the dominant class and its ideology” (p. 165). In “Notes of Deconstructing the Popular,” Stuart Hall (1981) explained that the connection between culture and political hegemony was a defining factor in the power struggles between various communities within a national context. Exercised without coercion and mainly through consent, hegemony allows the ruling community to preserve its position through negotiation with other subordinate groups and acceptance of resistant ideas and values.

The most significant difference between the Gramscian conceptualization of hegemony and the cultural studies interpretation of the term revolves around the category of class. In a recent issue of *Theory, Culture and Society* dedicated to theoretical uses of hegemony, Scott Lash (2007) wrote that “post-hegemonic cultural studies has much less to do with social class...Class is still with us, more than ever. Yet no longer being concentrated so much inside single nations and in concentrated places like factories, class has reconfigured, or more or less fragmented” (p. 70). Two decades earlier, Stuart Hall (1981) reached a similar conclusion when he claimed that “the people versus the power-bloc: this, rather than ‘class-against-class,’ is the central line of contradiction around which the terrain of culture is polarized. Popular culture,

especially, is organized around this contradiction: the popular forced versus the power-bloc” (p. 238). Despite the fact that the popular “masses” or the former working classes have been coopted within a general culture of capitalism and consumption, “these popular forces transform the cultural commodity into a cultural resource, pluralize the meanings and pleasures it offers, evade or resists its disciplinary efforts, fracture its homogeneity and coherence, raid or poach upon its terrain” (Fiske, 2004[1991]), p. 28). The process of negotiating culture is therefore the work of individuals whose destinies are not primarily determined by class and economics since “society is structured around a complex matrix of axes of difference (class, gender, race, age, and so on)” (Fiske, 2004[1991]), p. 30). The possibility to negotiate and change culture, even from a subordinated position and in a historical context marked by various types of inequalities is the aspect of the hegemony thesis of most significance to the scope of this dissertation.

The power of cultural practices within a context of struggle results sometimes from the simple, everyday repetition of a cultural action without the actual intention of resisting the structures of power in place. The possibility of quotidian cultural practices such as cooking, shopping or walking to act as elements of resistance comes from the understanding of culture as “the sum of the available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their common experiences” (Hall, 1980, p. 59). Common experiences are achieved through a constant process of giving and taking of meanings which reflects a certain “structure of feeling” at a given moment in time. In “Culture is Ordinary,” Raymond Williams (1997[1958]) argued that meanings “are made by living, made and remade, in ways we cannot know in advance” (p. 9). The unpredictable nature of cultural practices comes from the often incongruence between the multiples processes involved in the act of communication: transmission, reception and response

(Williams, 1959, p. 313). Even in a democratic¹⁴ society, the act of communication encompasses the desire of “any governing body...to implant the right ideas in the minds of those whom it governs” (Williams, 1959, p. 313). Williams placed the act of “communicating” culture at the center of successful democratic communities, arguing that failure to communicate results in failed social bonds. Failure to communicate, explained Williams (1959), represents the unwillingness to accept that “a transmission is always an offering...it is not an attempt to dominate, but to communicate, to achieve reception and response” (p. 316). Borrowing from Marxist terminology, Williams believed the first phase of communication, transmission, to be a product of the dominant class which, in a liberal-democratic context, accepts that its communicated messages might be challenged by alternative ideologies at the reception level. Communication, to be successful, must be an act of negotiation.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau analyzed several “practices of everyday life” as sites of struggle, communication and negotiation of culture. According to de Certeau (1984), culture “develops in an atmosphere of tensions, and often of violence, for which it provides symbolic balances, contracts of compatibility and compromises...The tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices” (p. xvii). De Certeau (1984) focused on spaces of consumption, such as the street, the mall or the restaurant, which he defines as “*poaching* in countless ways on the property of others” (p. xii). What transforms the process of consumption of communicated messages into an area of potential resistance and interpretation is the “deviousness” of a process which manifests itself through “*ways of using* the products imposed

¹⁴ I am aware of the many debates and contradictions surrounding the term “democratic” The way I use this term in this chapter is very general, primarily to point out the contrast between colonial societies, which lack official spaces of resistance, and other societies governed by more inclusive and liberal practices, where resistance is embedded in the nature of governance itself.

by a dominant economic order” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiii). Practices of everyday life include acts of speaking, walking or cooking which are able to produce a new structure of meaning by borrowing, interpreting and even resisting certain elements from dominant discourses and practices. For example, the presence of colonial foods in France in the nineteenth century opened the French appetite for new products and dishes such as couscous and mint tea, which are now common French foods. What makes practices of the everyday different from organized forms of protest which oppose directly regimes of domination is the unintentional and random nature of resistance embedded in banal social and cultural acts. De Certeau reserved his definition of everyday practices to instances of borrowing and interpretation of aspects of the dominant culture. Within a colonial context, another set of practices act as moments of silent and unintentional resistance, completely unrelated to the aspects of dominant culture analyzed by de Certeau. Many cultural practices, such as eating couscous instead of bread or drinking coffee in coffee shops, are rooted in histories and traditions which precede instances of colonial domination. During colonialism, the colonized communities could still silently engage in rituals disconnected from the colonial realities by cooking, for example, a traditional dish or by observing eating ceremonies different from those of the European colonizers.

Looking particularly at the ideology of nationalism embedded in the act of cooking in France, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (2004) wrote that “French cuisine engages the nation all the more effectively because it is part of everyday life. That we practice our nationalism without having to think about it...gives the culinary an immense advantage over cultural products that require more self-conscious ideological direction” (p. 81). Even if Parkhurst Ferguson discussed spaces of a culinary nature in the context of a Western European democratic state, I argue that a similar framework of silent influence and resistance can be more generally applied to cultures in

situations of domination. Even under historical circumstances of oppression and violence, such as colonialism, the colonized cultures do not cease to exist. If the ruling regime exercises coercive strategies to alter the political and economic order of the conquered society, some cultural areas, such as cooking, eating and dressing, remain resistant to change. Their resistance comes from what Parkhurst Ferguson, borrowing from de Certeau, calls “the everyday life” of certain cultural practices. If the simple act of eating becomes a marker of French nationalism, “as the cook stirs a béchamel sauce on the stove or the diner reads the menu” (Ferguson, 2004, p. 81), similar actions, even if taking place in different political contexts, can also symbolize silent rituals of cultural preservation. In the introduction to *The Everyday Life Reader*, Ben Highmore (2002) questioned the ability of “everyday” spaces to act as opponents of dominant structure – “does the everyday provide ground for conformity, or is it rather the place where conformity is evaded?...is the everyday a realm of submission to relations of power or the space in which those relations are contested (or at least negotiated in relatively interesting ways)?” (p. 5).

I believe that even before questioning the “resistance” component of practices of the everyday, the likelihood of resistance to exist and function outside democratic societies should be questioned. The possibility of resistance itself is a “luxury” of societies where resistance is allowed, celebrated and encouraged in order to fuel the hegemonic system of power in place. Likewise, “the everyday” as described by de Certeau is a social dimension which requires the support of a rather democratic system of governance, which accommodates and even encourages resistance. Even the theorizations of everyday practices assume the legitimacy of such manifestation and very rarely question the fact that such practices might struggle to exist and be manifested in less democratic historical contexts. For example, in the *Critique of Everyday Life*, Henri Lefebvre (1991) wrote about neo-colonial practices, such as the consumption of sugar in

France. Sugar is a raw ingredient which played a significant role in the history of Western colonialism (see Mintz, 1985). However, Lefebvre's analysis focused on these consumption practices as they developed in France and he did not refer to the impact of sugar consumption on the colonized countries, from where the sugar originated. Similarly, in *The Everyday Life Reader*, Ben Highmore (2002) pointed out the absence of non-Western spaces from the analysis of the "everyday" but nonetheless fails to dedicate a place in the *Reader* to this missing area of study (p. 17-18). This major omission points out towards one of the general shortcomings in thinking of the colonial encounter across disciplines: the focus on political and economic aspects of colonization.

Because of the violent nature of the colonial regime and the sophisticated apparatus of knowledge gathering about the colonized "other", the colonial encounter is often thought of in solely political, military and economic terms.¹⁵ It is true that the encounters that took place during colonialism were marked by violence, oppression and illicit acts of resistance which were severely punished. However, another series of encounters happened during colonialism, at the cultural level, between the everyday practices and lives of multiple communities. Several "structures of feeling" (Williams, 1961) met not only in instances of violence but in the midst of mundane activities such as walking, shopping, cooking, eating and dressing. The intersections which resulted from these quotidian encounters escaped rituals of strict policing and violent sanction because the "everyday," due to its complexity, casualness and "naturalness," resists outside regulation. The everyday has invisible "rules" and "structures" that are only known by those involved in its practices and are often invisible to them as well. Highmore (2002) argued

¹⁵ The violence of colonial politics and military has generated much needed literature on the colonial encounters. Some of the most significant titles which point out the brutality of the colonial regime are: Fanon, F. (1952). *Peux noirs, masques blancs*. Paris: Seuil; Memmi, A. (1965). *The colonizer and the colonized*. Boston: Beacon; Fanon, F. (1968). *Les damnés de la terre*. Paris: Mosperio; Le Cour Grandmaison, O. (2005). *Coloniser, exterminer: Sur la guerre et l'État colonial*. Paris: Fayard.

that “ideologies reside in precisely those places where they are not perceived to be...everyday life and ideology both overlap and have much in common – both ‘suffer’ from inattention. Both need to be seen as quasi-invisible and surreptitious realms that require...straightforward effort to make them visible” (p. 7). Because everyday practices are imperceptible, they are not perceived as threats and are therefore allowed to happen. As I will explore later in this chapter, such cultural practices (e.g. food, dance, music, fashion) were considered neutral by the colonial administrators and bureaucrats and did not represent a potential and immediate threat to the dominant culture. Consequently, these practices were transported from the colonies to France in the context of cultural events such as colonial exhibitions. The encounter with the French culture was framed by colonial officials as a reminder of France’s cultural superiority but the outcomes of these cultural contacts resulted in cases of influence and negotiation.

The everyday practices of the colonized communities were not generally perceived as resistant by the colonizers. It is true that some colonial practices, such as land expropriations and intense cultivation of vineyards on the North African coast resulted in the modification of certain eating practices. Because of this assumption, the everyday functions as one of the few spaces where resistance can happen on a daily basis without being policed or punished. In situations of oppression, such as colonialism, for resistance to exist it must happen outside the established boundaries of the official political apparatus. In many cases, because a space for resistance is not accommodated by the ruling political regime, resistance must take the form of violent rebellion against the oppressive government and is usually sanctioned. Another alternative for acts of resistance under colonialism is through the action of militant and intellectual groups outside the geographical boundaries of the colonized community, in efforts to generate intellectual debates and criticism of the oppressive regime outside of the space of conflict.

I argue that the preservation of ways of living which precede colonial domination can also be observed as instances of resistance. Even if immediate effects, which are visible in situations of direct combat (e.g. the killing of French military by pro-independence guerilla movements in Algeria) cannot be seen in forms of banal resistance, they are easier to observe from a post-colonial standpoint. I claim that the many successful contemporary intersections between French and immigrant cultures are the product of more than one hundred years of work of the everyday practices to support traditional and “authentic” structures of living. For example, the presence in France of numerous Algerian and Moroccan restaurants is not only a reflection of a recent post-colonial fascination with the consumption and understanding of so-called authentic dishes. I believe that this process has its roots in a long history of the struggle of the “everyday” to preserve and reinvent itself during the colonial period. The inclusion of leisure and everyday spaces within the body of the IMA allows for the observation of cultural practices which have not been altered by the contacts with the colonizers but have themselves influenced the culture of the French at home. Post-colonialism is the space for such impossible encounters.

Postcolonial theory: The impossible encounter

In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba (2005) pointed out the difficulty of explaining the post-colonial condition through a generalized definition because of the complexity of the colonial experience which resulted in diverse post-colonial conditions. She wrote, “it might seem that because the age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once-colonized people live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial” (Loomba, 2005, p. 12). However, the realities of once colonized nations are as diverse as the mechanisms, ideologies and discourses applied by their former colonizers. While certain general characteristics, such as violence, oppression and desire to civilize and transform are applicable to most processes of

colonization, most communities and societies experienced the colonial encounter differently. Therefore, argued Loomba (2005), “the term [postcolonialism] is not inadequate to the task of defining contemporary realities in the once-colonized countries...but may also cloud the internal social and racial differences of many societies” (p. 13). To talk about a generic post-colonialism would fail to explain the specific experiences, discourses, institutions and practices of memory-making within former colonies and their *métropoles*.

Many foundational post-colonial texts favor language and show a reduced interest in the encounters that took place in the sphere of the everyday culture. The foundational writings of the post-colonial academic field placed more importance on issues related to forms of linguistic resistance and more importantly, replaced “political insurgency [with] discursive radicalism” (Mishra & Hodge, 1995[1991], p. 278). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon spoke of the formation of national cultures in the aftermath of colonialism. For Fanon, the rebirth of a national culture could only happen when the history of the nation was reclaimed, actively, by the members of the national community. In Fanon’s view of post-colonial knowledge formation, this constant and active reclaim of history, through national literatures and storytelling traditions “is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of *thoughts* to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (Fanon, 1995[1968], p. 155). Fanon (1995[1968]) was also very specific about what a national culture is not, “national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people’s true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever-present reality of the people” (p. 154). Even if “the ever-present reality of the people” was of concern to Fanon, the everyday presents

itself through linguistic tactics of resistance and not through the totality of rather neutral cultural practices such as walking, cooking or eating.

The distinction between the realm of “thoughts” and the sphere of “the ever-present reality” of individuals indicates the priority given by early scholars of post-colonialism to the linguistic aspect in the process of rebuilding a post-colonial nation. The cultural practices of the everyday were considered both secondary and inferior to these two other spaces of national reconstruction as the fight against the “master” must be through “active struggle” (Fanon cited in Mishra & Hodge, 1995[1991], p. 277). According to Stuart Hall (1995[1990]), the post-colonial reconstitution of nations at the level of language and thought must also be accompanied by forms of “imaginary reunification and discovery” (p. 393-4) which can be uncovered in artistic practices such as cinema and photography, to which I add practices of the everyday. Post-colonial scholars consider language to be a privileged site of “active struggle” and the emphasis on language is in fact the bias of the post-colonial field, born out “on the margins” of departments of English literature in the 1980s (Mishra & Hodge, 1995[1991], p. 276-78; see also Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002[1989]). However, the post-colonial became the concern for most disciplines and fields under social sciences and humanities who are concerned with issues of cultural dominance, but the linguistic bias was also transferred (Smouts, 2007, p. 34-35).

One of the most celebrated and critiqued volumes of post-colonial theory, *The Empire Writes Back*, situated instances of power and resistance also at the linguistic level. Further, this volume offered one of the first definitions of the post-colonial condition, explained as “all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present” (Ashcroft, Grittiths & Taffin, 2002[1989], p. 2). According to Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge (1995[1991]), “the post-colonial is reduced to a purely textual phenomenon, as if power is

simply a matter of discourse and it is only through discourse that counter-claims might be made” (p. 278). The first accounts of the “other”’s resistance to the colonizer’s attempt to alter social structures were conceptualized at the level of language. In the famous work of Gayatri C. Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, the subaltern, term borrowed from Antonio Gramsci is defined as “the oppressed” or “the dispossessed”. Spivak spoke of the subaltern as deprived of the tools to be an active creator of its own “re-presentation,” therefore lacking the ability to speak for itself (Spivak, 1988, p. 275). To be able to speak for oneself is for Spivak and many other post-colonial scholars the ultimate marker of resistance to colonialism. At the level of language, the colonial encounter reflected the “narrow epistemic violence of colonialism” (Spivak, 1995 [1988], p. 28) which, even when preaching a civilizing mission meant to civilize, therefore change, the colonized, contradicted itself by forbidding the act of mimicry.

The colonial project is full of tensions and contradictions and one of the main contradictions is the impositions of boundaries to the process of mimicry. In “Of Mimicry and Men: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” Homi K. Bhabha (1984) explained that “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite*...the subject of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must always produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (p. 126, emphasis in original). Jenny Sharpe (1989) identified a series of “figures of colonial resistance: in British post-colonial literature, among whom the “mimic man...a contradictory figure who simultaneously reinforces colonial authority and disturbs it” (p. 140). The “mimic man”, who is a literary representation of the “real” *évolués* in French colonies and the educated local elites of the British empire, embodies the strict prescribed nature of the colonial encounter between colonizer and colonized. Most importantly, “the mimic man” (and woman) represents

the impossibility of the colonizer to have total control over the encounter. Furthermore, in “Educating Conformity in French Colonial Algeria,” Fanny Colonna (1997[1975]) pointed out that the French government was not only dealing with unruly encounters in the colonies but was also struggling with the policing of peasant behavior at home – “confronted both domestically and externally with cultural differences, the reformers judged... that civilizing practices had to be imposed since the children [in Algeria and rural France] are semisavages, reduced to a vegetative existence and living, as it were, in a state of nature” (p. 349).

A different relation was cultivated between the colonizers and the inhabitants of urban France, one which both encouraged and disapproved mimicry. The site of appropriate and inappropriate practices, the mimicry of the French “civilization” by colonial subjects, in the classrooms, in the courtroom, in the kitchen and on the streets, became one of the first spaces where colonial encounters were made possible outside a context of violence. Because the act of being like the French or the British was an ideological mission of the civilizing discourse, it was allowed to happen but not to reach full fruition. According to Bhabha (1984), the colonized who agrees to transgress his or her own culture and appropriate European norms is a “partial” presence, “both incomplete and virtual” (p. 127). Both Bhabha and Sharpe omitted two aspects from their analysis. If during colonialism, acts of cultural and political transgression made some Algerians or Indians into “almost” Europeans, many French or British were also lured by the culture of their empires and appropriated foreign traditions and practices. Second, the “mimicry” of the European “other” can also be viewed as empowering for those engaged in acts of transgression due to the uncontrollable nature of the act of imitation.

For Edward Said, the colonized “others” are incapable of acts of imitation because they exist only in the imaginary of the West as “knowledge of the Orient...in a sense *creates* the

Orient, the Oriental and his world” (Said, 1994[1979], p. 40, emphasis in original). Two different cultures encounter each other only through the Western desire for more land, more power and more knowledge. Because the Orient is purely the fictional “other” of colonial powers such as France and Great Britain, colonized communities lack the agency to control their own representations and also the ability to resist the West. Orientalism represents, according to Said, “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – ...by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it” (Said, 1994[1979], p. 3). In a later book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said would reopen discussions on issues of cultural resistance and influence, which lack from *Orientalism*, offering a much needed sequel to his interpretation of the colonial encounter. For Said, the encounter between France and its colonies corresponds with the reading, translation and representations of these “othered” lands within academic and institutional contexts. In this new framework, “Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing” (Said, 1994[1979], p. 41). Said is less concerned with the everyday translations that happen between intersecting cultural practices in spaces which evade this close scrutiny, such as the market, the street, the home, the restaurant or the tea shop. I argue that it is in these spaces that we can observe encounters that escape the reasoning of the Oriental framework.

The postcolonial in French scholarship: A new interdisciplinary encounter

The majority of the scholars I mentioned in this chapter so far, with the exception of Edward Said, situated their discussions of colonialism and post-colonialism within the British context. The post-colonial academic field itself was born in departments of English literature and the foundational texts are written by voices of an independent India who are nonetheless

writing in North America or Great Britain (e.g. Spivak, Bhabha, Guha, etc.). If the beginnings of the field and its main studies were specifically related to Great Britain, what is then the relevance of these texts to France's colonial history and its post-colonial condition? Because of the associations between post-colonial studies and the history of Great Britain, French scholars were reluctant to apply a post-colonial framework to France's history. However, the main reason for the reluctance to embrace the post-colonial was, according to Marie-Claude Smouts (2007), "que le théorème postcolonial touche au point le plus sensible de la conscience française – l'idéal de la nation républicaine héritière des Lumières" (p. 26). It was only in the last ten years that French scholars, particularly in the field of political science and history, started to inquire about the possibility of postcolonial studies *à la française*, careful of the fact that "le postcolonial [représente] un risque pour la cohésion nationale" (Smouts, 2007, p. 27; see also Bertrand, 2006; Dubreuil, 2006; Bancel et al., 2010). The interest in post-colonialism and the openness to address France's colonial memories was partially fuelled by recent historical work which challenges the collective remembering of the Vichy regime and its opponents.¹⁶

This new interest in the development of French post-colonial academic inquiries does not mean that a preoccupation with the post-colonial condition did not already exist in France. Since the 1950s, when Georges Balandier (1951) coined the term "la situation coloniale," offering a framework to discuss colonialism as a totality of political, cultural and economic relations of the "double history" of the colonizer and colonized, French scholars have been preoccupied with various aspects of the colonial and post-colonial condition. Balandier (2002) himself revisited his 1951 article in a recent issue of *French Politics, Culture and Society* and explained that the

¹⁶ I refer specifically to Rouso, H. (1994). *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. See also: Laborie, P. (2001). *L'opinion française sous Vichy*. Paris: Seuil. Jackson, J. (2003). *France: The Dark Years, 1940-44*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Burrin, P. (2005). *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise*. New York: New Press.

methodological and theoretical arguments of the colonial situation can be extended to the current post-colonial period because “colonisation et décolonisation se situent ensemble, non dissociables, au sein même de la conscience moderne actuelle” (p. 6). Furthermore, this complex situation which defines colonial and post-colonial contacts “donne accès à une totalité dynamique où toutes les composantes sont en interaction, en état de continuel réajustement des relations selon les variations des modes de la domination et de la dépendance” (Balandier, 2002, p. 7). The author advocated for the need to pay attention to encounters not only between two cultures external to each other but within these cultures themselves. Breaking down the two categories in multiple groups which intersect, communicate and disagree with each other even within the same cultural space shows the complexity of colonial and post-colonial histories.

In my dissertation, I define and situate the post-colonial episteme primarily in terms of the temporal dimension opened by the decolonization of former French colonies in the 1950s and 1960s. The post-colonial manifests itself in France through a myriad of social, political and cultural issues: the large post-colonial immigrant communities and the “challenges” they pose to French identity and citizenship; the lack of coherent colonial memories integrated to French history; or the everyday cultural encounters which bring back a complex history of intersections between France and its colonies. Even if the post-colonial condition is very complex and impossible to reduce to a series of characteristics applicable across cultures, I argue, nonetheless, that there are certain struggles and tensions that mark most post-colonial societies, both in Europe and abroad: the relation between the former colonial state and the present communities of immigrant origins who perceive themselves as victims of a residual colonialism; the constant requests to fuse the colonial past with the national history; and the politics of representation of the former “other” in national cultural institutions. These rather recent concerns of the post-

colonial condition are symptoms of certain happenings of the last twenty years, such as the increasing number of riots in the French suburbs, the battle of diasporic groups for the legitimacy of collective memories related to colonialism and decolonization, and the creation and transformation of cultural institutions about the “other”. The potential of the “cultural” to act as a site of reconciliation has created the opportunity for more and diverse encounters to be observed in post-colonial practices but also, retrospectively, in the past encounters between the two “binaries” of colonialism.

Encounters in space: Michel Foucault and the technologies of self

In an interview with Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault (1993) referred to the tensions between the “intention” embedded in a constructed space and the “real practice of people” who engage with that space (p. 135). Foucault spoke about “practices of freedom” as embedded in many architectural and engineering endeavors, from chimneys to prisons to churches. However, these practices can only develop and survive if those engaged with a particular space respect the original rules, creating a situation of perfect balance between intention and practice. Such situations never happen, according to Foucault. Therefore, “in the case of divergence and distortion, it [the space] immediately becomes the opposite of what has been intended” (Foucault, 1993, p. 136). I will show that official cultural institutions who claim not to perform certain functions, such as revive or “liberate” colonial memories, become sites of unexpected encounters between the memories which they were trying to avoid. The unexpected intersections and functions within any public space are results of the regulatory intentions of such places, “to ensure a certain allocation of people in space, a *canalization* of their circulation, as well as the coding of their reciprocal relations” (Foucault, 1993[...], p. 140, emphasis in original).

Foucault (1988[1982]) provided a model for understanding the internal workings of cultural institutions which combines “technologies of power” with “technologies of self” (p. 18). Technologies of power are meant to “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends,” while technologies of self “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations” (Foucault, 1988[1982], p. 18-19). The elimination of any external disturbances caused by the European interventions in Arab countries from the content of the IMA’s main spaces of display constitutes the “intention” to establish an order of knowledge in which colonialism plays a minimal role. However, is it really possible: first, to truly “know” the history of a North African state without understanding the disruptions caused by the French empire? And, second, to remain silent about colonialism when, outside the museum’s walls, this part of France’s history is made more and more visible every day?

According to Foucault, technologies of power have the role of building knowledge in conformity with the specific version of reality the dominant groups wish to impose on individuals. However, technologies of self interact with these technologies of power, not only in opposition but in the context of creative encounters. The individuals who perform these technologies of self are not only the visitors but also and mainly the internal communities who participate in the creation of the IMA’s stories, such as the curators, the communication managers, the researchers, the exhibition designers, the ticket vendors, the guards, etc. Another important category that interacts with technologies of power is formed by scholars invited to give lectures or debate certain topics, performers, movie producers, contributors to the *Qantara* magazine, etc. Foucault (1988[1982]) concluded, “this contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self I call governmentality” (p. 19). I am particularly interested in examining the results of these encounters between institutional ideologies and

various spaces within the same institution that accept, re-write and even challenge “le grand récit”. I believe that the institution itself is fragmented in a multitude of spaces which produce different types of knowledge about the colonial past and aspects of the post-colonial period. Encounters between these spaces, which range from blockbuster exhibitions to regular publications and to the everyday consumption of Lebanese foods in the IMA’s dining spaces, result in a constant re-telling of histories.

The cultural turn in colonial studies

Imperialism and colonialism, the two historical processes whose memorialization has become so problematic in France in the last twenty years, is often discussed in terms of its political and economic dimension and lack of contacts. For Edward Said (1994), “imperialism means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory,” while “colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant lands” (p. 9). In *Discours sur le colonialisme* (2004[1955]), Aimé Césaire spoke of the impossibility of colonialism to connect two cultures because “*colonisation = chosification*,” defined as the process of transforming “l’homme colonisateur en pion, en adjutant, en garde-chiourme, en chicote et l’homme indigène en instrument de production” (p. 23, emphasis in original). For Césaire, the only contacts that can happen between the colonizer and the colonized were “l’intimidation, la pression, la police, l’impôt, le vol, le viol, les cultures obligatoires” (p. 23). There has been much written about colonialism since the times of Césaire up to Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, but the dominant narrative on colonialism has remained unchanged in its politico-economic conceptualization.¹⁷

¹⁷ For more on colonialism as a political and economic institution, please see Girardet, R. (1972). *L’idée coloniale en France*. Paris: La Table Ronde; Thobie, J., Meynier, G., Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. (1990). *Histoire de la France coloniale, 1914-1990*. Paris: Agora; Aldrich, R. (1996). *Greater France: A history of French overseas expansion*.

In this context, the violence and oppression exercised by the colonial machine marked the understanding of the encounters between France and its colonies.

It is only in the last twenty years that another dimension was brought up in the study of colonialism, the culture or the cultural. According to Daniel Sherman (2000), “it was probably only a matter of time before the “cultural turn” manifested itself in the study of French colonial history [...]. It is precisely the cultural dimensions of colonialism that stake a claim to its centrality in the development of French identity and nationhood over the past two centuries (p. 708-710). About this new “cultural turn” in the study of colonialism, Edward Berenson (2004) argued that the shift towards the integration of the cultural trope comes from an interest in the reception of colonial messages by the working and lower classes in France and Great Britain (p. 128-30).¹⁸ This new interest in the construction of popular cultural practices around colonialism in France positions culture at the center of the colonial enterprise. Nicholas B. Dirks (1992) emphasized the relevance of the cultural because “linked together, colonialism and culture can be seen to provide a new world in which to deploy a critical cartography of the history and effects of power” (p. 5).

The possibilities opened by the study of culture and colonialism are also pointed out by Robert Young (1995) in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, where Young argued that “culture is always a dialectical process, inscribing and expelling its own alterity. The genealogy of the concept of ‘culture’ shows that it does not so much progress as constantly reform itself around conflictual divisions” (p. 30). Culture, its producers and its consumers have

London Palgrave, Le Cour Grandmaison, OI (2005) *Coloniser, exterminer. Sur la guerre et l'État colonial* Paris Fayard, Cooper, F (2005) *Colonialism in question Theory, knowledge, history* Berkeley University of California Press, Pitts, J (2006) *A turn to empire The rise of imperial liberalism in Britain and France* Princeton Princeton University Press

¹⁸ Daniel Sherman's article, “The Arts and Sciences of Colonialism” (2000) and Edward Berenson's article, “Making a Colonial Culture? Empire and the French Public, 1880-1940?” (2004) offer great reviews of the several books which give rise to and belong to “the cultural turn” in colonial studies

the capacity to reform existing social divisions. They also have the power to change, alter and influence the components of this division, for culture is “a site of intervention, dislocation and struggle” (Dirks, 1992, p. 11). The entrance of the cultural in the study of colonialism happened very cautiously as not to diminish the violence of the colonial condition. Dirks spoke of the fear to “aestheticize” colonialism in the midst of applying a cultural lens to various components of colonial history, thus “linking culture and colonialism does not efface the violence of colonialism. Not only does this linkage preserve a sense of the violent means by which colonialism was affected and maintained, it allows us to see anew the expanded domains of violence, to realize that cultural intervention and influence were not antidotes to the brutality of domination but extensions of it” (Dirks, 1992, p. 4-5). Therefore, culture becomes an “approved” academic space for the study of colonial histories but a footnote about the validity of studying “the cultural” is always required as if culture is not “serious” enough to express the complexity of the colonial act. This fear that culture might detract from the severity of the colonial past comes from a series of anxieties generated by the cultural turn, such as the vagueness of the concept of culture and the actual potential of culture to generate struggle and change (Bonnell, Hunt & Biernacky, 1999; see also Ortner, 1999).

The pairing of culture and colonialism in the last twenty years has generated a multitude of studies which I group in three different categories: examinations of colonial and post-colonial cultures which develop in the *métropole* during and after colonialism¹⁹; accounts of the perceptions of colonial propaganda and colonialism among the popular classes in France and

¹⁹ Dumont, M.-J. (1988). *Paris Arabesques: Architectures et décors arabes et orientalisants à Paris*. Paris: Editions Koehler, IMA & CNMHS; Blanchard, P. & Lemaire, S. (Eds.). (2004). *Culture imperiale: Les colonies au Coeur de la République, 1931-1961*. Paris: Autrement; Blanchard, P., Lemaire, S. & Bancel, S. (Eds.). (2006). *Culture post-coloniale 1961-2006: Traces et mémoires coloniales en France*. Paris: Autrement; Blanchard, P., Lemaire, S. & NBancel, N. (Eds.). (2008). *Culture coloniale en France: De la révolution française à nos jours*. Paris: CNRS.

Great Britain²⁰; and investigations of cultural changes produced by the colonial regimes in the various colonies.²¹ All these accounts of various cultural processes and practices offer different interpretations of the encounters between cultural groups, communities and individuals in the colonial and post-colonial context. Some voices argue that *la culture coloniale* is comprised not only of influences exercised by the colonized communities on French practices but mostly of power structures, techniques of governance and racial ideologies developed in the colonial “laboratory” and imported and applied in France.²² Other scholars observe the types of contacts which resulted from the various colonial exhibitions organized by the Ministry of Colonies in France, with the apogee in 1931. Colonial exhibitions were not only visible within the architectural fabric of the city, but in a myriad of popular texts (songs, pamphlets, jokes, etc.) and media texts (daily newspapers, tabloids, journals and magazines). During these colonial *spectacles*, the exposure to the “other’s” cultures generated interest and fascination however within the limits of an “orientalized” and exotic understanding of the foreigner. For other scholars, the focus of research is situated outside of the *métropole*, centering on the effects of colonial ideologies, mainly the civilizing mission, and institutional practices on the cultures of the colonized communities.

Despite the differences in the literature on culture and colonialism, there is, however, a general agreement on the possibilities opened by the study of cultural spaces to create a

²⁰ Chafer, T & Sackur, A (Eds) (2002) *Promoting the Colonial Idea Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France* New York Palgrave, 2002, Liauzu, C & Liauzu, J (2002) *Quand on chantait les colonies* Paris Syllepse, Prochaska, D (2004) *Making Algeria French Colonialism in Bone, 1870-1920* Cambridge Cambridge University Press

²¹ Conklin, A (1997) *A mission to civilize The Republican idea in France and West Africa 1895-1930* Stanford University of California Press, Porterfield, T (1998) *The allure of empire Art in the service of French imperialism, 1798-1836* Princeton Princeton University Press, Rislér, C (2004) *La politique culturelle de la France en Algérie* Paris L’Harmattan

²² Very generally, this is the point of view of Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel and their collaborators. For an explanation of the idea of a “colonial culture,” please see Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire and Nicolas Bancel, “La formation d’une culture colomale en France, du temps des colonies a celui des ‘guerres des memoires’” in *Culture coloniale en France* See also Lebovics, H (2004) *Bringing the empire back home France in the global age* Durham Duke University Press

cartography of colonial histories and their aftermath outside the politico-military and economic dimensions. This space of investigation owes greatly to Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said looked critically at his own meditations on the Orient in *Orientalism* (1979) and offered a new vision of the West-"other" encounter, observing and emphasizing instances of influence and resistance in the realm of culture. Said emphasized the imperative to look at influences, frictions and cultural transfers in order to offer the former colonized communities agency and autonomy. Moreover, to escape the constraints of the "Us versus Them" narrative, Said (1993) encouraged the examination "of how the processes of imperialism occurred beyond the level of economic laws and political decisions...and were manifested at another very significant level, that of the national culture" (p. 12). The importance of studying culture not as another space dominated by colonialism but as an autonomous place of resistance and influence comes from Said's vision of culture as "hybrid, mixed and impure". Furthermore, "far from being unitary and monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more 'foreign' elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude" (Said, 1993, p. 15). The multiple intersections that take place between different cultures are products of the "intertwined and overlapping histories" that Said identifies as the realities of human societies even in instances of domination and violence.

Borrowing from musical terminology, Said (1993) proposes a "counterpunal" look at cultural experiences in order "to formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility" (p. 18). For Homi K. Bhabha, representations of difference must not be automatically integrated into patterns of violence. On the contrary, "the social articulation of difference...is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha,

1994, p. 2). Colonialism, seen as a process which transformed cultures, had a great impact not only on the colonies but also on the *métropole*. Moreover, a contrapuntal history of colonialism can bring to light cultural practices of the colonized communities which have not been altered by colonialism. Said (1993) asked, “who in India or Algeria today can confidently separate out the British or French component of the past from present actualities, and who in Britain or France can draw a clear circle around British London or French Paris that would exclude the impact of India and Algeria upon those two imperial cities?” (p. 15). Therefore, “it is more rewarding – and more difficult – to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about ‘us’” (Said, 1993, p. 336).

To think contrapuntally about the colonial encounter implies the acknowledgement of “tensions of empire”. According to Ann L. Stoler and Frederick Cooper (1997), “Europe’s colonies were never empty spaces to be made over in Europe’s image or fashioned in its interests...Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself” (p. 1). The contradictions inherent in colonialism are not meant to diminish the violent domination of the colonial regime or to imply that colonialism had little effect on the colonized cultures and peoples. This framework comes in response to the popular idea that colonialism was a monolithic violent process of subjugation with no resistance from the colonized communities (see, for example, Le Cour Grandmaison, 2005). A contrapuntal understanding of colonialism means “to treat as problematic the *making* of both colonizers and colonized in order to understand better the forces that, over time, have drawn them into an extraordinarily intricate web of relations” (Comaroff, 1997, p. 165). In *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Anne McClintock critiqued post-colonial theory which, she argued, made colonialism the only factor of change in the history of

the colonizer communities. According to the author, “if the theory promises a decentering of history in Hybridity, syncretism, multi-dimensional time and so forth, the singularity of the term effects a recentering of global history around the single rubric of European time” (McClintock, 1992, p. 86). Uma Narayan spoke of the risk of generating a “totalizing” view of colonialism, which might hide significant instances of influence and resistance. According to Narayan (1995), “there is a complex dynamic in the ways in which certain aspects of ‘western culture’ are assimilated into post-colonial contexts, while other aspects are confronted with resistance, a dynamic that goes back to colonial times” (p. 69). This dynamic is most likely to be visible at the level of culture, because “cultures might be then represented as zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection and of forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing” (Said, 1989, p. 225).

Conclusions: Encounters beyond the cultural turn

In this chapter, I explained the reasons why “the encounter” represents the appropriate conceptual framework to make sense of the spaces within the Institut du Monde Arabe. Conceived as an inter-cultural communicator, obvious in the foundational documents of the institution, the IMA is a vast space of harmonious and contradictory encounters produced by the complicated history of France and the Arab world. This chapter positioned the encounter in the context of several academic fields of study: cultural studies, everyday studies, post-colonialism and the Foucauldian study of space. Cultural studies provides a flexible and changing definition of culture which permits instances of resistance to unravel in organized manifestations and cultural codes but also in inconspicuous and invisible practices. The hegemonic nature of some political systems accepts and welcomes resistance as a form of citizenship participation and communication. However, colonial regimes, where ideologies of power and control were tightly

policing the happenings within the public sphere, prevented instances of resistance to occur, as they might have threatened the foundations of the system. These being said, examples of resistance were common during colonialism but they were often marginalized and sanctioned by the colonial governance.²³

I position my dissertation among other studies which have approached colonialism through a cultural lens. The study of culture and its possibility to generate resistance and influence at the level of the everyday allows for a more nuanced understanding of the colonial encounter without diminishing the violence and oppressive nature of the colonial act. Post-colonial cultural institutions such as the IMA combine traditional spaces of display with zones of a more consumerist orientation such as shops and restaurants. By merging the cultural and the commercial, such official spaces which often reject colonial history from their main discourses, welcome indirectly colonial memories. At the same time, as I will show in the following chapter, “Creative encounters: Collective memories in cultural institutions”, even cultural institutions with a rather clear political mandate such as the IMA deviate from their official missions. Foundational documents, as analyzed in this chapter, point out the ideal mission and structure of an institution, but the encounters between voices, stories and memories within an institution prove in fact the diverse communicative functions of a cultural space such as the Institut du Monde Arabe.

²³ Many scholars, in both France and the United States, have focused on the Algerian paramilitary organizations (the National Liberal Front, the National Liberation Army or the Secret Army Organization) which led Algeria to independence through violent resistance to the colonial regimes. For more information on these issues, please see: Harbi, M. (1991). *FLN mirage et réalité*, Paris: Jaguar; Alexander, M. S., Evans, M., & Keiger, J. F. V. (Eds.) (2002). *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954 – 62: Experiences, Images, Testimonies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Connelly, M. J. (2002). *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*, New York: Oxford University Press; Stora, B. (2004). *Histoire de la guerre d'Algérie*, La Découverte, Paris: La Découverte.

CHAPTER 3

Creative encounters: Collective memories in cultural institutions

The Institut du Monde Arabe is a space for encounters between Arab and French cultures which exists in a specific national context: post-colonial France. The presence in post-colonial France of a cultural institution devoted to a group of formerly colonized nations poses a series of questions about the legacy of post-colonial representations, the colonial memories they generate and their distance from official stories about France's colonial past. While debates about the role of the IMA in the formation of colonial memory have been very rarely compared to the discussions around the Musée du Quai Branly and the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, I believe that the institution is a significant contributor to the discourse on collective memory in France. Despite the IMA's prominent presence in Paris, it holds a marginal position in the literature on museum studies, postcolonialism or French history. Further, the IMA is lost also in the academic work on cultural policy or urban studies. In this chapter, I will position the IMA in the context of the *crise de mémoire coloniale* in France. This chapter will include a theoretical look at the study of collective memory with a focus on France and a history of the development of museums in the West, which will lead to a discussion of the birth of ethnographic museums and colonial exhibitions in France in the following chapter.

Collective memory: In between remembering and forgetting

The formation of common beliefs and stories around historical events with a significant impact on the present has been studied in the past few decades under the name of memory studies. In *History as an Art of Memory*, Patrick H. Hutton (1993) defined collective memory as an "elaborate network of social mores, values, and ideals that marks out the dimension of our

imaginings according to the attitudes of the social group to which we relate” (p. 78). The connections between the individual and the group are materialized through a series of “landmarks,” which include, according to Halbwachs (1992), “particular figures, dates and periods of time” (p. 175). Pierre Nora (1997) referred to such landmarks as *lieux de mémoire*. The significance of space and place, *le lieu*, denotes the materiality of collective memories, which do not exist only in abstract but are configured in the material world. The interaction between various communities and these spaces of collective memory is what provides them with meaning.

Maurice Halbwachs, who is considered by many contemporary scholars of memory as the “father” of the memory studies field, defined collective memory at the intersection between popular consciousness and individual beliefs. He wrote, “while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember” (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 48). Historical events are remembered differently by the multiple social groups and communities who compose the nation; further, individuals who compose these groups remember in myriad ways. However, for collective memorialization to happen, “every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time” (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 84). This spatial and temporal relation between collective memories and their producing groups is challenged by the passing of time. Halbwachs (1980) asked, “how can currents of collective thoughts whose impetus lies in the past be recreated when we can grasp only the present?” (p. 80). Public and official commemorative acts such as monuments, memorials, national holidays, laws, declarations, public apologies or textbooks are crucial in the passing of historical memory from one generation to another. The lack of such repetitive commemorative moments in relation to a past event might result in collective forgetting.

In *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Paul Ricoeur (2004) defined forgetting as “the disturbing threat that lurks in the background of the phenomenology of memory and of the epistemology of history” (p. 412). If remembering is a source of celebration and even closure in light of past events, forgetting has the negative connotation of peril and degradation, since what is not remembered is doomed to be erased from collective memory. Along these lines, “forgetting is experienced as an attack on the reliability of memory. An attack, a weakness, a lacuna...memory defines itself...as a struggle against forgetting” (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 413). Ricoeur’s historical and philosophical analysis of different practices of forgetting such as amnesty (political forgiveness), collective forgiveness, “commanded amnesia” or “moral guilt” challenge several assumptions about forgetting and complicate the thesis of collective remembering. While Ricoeur did not address the issue of colonial memory at length, he positioned traumatic events such as wars in between forgetting and forgiveness. Thus, “wars of liberation, colonial or post-colonial wars, and even more so the conflicts and wars produced by the demands of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, have projected onto the foreground a disturbing question: are peoples capable of forgiving?” (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 476). If the efforts for collective remembering are motivated by the obsession to protect certain events from forgetting, what happens after this threat is eliminated? Forgiveness could be one possible answer but, argued Ricoeur, there is no guarantee that forgiveness would be achieved even when a past event is solidified in national or global consciousness.

Instances of collective forgetting have been considered necessary to the development of national identity and history in France since the times of the French Revolution. It is the work of Ernest Renan (1882), “What is a nation”, that legitimated forgetting as a strategy for strengthening the nation. According to Renan,

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even of those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial (p. 11).

Many nations hide or minimize the commemoration of past events in order to promote national cohesiveness. In France, two major memory crises around the remembering of the Vichy regime and of French colonialism mark the telling of recent history. Both historical moments have challenged the Republic and its values and have resulted in actions which contradicted the Jacobin ideologies of the French nation, *une et indivisible*. According to Henry Rousso, the silences around the Vichy regime and the Occupation have been broken through the active work of French officials, citizens, the media and the international community in general (see Rousso, 1987; Rousso & Conan, 1998). In *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past*, Henry Rousso and Eric Conan (1998) discussed the effects of over-commemoration which result in sensationalism and ignorance. According to the authors, too much memory ruined the “new rendez-vous with French history” and “instead stirred up misgivings and controversy” (p. 16). If, in the case of the German Occupation of France, the abundance of “phony taboos and historical fantasies” produced confusion about the real events and prevented the affected communities to move on, *la mémoire coloniale* is yet to exit its crisis.

The problem with remembering colonialism does not come from the lack of communities and individuals who wish to remember the colonial moment and its violence but from the absence of material manifestations of colonial histories. What makes the Holocaust, for example, a successful case of collective remembering is the abundance of monuments, memorials, museums and research centers throughout the world, which constitute public and official *lieux de mémoire* which protect the memory of Holocaust from being erased from

collective consciousness. In the case of colonialism, the desire of the French state, starting with the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, to forget colonialism and the violent period of decolonization, especially in the case of Algeria and Indochina (Connelly, 2002) produced a period of amnesia from which the French nation has slowly started to recover only in the last few years. However, the long absence of colonial memories in France has resulted in some severe damages to the relation between the state and the post-colonial immigrant communities.

Despite the lack of public efforts to remember colonialism, its victims and its survivors, colonialism has been a component of French identity since the 1960s. The presence of immigrant communities from former colonized nations, the birth of new generations of French citizens of North African or Asian origins and the cultural practices they brought along had a strong influence on French culture. Since encounters which happen in the present, as argued by Sara Ahmed (2000), carry the legacy of past contacts, the hybrid cultural practices in France, visible in cuisine, language or art, represent constant reminders of the colonial moment. Besides these unofficial instances of cultural *mixité*, several cultural institutions in Paris act as indirect reminders of colonial encounters. The leaders of the Institut du Monde Arabe claimed through the foundational documents and various contacts with the media that the IMA has no connections with the political sphere which suggests an intended distancing from issues related with the crisis of colonial memory. However, the simple presence of such an institution in France evokes a past dominated by colonial encounters. Some spaces at the IMA, as it will be discussed in the analytical chapters, incorporate references, some even critical, to France's former empire. Further, the absence of colonial stories from the main spaces of display at the IMA is telling of the official stance on the integration of France's colonial past in national institutions.

Colonial memory in France: “La fracture”

Many of these missed encounters between France and its former colonies are connected with the processes of memorialization generated by France’s colonial past. The more recent literature which connects museums, post-colonialism and memory has addressed some of the inconsistencies embedded in the missions of cultural institutions that hold an unstated and unofficial memorialistic function. This body of literature stems from larger questions about the role of museums within the public sphere investigated more generally in the context of cultural policy studies. While the IMA’s official role does not include a memorialistic dimension, its focus on Arab culture touches indirectly on issues of a memory nature. Not all Arab countries were colonized by France, but many of them, especially in North Africa suffered the consequences of an expanding nineteenth century French empire. Furthermore, the second largest immigrant community in France today is constituted by Algerians and their presence in France resonates with colonial and post-colonial memories.

One collective practice characteristic to the post-colonial condition, often blamed for many present tensions and conflicts in France, is the production of memories about the colonial past. This active fight for the unearthing of colonial histories and their impact on the post-colonial present has been taken not only by some post-colonial communities in France but also and mainly by groups of scholars working in the fields of history and sociology. While this academic activism is much needed in a France tormented by its colonial ghosts, the discourse of scholars such as Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, François Verges and Sandrine Lemaire²⁴

²⁴ This group of French scholars has edited a series of volumes on this topic. Please see Blanchard, P, Bancel, N & Lemaire, S (Eds) (2005) *La fracture coloniale La société française au prisme du heritage colonial* Paris La Decouverte, Blanchard, P, Bancel, N & Verges, F (Eds) (2003) *La république coloniale Essai sur une utopie* Paris Albin Michel, Blanchard, P & Bancel, N (2005) *Culture post-coloniale 1961-2006 Traces et mémoires coloniales en France* Paris Autrement, Blanchard, P, Bancel, N & Lemaire, S (Eds) (2008) *Culture coloniale en France De la révolution française à nos jours* Paris CNRS

brings back the clear cut binaries of the early theorizations of post-colonial studies. With too much emphasis on the oppression and violence experienced by the formerly colonized nations and too little attention to the spaces of contact, the encounter between different cultures in today's France, as theorized by the previous scholars, cannot escape its colonial condition. The legacy of the divisions between cultural groups during colonialism is seen as marking the realities of diasporic communities in France, as if colonialism would take place all over again.

While certain similarities between colonial practices and post-colonial realities cannot be denied and must be pointed out²⁵, the depiction of French citizens of foreign origins as victims, "refoulés" or subalterns hides the histories of everyday encounters and influences. Moreover, such depictions are deemed representative of entire communities who might not experience their daily realities as victims of a colonial past and who might not feel that their lives are marked by constant conflict and opposition with the dominant culture. I argue that it is important, in relation to post-colonial memory making, to understand the consequences of colonialism in France and it is also necessary to observe certain events, such as the riots in the French *banlieue* and the frequent racial profiling done by the French police, through the binary lens of early post-colonialism. However, this view of reality, where the former colonizer and the former colonized are in constant opposition, does not allow for the observation of other types of encounters that take place within official and less official realms.

One of the popular narratives in the literature on post-colonial memory in France is *la fracture*. Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire (2005) argued throughout their work that France today is characterized by a strong "fracture coloniale," which they define as "un concept [qui] voudrait à la fois signifier la tension et les effets de la post-colonialité: il recouvre des réalités multiples et

²⁵ For a comprehensive presentation of such similarities, please see: Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (eds), "La fracture coloniale. Une crise française" in *La fracture coloniale. La société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial*, La découverte, Paris, 2005, p 11-12

des situations hétérogènes, dans la mesure où ces réalités et ces situations peuvent être éclairées...par des processus de longue durée, reliés à la situation coloniale” (p. 13). Therefore, according to the French scholars, the effects of the colonial past can be observed in most spaces within French society, from the representation of the “other” in mass media to immigration policies. The authors situate these fractures within the politics of denial orchestrated by the French government in an attempt to keep the national history separate from the colonial past (ibid., p. 15). At the same time, the development of a “politique de la mémoire” in France in the last twenty years has allowed for these fractures to become visible.²⁶ The controversial *loi française du 23 février 2005*, which encouraged high school teachers to speak about the positive contributions of colonialism to North Africa, is just one example.

The possibility to talk about memories is a result of the post-modern condition which deconstructs the metanarratives of history in favor of a fragmented and often contradictory collection of pieces from the past. For Pierre Nora (1997), the birth of “mémoires” coincides with the moment when “l’histoire commence à faire sa propre histoire” (p. 26), when historiography replaces History. In other words, different communities which share the same national history and space start to construct alternative stories of their past which may enter in contradiction with the overall official version of the past. In this context, a great importance rests on the space or place of memory. Collective memories, according to Halbwachs, are anchored in the space which produced them and which sustains the coherence of a community. Therefore, “le lieu a reçu l’empreinte du groupe, et réciproquement. Alors, toutes les démarches du groupe peuvent se traduire en termes spatiaux” (Halbwachs, 1968, p. 133). In the 1980s,

²⁶ For more on the development of the politics of memory in France, please see: Stora, B. (1991). *La Gangrène et l’oubli*. Paris: La Découverte; Rivet, D. (1992). “Le fait colonial et nous. Histoire d’un éloignement” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 33, 127-138; Rioux, J.-P. (2006). *La France perd la mémoire*. Paris: Perrin; Blanchard, P. & Veyrat-Masson, I. (Eds.). (2008). *Les guerres de mémoires: La France et son histoire*. Paris: La Découverte; Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. (2009). *Enjeux politiques de l’histoire coloniale*. Paris: Agone, p. 54-84.

Pierre Nora introduced *les lieux de mémoire* as the main framework for understanding the intersections between history, historiography and memory. Because history is no longer “totémique” but fragmented and divided, Nora believed there was the risk that some past events might be forgotten, since “sans vigilance commémorative, l’histoire les balayerait vite” (Nora, 1997, p. 29). Therefore, added Nora, “les lieux de mémoire naissent et vivent du sentiment qu’il n’y a pas de mémoire spontanée, qu’il faut créer des archives, qu’il faut maintenir des anniversaires, organiser des célébrations, prononcer des éloges funèbres” (Nora, 1997, p. 29). The possibility of memories to be archived thus quantified and translated into monuments, memorials, textbooks or laws creates official divisions between what is to be remembered and what is to be forgotten. For example, Nora and the contributors to *Les Lieux de Mémoire* dedicate extensive chapters to symbols of Frenchness such as Marianne and the Arc de Triomphe but very little space to France’s colonial past.

The creation of a series of *lieux de mémoires* which were meant to represent France’s past has been criticized for the exclusion of some memories, such as those pertaining to colonialism and decolonization (Noiriel, 1986; Hargreaves, 2005; Lorcin, 2006). For Blanchard (2008), the silence surrounding colonialism and decolonization is closely connected with the formation of a national imaginary through various state-supervised strategies. Accordingly, “l’état...est le garant du ‘récit’ national. Il est donc tenté, par l’intermédiaire de la loi, de l’orientation des manuels scolaires ou de la politique patrimoniale et muséale, d’infléchir et d’interpréter l’histoire en la convertissant en ‘mémoire’ ou en ‘récit national’” (p. 497). The two main national spaces identified by Blanchard as sites of intervention for the formation of official colonial memories are monuments/memorials and bodies of legislation (Blanchard, Lemaire & Bancel, 2008, p. 504-06; see also Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire, 2005). Once *la question*

coloniale became a permanent presence on the official agenda of French governing structures, ending the silence decried by many French intellectuals and activists, the focus turned to the absence of concrete and visible places where these memories can eventually come to life.

There are very few *lieux* in France which speak directly to France's colonial past. Blanchard and Bancel (2008) mentioned a few of these sites²⁷, the majority situated outside Paris and lacking the grandeur of the Socialist *grands travaux* or of more recent museums about the "other" such as the Quai Branly. Besides the lack of a prominent place among other French cultural institutions, these *lieux de mémoire* with a specific focus on colonialism and decolonization also have in common their undetermined dates of inauguration. This rather unimpressive reality makes historians like Blanchard pessimistic because, "en l'absence d'un véritable débat scientifique, ces projets restent opaques...il est très difficile de déterminer quelles en sont les ambitions respectives comme les lignes directrices" (Blanchard and Bancel, 2008, p. 505). If such projects have failed to solidify a culture around commemorations of the colonial past, other post-colonial cultural institutions, of much larger scale and highly talked about, have spoken about and for France's colonial past since the 1980s.

At the same time, the absence of some memories from official discourses could be understood through the notions of "fragile memories" and "manipulated memory" developed by Paul Ricoeur (2004). The violent nature of the colonial encounter dictates certain politics of memory which often result in the forgetting and the manipulation of memories. If France denies certain colonial and post-colonial memories in order to protect the continuity of its history,

²⁷ Some of these sites of commemoration are le Musée d'Histoire de la France en Algérie (Montpellier), une site dédiée à la guerre d'Algérie et aux "événements" de la décolonisation au Maroc et en Tunisie (Tarn), le Memorial national de la France d'outre-mer (Marseille) I tried to find information about these three spaces through a Google search and the information that I was able to find was minimal. What I was able to determine by piecing together information is that none of these projects was actually finalized, some of them being postponed indeterminately, others having even more pessimistic futures

formerly colonized populations may reject memories which are too violent and painful to be able to construct their new identities outside the confines of their colonial past. However, these two instances of silence are surrounded by different social and political contexts. While official French post-colonial discourses could have been constructed to incorporate the violence of the colonial act, many populations who have been affected by colonialism lack the privilege of a strong public voice. I believe that the IMA, while reproducing aspects of the official silence, offers a place of re-birth for some destroyed and “manipulated” memories.

Much has been written about Quai Branly and the CNHI as institutions where *la question coloniale* is problematized and debated.²⁸ The existence of such institutions, which more or less address topics related to colonial memories, such as histories of immigration to France, the formation of colonial cultures in France or the display of former “primitive” objects collected during the French empire, produce debates around the following question formulated by Robert Aldrich (2008): “un musée de la colonisation et du colonialisme est-il possible?” (p. 561). Aldrich remained sceptical about the successful mission of such institutions, yet appreciated their existence. Thus, “après plusieurs décennies au cours desquelles le colonialisme a été dans une large mesure mis au ban des musées, il a aujourd’hui réintégré progressivement, et de manière multiple, le paysage muséologique de la France contemporaine, mais peine encore à trouver une expression autonome” (Aldrich, 2008, p. 561). Along the same lines, Aldrich (2005) argued earlier in *Vestiges of Colonial Empire in France* that “perhaps ambivalence is the best simple way to describe attitudes towards the colonies – a mixture of nostalgia, residual pride, misgivings about the worth of the efforts, sometimes shame about what was done, occasional outrage” (p. 8). A more pessimistic view was displayed in the writings of Sarah Froning Deleporte (2005), who argued that “sans doute, le fait même qu’ils soient là, avec d’autres nouveaux musées,

²⁸ See Chapter 4 of the dissertation.

rendra encore plus évidente l'absence, en France, d'une véritable prise de conscience officielle de l'histoire coloniale" (p. 115).

Museums: Theories and contexts

If modern museums are believed to be a French creation (Duncan, 1995; McClellan, 2008), then their presence in France also coincides with colonialism and the narratives and representations it created about the "other". In colonial exhibitions, ethnographic museums or contemporary cultural institutions, the display of the colonial (and post-colonial) "other" has marked the construction of French identity and has acted as a site of memory making and unmaking. This section will explain the multiple roles of cultural institutions in Western societies as disciplinary machines, places of national identity formation and spaces of memory making. I will sketch a history of the "other's" display in colonial and post-colonial French museums and will briefly address the "curious" absence of the IMA from this history.

Defining the museum: Shifting paradigms

Several definitions have been proposed for museum since the 19th century, when museums transitioned from private collection to the public domain. As early as 1943, Theodore Law (2004[1943]), a revered curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City was arguing that "the word 'museum' has little if any meaning the way it is used today. Actually one cannot define it because it has acquired so many different connotations...the fact is that a definition must be made for the word out of the actions of the institutions which it denotes" (p. 31). At the same time, museum studies scholars and museum officials work with different definitions of cultural institutions. If there is a definition wide enough to encompass the actions and missions of the majority of museums, it would sound like the one provided by the

International Council of Museum (ICOM) in 2007, “a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (“Museum Definition,” para. 3). The official definition of museums provided by ICOM is general, confirming Law’s argument that each museum should be analyzed in its specific context and through its actions.

One of the most common criteria for analyzing museums is their capacity to change, evolve and adjust to the larger social, political and cultural shifts. In the introduction to *New Museum, Theory and Culture*, Janet Marstine (2006) asked, “are museums changing or are they simply voicing the rhetoric of change? Are museums capable of change? Are they stuck in time, limited by elitist roots? Or have they always been in the process of change?” (p. 6). For Marstine, the potential for change comes from the ways in which museums and their communities image the mission of the museum. The author provided a classification of museum into different types of institutions, pointing out the “fuzzy” boundaries of definitions. The museum as shrine, argued Marstine (2006), “is an iconic image towards which many museums aspire ...In the paradigm of the shrine, the museum has therapeutic potential. It is a place of sanctuary removed from the outside world” (p. 9). Despite these ideals of museums, the reality is that they are also components of the market-driven society. Museum directors and curators play down the economic dimension of museums and “tend to hide the fact that the objects in their collections have value as commodities” (Marstine, 2006, p. 11). Especially in the past few decades, museums started to be analyzed in relation to their “colonizing” actions. According to Marstine (2006), “in forming collections by appropriating – making one’s own – objects from

non-Western cultures, museums reveal more about the value system of the colonizer than about the colonized (p. 14).

A forth paradigm for museums, the post-museum, is the most accommodating to change and the most optimistic view of contemporary cultural institutions. Coined by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000), the concept of “post-museum” refers to the capacity of museums to be transformed and re-imagined through constant self-evaluations (p. 1). Further, “in the post-museum, multiple subjectivities and identities can exist as part of a cultural practice that provides the potential to expand the politics of democratic community and solidarity” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 140). This vision of museums as changing institutions is based, according to Hooper-Greenhill (1992) on Michel Foucault’s interpretation of history “which rejects the notion of a continuous, smooth, progressive, totalizing, developmental history” (p. 10). Also from Foucault, the author borrowed the methodological framework of “practices” which are used to explore the conditions which make these possible at a certain moment in time (ibid.). It is this paradigmatic conceptualization of the museological space which I apply to the deconstruction of the Institut du Monde Arabe. A totalizing view of the IMA as a space which rejects colonialism overall would hide the specific practices attached to different spaces in the institution at different times. These conceptual and methodological considerations will be supported later in my dissertation by the analysis of three distinct spaces in the IMA and the accompanying practices of representation.

Museums and citizenship

Influenced by the writings of Tony Bennett²⁹, many museum studies scholars argue that cultural institutions in the modern liberal Western world are machines for producing “good” and

²⁹ The exhibitionary complex, *New Formations*, 1988, 4, 73-102; The political rationality of the museum, *Continuum*, 1990, 3(1), 35-55; *The birth of the museum: History, theory, politics* (1995), London: Routledge; *Pasts beyond memory: Evolution, museums, colonialism* (2004), London: Routledge.

“disciplined” citizens (Kaplan, 1994; MacDonald, 2007; McLean 1998; Witcomb 2003). For Bennett (1995), making exhibitions available to the mass public in the 19th century was bound up with ideas about transforming these publics into communities of citizens who would themselves take on the task of self-education and self-improvement. As museums were becoming in the post-French Revolution age spaces where citizens could admire the previously private collections of the aristocracy, they started to perform a new disciplinary function in a new social reality (Hooper-Greenhill, 1989). In this social reality, which corresponded with the end of religious rule and the new reign of scientific rationality, “it is the population itself on which government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, *without the full awareness of the people*, the simulation of birth rates...etc.” (Foucault, 1991, p. 96, emphasis mine).

This Foucauldian idea is essential to the conceptualization of cultural institutions in different academic fields. The technique of governing a community through the illusion of self-governance represents the “secret” and invisible function of museums. According to Sharon Macdonald (2007[1998]), “exhibitions could physically knit together the universal and national or racial, and visitors could embody the progressive narratives as they moved through the orderly museum space” (p. 186). In this surveillance strategy, Bennett (1990) saw significant contradictions between “the democratic rhetoric governing the conception of public museums as vehicles for popular education and...their actual functioning as instruments for the reform of public manners” (p. 36). In the end, the “reform of public manners” represents an exercise in citizenship and national identity formation because the exhibitionary spaces “differentiate populations via a combination of cultural markers” (Bennett, 1990, p. 51).

If museums have the potential for surveillance, self-regulation and the production of “well tempered selves,” they seem suitable instruments for instructing people in matters of citizenship. *Exhibiting Cultures* (1991), one of the most influential volumes which speaks to the diverse roles of cultural institutions, is based on the assumption that museums are able to shape citizenship and identities (Macdonald, 2007; Watson, 2007). One of the main questions that frames the volume is “will museums be on the forefront of cultivating new kinds of identity and educating the population about them?” (Kaeppler qtd. in Karp and Lavine, 1991, p. 2). For Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, museums are spaces where dialogues between communities and cultures reflect the conflicts within societies. Moreover, museums are able to correct and reform social inequality, denial of difference and discriminatory practices. The authors state that “decisions about how cultures are presented reflect deeper judgments of power and authority and can, indeed, resolve themselves into claims about what a nation is or ought to be as well as how citizens should relate to one another” (Karp and Lavine, 1991, p. 2). Such a view prescribes museums the role of making “good” citizens and acting as extensions of official spaces of national governance.

Flora Kaplan’s main argument in *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity* is that museums promote national agendas through the objects that they put or do not put on display as representative of national and cultural values. She looked primarily at cultural institutions in Britain and Scotland, observing the practices of difference embodied in displays of a nationalistic nature (Kaplan, 1994). Fiona McLean (1998) pointed out the instability and the elusive character of identities as reflected in museums and argued that “when considered alongside the other factors in the circuit of culture model, the production, consumption, regulation and representation of identity, the meanings of national identity

construction in museums begin to be unraveled” (p. 251). Being forgers of coherent national identities, museums automatically become “sites for the negotiation of difference” (Sherman, 2008, p. 2). Because nations often define their subjects in comparison to less superior, less cultivated or less civilized ones, to use the colonial language embedded in *la mission civilisatrice*, museums reflect larger ideological trends and discourses of a specific period. This should not imply that museums are not able to change or challenge official stories, memories and representations. On the contrary, in the past twenty years, many cultural institutions have revisited their own agendas and goals in order to respond to criticism coming from museum studies scholars and from members of various communities which form the contemporary fragmented and multi-cultural nations.

The “new museology”: Museums, memory and communities

Starting with 1989, “reform” became the key goal of cultural institutions and of museum studies scholars. In *The New Museology*, Peter Vergo (1989) wrote that curatorial techniques and practices, “the old museology”, are “too much about the museum methods, and too little about the purposes of museums” (p. 3). To this, Janet Marstine (2006) added, “new museum theory...holds that...the decisions these [museum] workers make reflect underlying value systems that are encoded in institutional narratives” (p. 5). In a multicultural, transnational and fragmented social environment, museums must question their techniques of representation, inclusion and exclusion. Seen as highly political institutions, museums are often accused of reproducing rather than solving social inequalities. The production and dissemination of knowledge in museums is considered problematic and unreflective of new social conditions (Karp and Lavine, 1991; Clifford, 1997; Witcomb, 2003; Macdonald, 2006; Watson, 2007). Because the museum is continuously involved in processes of selecting, it inevitably chooses

“certain cultural products for official safe-keeping, for posterity and public display – a process which recognizes and affirms some identities, and omits to recognize and affirm others” (Macdonald, 2006, p. 4).

The “new museology” positions the museum not only as a space that reflects and constructs reality but most importantly as a venue where change is possible. As institutions functioning for the good of the communities they represent, “museums can contribute to the combating of the causes and the amelioration of the symptoms of social inequality and disadvantage” (Sandell, 2002, p. 96). The optimistic tone of scholars such as Richard Sandell and Jocelyn Dodd regarding the transformative power of museums on individuals and communities becomes more cautionary in the recent work of Tony Bennett. According to him, “if they are to provide such exercises in a new civics, museums need to take account of the different ways in which they can intelligibly relate to sharply diverging constituencies and publics in the context of complex intersections of class and racialized social divisions. (Bennett, 2006, p. 67). Bennett’s main concern refers to the new missions of museums to become global and international which leads to the potential exclusions of local and national communities in favour of larger exhibitions with a universal scope. Blockbuster traveling exhibitions, such as “The Treasures of Tutankhamun” (1972), and museums like the Guggenheim chain tend to detract from the local cultures, promoting ‘civilizational’ approaches to the display of culture (Rectanus, 2006, p. 381).

The transformation of museums into popular venues, relevant to contemporary culture and divorced from elitist assumptions, marks another significant shift in the ideology of cultural institutions: the role of museums as factors of social change. The possibility of museums to participate in larger efforts to increase social equality, fight racism or collect controversial

memories is a product of the “new museology” approach to the study and transformation of museums. Peter Vergo(1989) wrote that,

Beyond the captions, the information panels, the accompanying catalogue, the press handout, there is a subtext comprising innumerable diverse, often contradictory strands, woven from the wishes and ambitions, the intellectual and political or social or educational aspirations and preconceptions of the museum director, the curator, the scholar, the designer, the sponsor – to say nothing of the society, the political or social or education system which nurtured all these people (p. 3).

This “new” museology places emphasis on the mission of the institution in relation to its publics, the museum’s communities, as stated by Sheila Watson (2007). This new and reinvented museum is involved in practices beyond those of representation, which, according to Vergo (1989), place “a certain construction upon history” (p. 3). Cultural institutions construct history while they are also engaged in dynamic processes of communicating this history to different audiences. Once a certain version of history has been constructed within the museum, through the work of curators, administrator and scholars, it is communicated through multiple venues to diverse audiences. At the IMA for example, a main temporary exhibition (*grande exposition*) is accompanied by a special section in the IMA’s official publication, *Qantara*, several talks and roundtables on issues related to the exhibitions, screening of movies connected with certain themes from the exhibition and the selling of books or consumer products inspired by the event. These multiple communicative acts which happen at the museum place the institution in the midst of social, cultural and political situations which characterize different national contexts.

The concept of “community” is significant to the academic literature on museums in reference to the diversity of voices which contribute to the content of an institution. The relation between museums and their communities has been discussed in several conferences and has produced numerous volumes, such as *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* (1992), *Art and Its Publics* (2003) and *Museums and Their Communities* (2007). Sheila Watson

pointed out one essential and yet unresolved question, “how can museums establish transparent, inclusive and fair relationships with all communities?” (Watson, 2007, p. 2). The difficulty in answering such questions comes from the debates on what a community is, how is it different from a public or an audience and where it is situated. Peter David (2007) argued that “‘the community’ is...a constantly changing pattern of the tangible and the intangible” (p. 59). Communities are often understood as static entities, forged by a series of unmodified traditions which would make their characteristic clear and obvious to the observer. Elizabeth Crooke identified a series of myths associated with the term, “[community] has long established roots; is based on traditional modes of behavior; characteristics are easily recognizable...they are often associated with a fixed place” (Crooke, 2006, p. 172).

Trying to make some order in the complex realm of communities and identities, museums often “identify the communities they wish to work with and they exercise the power to represent *their* communities” (Watson, 2007, p. 3; emphasis in original). The definition of museums themselves has changed drastically in the last fifty years to encompass heritage projects and community initiatives but also intangible heritage and the historic built environment (Corsane, 2004; David, 2007; Watson, 2007). Therefore, the meeting points between museums and communities are also dynamic and constantly shifting and cultural institutions often reflect these moving intersections. Sheila Watson (2007) suggested that, even if community is hard to pin down, a loose definition should be accepted – “let us accept that the essential defining factor of a community is the sense of belonging that comes to those who are part of it” (p. 3). To forge solid relations with the communities they represent, museums must strive to be inclusive institutions. However, the potential failure of projects of inclusiveness should not detract from the attempt to change the cultural institutions, traditionally exclusive, into spaces of social

diversity. One museum might not be able to represent all communities but its effort to be representative of less visible social groups and include their stories and memories can have a positive effect on society at large. Stephen Weil (2007) believed that “the museum that does not prove an outcome to its community is as socially irresponsible as the business that fails to show a profit” (p. 42). Moreover, he added, the outcome should be no less than “the positive and intended differences that it makes in the lives of the individuals and communities that constitute its target audiences” (Weil, 2007, p. 53). The presence or absence of certain communities from the narratives imagined by museums is an indication of the larger stories a nation wishes to tell about itself.

Creating a national story is closely related to the forging of a collective memory. In *Museums and Their Communities*, one entire section of the volume is dedicated to processes of remembering and forgetting as they develop within the museum. The museum is one of the many national spaces where individual and collective memories come together in agreement or in contradiction. An act of remembering or forgetting guarantees the permanence or the death of an idea. Usually, museums are seen as holders of official memories, thus acting as instruments of the state and neglecting the interests of the various communities which form the nation (Crane, 2000; Davison, 2000; Freuning Deleporte, 2006). Such an understanding of the museum is based on the assumption that memories are static and that cultural institutions cannot respond to social and historical changes. Susan Crane implied that audiences rely on what museums have to say about past memories because “for many, museums perform the externalized function of their own brains: it remembers, for them, what is most valuable and essential in culture and science” (Crane, 2006, p. 98). At the same time, “memory is transient, inaccurate and fallible” thus museums can attempt to reflect changing memories and national and local stories” (Watson,

2007, p. 376; see also Sturken, 1997; Bal, Crewe and Spitzer, 1998). The tensions which develop between the static nature of history and the dynamic character of memories is often a reflection of the unwillingness of the national government to address certain aspects of its past in public forums. One such instance is the history of colonialism in France. The connection between museums and politics transforms museums into relevant social spaces which participate to larger popular debates.

Museums and consumption: Merging the cultural and the commercial

Museums are also shaped by processes of consumerism and cultures of taste. The presence of shops and restaurants within contemporary cultural institutions is the outcome of an ideological change in the mission of museums. This shift was explained by Neil Kotler and Phillip Kotler (2000) who argued that “one can assert with confidence that the most fundamental change that has affected museums...is the now almost universal conviction that they exist in order to serve the public” (p. 167). In the past few decades, wrote Hudson (2004[998]), “museums found themselves in the wholly unaccustomed and unwelcome position of having to compete for the leisure hours” (p. 89). This new position of the museum at the intersection between high culture and consumption generated a series of shifts in the structure of the cultural institutions which corresponds with the expectations of visitors and consumers. In *Cultural Excursions: Marking Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America*, Neil Harris (1990) discussed the connections between department stores, world fairs and museums, concluding that in the post-war America, museums were competing for publics with other spaces. This competition generated a new and very specific culture of consumption within the museum walls. Harris (1990) wrote, “the immediate gratification felt by the department store consumer in the act of purchase, and the experience of handling objects and learning more about them, which was

the joy of the fair-goer, are united in the museum store, and seal the museum-going experience for many visitors” (p. 80).

Scholars of museum studies have looked critically at the merging of cultural and commercial values. One of the most common conclusions highlighted the transformation of museum into spaces of consumerism. Several scholars have perceived these changes with anxiety and disappointment, arguing that “the museum itself has been sucked in the maelstrom of modernization” (Huyssen, 1995, p. 21); that “the thrust of today’s museums is to attain *attraction status*, to be a *destination*, and to appeal to a mass audience” (Bruce, 2006, p.130); and that museum visitors spend more time in the museum gift shop than in the museum itself (Stearns, 2001, p. 127; see also Sturken, 2007). However, other scholars have pointed out the long tradition observable in art museums of juxtaposing high art and consumerism. Michelle Hening (2006) wrote that “while the discourses of the museum may attempt to distance it from other more commercial and popular sites of display, the chief display techniques used in museums are shared across these other cultural sites” (p. 3). It makes sense, according to this argument, that spaces which form modern culture, such as museums, street fairs or department store, also share strategies and techniques of display.

Conclusions: Encounters between museums and memories

This chapter focused on two bodies of literature which come together in the process of analyzing the Institut du Monde Arabe: memory studies and museum studies. The Institut du Monde Arabe appeared on the French cultural scene at a time when several communities were battling over colonial memory. However, the leaders of the institute envisioned the IMA as a non-political participant to French cultural life, excluding it from the contemporary debates

about colonialism. Many French museums were participating, some unwillingly, in this discourse.

The IMA is a cultural institution which places great emphasis and resources on its museum. Due to the lack of specific literature on cultural institutions, I use the work of museum studies to understand the development of the IMA in relation to its political context, communities and strategies for display. In the past few decades, cultural institutions have changed drastically in order to accommodate the desires and expectations of their visitors. Consequently, rituals of consumption such as eating and shopping have been integrated to the museological spaces. This change in the structure of cultural institutions reflects larger patterns in museum culture worldwide.

The Institut du Monde Arabe, similar to other cultural institutions, is not only a space for display but a place where memories are embedded in the museological discourse. An institution dedicated to Arab countries, several of them former French colonies, the IMA participates to broader debates about colonial memory in France. The mission of the institution does not encompass a commemorative component. However, despite the effort to stay away from the memory dilemma, the diverse spaces and voices which compose the IMA transform the institution into a *lieux de mémoire*. Not every space at the IMA responds equally to a quest for colonial stories and the analytical chapters of this dissertation will show the different degrees of remembering and forgetting embedded in the discourses of various spaces at the institute. The following chapter, “Inevitable encounters: From colonial exhibitions to post-colonial institutions” reflects further on the intersections between cultural institutions and collective memory through an investigation of regimes of display of colonial cultures in ethnographic museums, colonial exhibitions and residual architecture in France.

CHAPTER 4

Inevitable encounters: From colonial exhibitions to post-colonial institutions

As a post-colonial cultural institution in France, the Institut du Monde Arabe responds to representations of the “other” inherited from colonial times. Starting with the 1880s, the cultures of the colonized countries were imported in France through colonial exhibitions and ethnographic museums, in order to expose the French at home to the “uncivilized” ways of the “other”. The representations of the colonized cultures were part of a much larger project to construct Frenchness in opposition with less “developed” societies. The colonial display of humans, objects and traditions through exotic and Oriental representations left a mark on the overall imaginary about the “other” in France. I will show that by promoting the cultural rehabilitation and modern display of Arab cultures, the IMA participates in the combat of racial and ethnic stereotypes inherited from the colonial rhetoric.

In this chapter, I will discuss the strategies of display developed during colonialism with a focus on the institutions which I argue were the most influential in the development of colonial stereotypes. These institutions are: ethnographic museums, colonial exhibitions and residual architecture – buildings which have survived colonial exhibitions and have been transformed according to the post-colonial condition. The first part of the chapter will discuss in detail the history of these three spaces of display. Further, I analyze the three main cultural contexts in which the “other” was constructed at the 1931 Colonial exposition in Paris: exhibitions and museums; print culture; and leisure, exemplified through the culinary experience of the “other’s” foods. In this section, I use Michel Foucault’s ideas about the ordering of Western knowledge to reflect on the vast system of gathering, cataloguing and transporting knowledge from the colonies to the *métropole*. This chapter serves another purpose besides the historical

contextualization of colonial representations in official cultural venues: It opens up discussions about French cultural policy, to be addressed in the following chapter and it describes the systems of representation which post-colonial cultural institutions must take into account. I believe that the Institut du Monde Arabe should be analyzed in the context of the complex museological culture of post-colonial France and in dialogue with other cultural institutions, past and present, which contribute to representations at the “other”.

Ethnographic museums and colonial exhibitions in France: Representing the “other”

Since the mid-19th century, the colonial government initiated a series of cultural projects in the *métropole*. The French at home had to be convinced that *la mission civilisatrice* which represented the ideological matrix of the colonial empire was needed and that it actually worked. Nicolas Bancel et al. (2004) wrote about the articulation of images of the “sauvage” (savage) through a complex system of cultural events and institutions in France which proved that the right to colonize was paired with “ce droit d’‘exhiber’ des ‘exotiques’ dans des zoos, des cirques ou des villages...Oui, le ‘sauvage’ existe! Je l’ai vu...Il convient maintenant de l’‘apprivoiser’ avant de le ‘civiliser’” (p. 5). The French populations at home, unable to travel to the colonized countries in Africa or Asia, were exposed to glimpses of the faraway lands and cultures through colonial exhibitions, animal and human zoos and ethnographic museums. All these cultural productions represented invitations to imaginary journeys (see Fig. 7). The motto of the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale (1931 International Colonial Exhibition) in Paris was “le tour du monde en un jour” (Hodeir & Pierre, 1991; Morton 2003; de l’Estoile 2007). The birth of such spectacles was legitimated by three co-existing historical processes: “la construction d’un imaginaire social sur l’Autre, la théorisation scientifique de la ‘hiérarchie des races’...et enfin l’édification d’un empire colonial alors en pleine expansion” (Bancel et al, 2004, p. 63).

The desire to create a unified visual vocabulary about the colonized “other” coincided with the development of the ethnographic field in France which was very much fuelled by colonialist ideologies. In fact, the divide between ethnography and art is still a site of debate in contemporary French museology and it is visible in the dialogues surrounding the opening of the Musée du Quai Branly, or, according to Sally Price (2007), “Jacques Chirac’s Museum on the Quai Branly”. The reason why the museum bears the name of its location, Quai Branly, and not of the artistic periods or geographical provenance of its collections is the colonial undertone of the “primitive arts” (*arts premiers*) category under which the objects displayed in the museum were previously categorized. Quai Branly hosts the collections formerly owned by two other institutions: Musée de l’Homme (Museum of Man) and Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie (National Museum of African and Oceanian Arts), both colonial projects founded on ideologies of Western cultural superiority (Dias 1991, 2007; Price 2007; d’Estoile 2003, 2008). Even if Paul Rivet argued in the 1930s that a certain “ethnologic humanism” and even the acceptance of cultural diversity were embedded in the mission of the Musée de l’Homme, the label of “primitive” artifacts was still paradigmatically applied to non-Western objects from Africa, Oceania and the Americas (Dias, 2007, p. 66-9).

In a special issue of the journal *Le Débat* dedicated to the Quai Branly, James Clifford (2007) spoke to this eternal French battle between arts and ethnography, “au musée du Quai Branly, ‘illusion’ et ‘œuvre d’art’ coexistent malaisément avec le réalisme de l’ethnographie et de l’histoire...depuis la naissance du projet sous le signe des ‘arts premiers,’ la question du bon équilibre entre esthétique et anthropologie a soulevé un vif débat” (p. 30). The ongoing presence and fear of this invisible hierarchy of objects on display in various French museums is an indication of other unsolved issues that the French government has with its colonial past.

According to Bogumil Jewsiewicki (2007), the Quai Branly, “tout s’y réfracte: la politique culturelle des musées français; un profond malaise, plus que mémoriel, face à l’actualité du passé colonial et le refus d’admettre que la République n’a pas su agir à la hauteur de ses principes” (p. 175). In order to decipher the place that the Institut du Monde Arabe has among cultural institutions about the “other” and identify the reasons for its absence from the various dialogues on such institutions, it is important to follow the histories, the contexts and the legacies of such official spaces.

The presence of ethnographic museums in France is closely connected to the development of international fairs and exhibitions. The Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro (The Tracadero Museum of Ethnography) was opened in 1878 in the context of the Exposition universelle de Paris and housed a collection of a few thousand objects from the Americans and Oceania together with artifacts inherited from various royal cabinets of curiosities (Dias, 1991; Dias, 2001; de l’Estoile, 2007). Dias (2001) explained that in the 19th century “l’ethnographie s’identifiant ainsi à l’étude des sociétés ‘primitives’ et populaires (p. 85). In *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, Sally Price identified one of the main distinctions between an object categorized as “primitive” and one defined as a work of art. Therefore, “once an object is channelled into this second category (that is, once it is defined as art rather than artefact), the logic by which it would have deserved more extensive contextualization than a work of Western provenience undergoes an interesting inversion” (p. 89-90). While Western art does not need to be explained because it speaks to familiar sensibilities of the viewers, “primitive art” must be interpreted and deciphered, thus disciplined and civilized for the Western spectator. This process of translation of authentic forms of culture as barbaric and untamed represents a common trait of colonial exhibitions and ethnographic museums alike.

One year before the opening of the Musée d’Ethnographie, the Jardin Zoologique d’Acclimation (The Zoological Park of Acclimatization) hosted an exhibition of exotic animals, which were accompanied by fourteen Africans, “les nubiens” (Schneider, 1982; Schneider, 2004; Those-Arora, 2004). The exhibition had so much success that all colonial exhibitions which followed included human subjects in their display of other cultures. The interest in both the objects and the peoples inhabiting the colonized lands gave birth in 1937 to the Musée de l’Homme which replaced the previous ethnographic museum at the Trocadéro. According to Raymond Polin (1937), the main role of the Musée de l’Homme was to collect data about various human groups and “chaque groupe humain est installé, raconté, conservé dans cet univers réduit et toujours plus complet” (p. 99). The paradigm of collecting was at the center of this new institution but the relation between the researchers and the objects of their study changes to reflect a novel vision of racial difference. In the 1930s, a new humanism “centered on combating fascism, racism, and imperialism” promoted by French intellectuals and scientists made the mission of the old Trocadéro museum impossible (Price, 2007, p. 83). The Musée de l’Homme came to life in this new political and cultural context. Its supporters argued that moral and intellectual differences were caused by diverse cultural experiences and not by inherent cultural capacities (Dias, 2008, p. 131). For the first time, French intellectuals like Marcel Mauss and Paul Rivet questioned the usage of the term “primitive” to describe indigenous peoples living in French-controlled territories (Sherman, 2004, p. 678). At the same time, “the rejection of racial hierarchy did not entail the denial of cultural hierarchy” (Dias, 2008, p. 131).

Colonialism and regimes of display: Colonial exhibitions and world fairs

The types of encounters that take place in cultural institutions are inscribed in various politics of display. As it will be elaborated in the next chapter, very few connections have been made between cultural productions organized by the Ministry of Colonies and the post-1958 cultural policy projects orchestrated by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. If in the case of some projects, this connection might not be needed or immediately obvious, I argue that the IMA cannot be detached from the legacy which colonial exhibitions left on the contemporary regimes of display of the Arab “other”. The present encounters between the IMA and the past of Arab cultures are challenged by the Oriental representations which have marked the previous contacts between cultures in the context of colonial cultural projects. Some techniques Nicholas Mirzoeff (1998) catalogued under “visual colonialism” can be observed in the context of the IMA just like some official narratives forbid the telling of a critical colonial past. These practices are accompanied by the invention of new techniques and systems of telling stories about the past that defy orientalizations and challenge official discourses. The tensions between these two “strategies” of display – the one that preserves and the other that challenges Oriental representations – are further complicated by the diversity of encounters which took place in the context of colonial exhibitions. According to James Clifford (1997), “a wholly appropriate emphasis on coercion, exploitation, and miscomprehension does not, however, exhaust the complexities of travel and encounter...Even encounters that are ethnocentric – which they all are to a degree – can produce reflection and cultural critique” (p. 189).

James Clifford, borrowing from Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*, defined museums as “contact zones” between cultures engaged historically in relations of struggle and opposition. For Clifford, most colonial stories incorporated in

exhibitions which are critical of the visual paradigms inherited from colonial times express this constant tension which museums about the “other” inevitably face. Even institutions such as the IMA that intend to take a neutral and even “silent” stand on issues related to colonialism cannot avoid these tensions because “when museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a *collection* becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship – a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull” (Clifford, 1997, p. 192, emphasis in original). However, the fact that cultural institutions about the “other” must respond to the challenges brought up by the colonial past does not mean that ruptures with this past are not possible. On the contrary, added Clifford (1997) in relation to African art, “the ‘tribal’ present is a fabric some of whose strands extend before (and after) the encounter with white societies – an encounter that may appear endless but is actually discontinuous and, in some respects, terminable” (p. 194).

One of the main post-colonial challenges in the display of Arab art is the legacy of Orientalism and exoticism, the two essential dimensions of the system of representation of Arab cultures during colonial exhibitions and in ethnographic museums. In “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,” Timothy Mitchell (1992) identified the three main features of the Orientalist reality. This reality “is understood as the product of unchanging racial or cultural essences; these essential characteristics are in each case the polar opposite of the West...; and the Oriental opposite or Other is, therefore, marked by a series of fundamental absences (of movement, reason, order...)” (p. 289). The false expectations and the lack of knowledge about the Orient of the visitors to the colonial fairs and exhibitions were a direct result of the “world-as-exhibition” phenomena which characterizes the Western city but not the North African one. The author echoed a phrase from Heidegger, “the world-as-exhibition means not an exhibition of the world but the world organized and grasped as though it were an exhibition” (Mitchell, 1992,

p. 296). According to this Western ordering of reality, the spaces which make up “the real world” – museums, department stores or streets– are arranged as if to be exhibited to the visitor. Therefore, “exhibitions were coming to resemble the commercial machinery of the rest of the city” (Mitchell, 1992, p. 299). The “modern subject” was accustomed to experiencing reality as an exhibition and, consequently, understood the reality constructed by exhibitions and fairs in terms of this system of knowledge provided by modern capitalism. At the same time, the same modern subject will seek similar systems of organization and ordering of reality in spaces outside Western Europe. Because of these expectations, the Orient will be translated for the Western visitor as a world created to be displayed. Thus “Europeans brought to the Middle East the cognitive habits of the world-as-exhibition, and tried to grasp the Orient as something picturelike” (Mitchell, 1992, p. 308).

The encounters between cultures during colonialism are often marked by the misrepresentations of the “other” according to Oriental “rules”, racial hierarchies and identity struggles of the French empire. Zeynep Çelik (1992) complicated this system of “communicating” the “other” to the *métropole* by emphasizing the diverse nature of exchanges between Islam and the West. A nuanced examination of these exchanges “acknowledges the existence of communication, discussion, and mutual recognition among these unequal partners, helping to refute the ‘silent’ and ‘frozen’ status given to Islam in Western discourse” (Çelik, 1992, p. 3). The object of Çelik’s study is the representation of Arab architecture at the various international exhibitions and fairs in the 19th century. The author analyzed the architectural imaginary constructed about the Arabs by pointing out the variety of power relations between France and Arab states. For example, Arab states which were not part of the French empire such as Lebanon and Egypt had nonetheless pavilions at the international exhibitions. These pavilions

combined elements of modernizations with “historical heritage” specific to individual countries (Çelik, 1992, p. 2-5). However, Çelik’s discussion of the Algerian presence at world fairs starting with 1867 does not reflect the same diversity of encounters, as the architecture of the Algerian pavilions seems to subscribe to the raw orientalization most visitors expected from such events (Çelik, 1992, p. 125-37).

One of the imagined spaces of the Orient translated by Western cultural producers is “the Oriental “city”, usually reduced to street markets (bazaars), lavish palaces and mysterious mosques. At the 1867 Exposition universelle in Paris, the North African colonies were represented through a series of reproductions of architectural edifices from Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, such as the palace of the Bey of Tunisia, the Ahmedabad mosque and the “selamlik” of the Egyptian king (Çelik, 1992; Morton, 2003; Gaillard, 2003; Demeulenaere-Douyere, 2006). At this time, “Algeria was represented in the French exhibit as a ‘trophy’, a new territory reconquered by civilization after centuries of barbaric rule” (Çelik, 1992, p. 125). Attention to differences between the architectures of various areas was not of main concern to the organizers of the event. Their main intention was to invest “le quartier Oriental” (the Oriental quarter) with the aura of universal exoticism expected from this unknown area.

In the subsequent exhibitions, the renditions of the Oriental city become explorations into the regional differences of colonized nations and also proofs of the accumulation of knowledge about the “other”. Since 1889, the Oriental street has become one of the most important spaces of the colonial exhibitions. For example, described Catherine Hodeir and Michel Pierre (1991), “les visiteurs parcourent la rue du Caire, bordée de vingt-trois maisons de styles architecturaux divers abritant artisans, commerçants et tenanciers de cafés maures” (p. 17). Similarly, the following universal exhibition in 1900 made the colonial section its central attraction by placing

a “vaste quartier exotique” around the Eiffel Tower and throughout the Trocadéro esplanade. La rue d’Alger “et ses choréographies dérisoires: danses du narguilé, du sabre et, bien évidemment, du ventre” was actually hidden inside the Algerian palace (Hodeir & Pierre, 1991, p. 17). Most buildings, such as imperial palaces and mosques are in fact simple façades for “exotic” cafés and restaurants, theatres and dance halls which offered the visitors a taste of the “other’s” cultures. The mélange of architectural details and decorative arts, foods and drinks, dances and songs were all signifiers of the cultures of the colonized subjects and were meant to entertain and attract the visitors but, at the same time, to prove the superior qualities – refinement, intellect, civilization, rationality – of the French culture by comparison with the objects and practices on display.

The cultures of the “other” were also displayed through a multitude of mediated spaces complementary to the different colonial exhibitions. The visual culture created around colonial objects, people and traditions through popular magazines, advertisements, postcards, posters, exhibitions programmes, songs, restaurant menus and short novels imposed a specific view of the colonized subjects in the French imaginary. Even if the effects of this visual system on French publics cannot be generalized, what is certain is that the Ministry of Colonies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with business owners, journalists, travelers, writers, scholars and members of the civil society believed in the necessity of translating the “other” to the French in the *métropole*. The significance of such a vast effort to engage the French with the empire was explained by Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (2002) through a look at the internal political struggles in France in the 19th century. According to the authors, “the empire continued to play an integrative and unifying role in France long after the main scrambles were over. In part this can be explained by the greater need for unification given the enormity of the task in

front of the Third Republic in 1870³⁰” (Chafer and Sackur, 2002, p. 6). The empire becomes the hope for national unification behind a common project meant to sustain the image of a glorious France.³¹

Colonial exhibitions, while generators of cultural and racial stereotypes, were nevertheless finely crafted ideological productions of the colonial state put together by a well-documented Ministry of Colonies. For example, the 1931 Exhibition Coloniale was intended to demonstrate that “colonial action, so long misunderstood, deformed, sometimes shackled, is a constructive and beneficial action” (Morton, 2003, p. 3). Therefore, the organizers of the exhibition, under the guidance of Maréchal Hubert Lyautey were aware that the depiction of the colonies must balance exoticism and civilization in order to prove that the French colonial intervention had measurable results but also that the civilizing process could never produce citizens as superior as the French. Therefore, “by making this distinction very visible, the purpose of the exhibition was to legitimize French colonization” (Morton, 2003, p. 5). Using the tools of scientific rationality and racial categorization colonial exhibitions since 1878 have portrayed different cultures according to the needs of the empire at a certain point in time. Consequently, argued Dana S. Hale (2008), “the French continually redefined the concept of race in a way that was contingent on political situations and on the perceptions of government officials, the press and influential writers” (p. 13; see also Conklin, 1997; Cooper & Stoler, 1997).

³⁰ This date refers to the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, when France lost Alsace and Lorraine to the Prussian Empire.

³¹ For more on French imperialist propaganda, please see: Girardet, R. (1972). *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962*. Paris: La Table Ronde; Schneider, W. (1982). *An empire for the masses: The French popular image of Africa, 1870-1900*. Westport: Greenwood Press; August, T.C. (1985). *The selling of the empire: British and French imperialist propaganda 1890-1940*. Westport: Greenwood Press; Blanchard, P. & Chatelier, A. (Eds.) (1993). *Images et colonies*. Paris: Syros; Blanchard, P., Lemaire, S. & Bancel, N. (Eds). (2008). *Culture coloniale en France: De la Révolution française à nos jours*. Paris: Autrement.

If the presence of colonies was minimal at the 1878 fair, with one exhibit building displaying agricultural products from various African colonies accompanied by brief historical facts, by 1900s, each colonized country has its own pavilion which included colonial villages populated by native artisans, cafés, restaurants and shops selling foods, beverages and souvenirs (Hale, 2008, p. 13-22; see also Hodeir & Pierre, 1991; Çelik, 1992; Gaillard, 2003; Aillaud, Aillaud & Barbier, 2006). Each colony was reduced to a microcosm of objects, people and spaces and it was invested with very specific characteristics according to its place within the French empire, the scientific hierarchical categorizations and the pre-colonial historical encounters with France or other European powers. According to Morton (2003), the 1931 colonial exhibition was “a phantasmagoric microcosm of the French colonial empire...a collection of fragments, taken from their contexts and reassembled into a new whole: an ideal colonial world based on classifications of visible difference” (p. 79).

Therefore, France’s most praised colonial possessions, Algeria and Indochina, occupied central roles within the exhibition at Parc de Vincennes in 1931 and they were represented as more advanced and “civilized” than other African and Asian territories. Hale (2008) spoke of three main racial typologies noticeable during the exposition, “the Sub-Saharan Africans, the uncivilized types”, “the North Africans, mysterious peoples” and “the Indochinese, gentle subjects”. This categorization reflected a general belief that “race determined an individual’s and group’s potential for ‘civilization’” (Hale, 2008, p. 13). Therefore, the Asian subjects were considered most receptive to French lessons of civilization, followed by the Arabs and, lastly, by Sub-Saharan Africans (Hale, 2008, p. 9-13; see also Colonna, 1997; Peabody & Stovall, 2003). Morton (2003) wrote extensively of the techniques of collecting which underline the structure of this colonial production, “ the Exposition collected and classified examples of all peoples and

cultures within a schema that would keep them into their ‘proper’ place, just as French colonial policy and practice controlled and categorized native peoples in the colonies” (p. 81).

I believe that the visual narratives created about the colonized nations, based on Orientalist themes and motifs, and communicated to the French public through a myriad of cultural forms, must be discussed when addressing the history of contemporary cultural institutions. Through its collections, publications and restaurants, the IMA speaks directly to this colonial imaginary, preserving or challenging some of its aspects but also re-writing, re-interpreting and adapting them. Any “bridges” built with the colonial or pre-colonial past will be subjected to these internalized visions about the “other”.

Palais de la Porte Dorée: Residual architecture between ethnographic museum and colonial exhibition

Even if the practice of colonial exhibition and international fairs died with the emergence of the Second World War and the Occupation, their legacy is still visible in the Parisian architectural landscape. Most universal exhibitions in Paris left behind a permanent reminder of their existence: in 1889, le Tour Eiffel; in 1900, le Grand and le Petit Palais; and in 1931, le Palais de la Porte Dorée or le Musée Permanent des Colonies (The Permanent Museum of the Colonies) (see Fig. 8). Built between 1928 and 1931 by architect Albert Laprade as the site of a permanent museum of the colonies, the Palais “[est] destiné à symboliser les termes de l’échange inhérent au pacte colonial [ayant]...la mission d’être un panthéon, sans transfert de cendres, de la France coloniale” (Hodeir, 2002, p. 33). The Minister of Colonies Paul Reynaud stated in the inaugural speech that “son but essentiel est de donner aux Français conscience de leur empire. [...] Il faut que chacun de nous se sente citoyen de la grande France, celle des cinq parties du monde” (Reynaud qtd. in Hodeir, 2002, p. 34).

The museum was designed to take the visitors through a history of French colonialism going back to the Crusades in order to show the continuity and the naturalness of imperialism. After showing the glorious history of colonial expansion, the exhibition focused on anthropological aspects of the colonized cultures, including “les arts indigènes, l’action sociale, l’outillage économique, les produits, le tourisme et la marine marchande” (Hodeir, 2002, p. 37; see also Morton, 1998; de l’Estoile 2003, 2007; Murphy, 2007). The museum also included a large aquarium with exotic fish, which exists even today. The outside walls of the Palais, adorned with Alfred Janniot’s intricate bas-relief sculptures, tell the story of French colonialism through a maze of symbols: people, flora and fauna (Jarasse, 2002; Murphy, 2007). As described by Maureen Murphy (2007), “la France figure au centre de la composition, au-dessus de la porte d’entrée, sous les traits d’une allégorie de l’Abondance vers qui tout converge” (p. 29).

What is the destiny of a museum meant to celebrate colonialism once la *plus grande France* ceases to exist? Between 1934 and 1960, Palais de la Porte Dorée functioned under a new name, Musée de la France d’Outre Mer (The Museum of Overseas France) and became an education tool for French citizens in matters of colonialism. During this period, the museum was slightly restructured, resulting in the elimination of certain periods from the history of colonialism, such as the Crusades, and the development of a more “accurate” depiction, according to Director Gaston Palewski, of “le présent des colonies,” which mixed “primitive” art with utilitarian “ethnographic” objects (Murphy, 2007, p. 42-3). At this point, the emphasis was on objects collected from l’Afrique noire, catalogued as *arts premiers*, and Oceania. Since the 1950s, the old vocation of the museum has been constantly challenged by the decolonization movements in France and in the colonies. The decolonization of Indochina after the battle of

Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and the Algerian War, which ended with Algeria's decolonization in 1962, forced the museum to re-invent itself in a post-colonial world. In 1960, André Malraux named the institution as part of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, changing its name into Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens. According to Murphy (2007), "le musée devient l'un des tout premiers à présenter les objets d'Afrique et d'Océanie en tant qu'objets d'art et non plus sous l'angle du colonial ou de l'ethnographie" (p. 47). In 1990, the new museum became a national establishment, changed its name again into the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (MAAO). This shift placed the museum on the same level with Louvre and Centre Pompidou. In the mid-1980s, the museum was already concerned with contemporary art, interest visible in exhibitions on contemporary Moroccan painters (1985) and Senegalese glass painting (1987). In 2003, the museum closed its gates and its collections were relocated in the future museum on the Quai Branly. Today, le Palais de la Porte Dorée is the contested site of the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration (CNHI)³².

The many lives of the Palais de la Porte Dorée from 1931 until today point out the tensions generated by the creation of post-colonial cultural institutions. Some of the tensions surrounding the colonial encounters between France and African and Oceanic cultures have been made visible by the popular debates around the Musée National des Arts Africains et Océaniens or the Musée du Quai Branly. The fervent discussions around the mis-use of terms such as *arts premiers* or *arts noirs* have corrected the language used to refer to objects from these two geographical areas or have at least drawn attention to the colonial connotations embedded in

³² For more on the CNHI, please see the special issue of *Museum International*, "The Cultural Heritage of Migrants," no. 233/234, May 2007, special issue of *Hommes & Migrations*, "Une collection en devenir," no. 1267, May-June 2007; Green, N. L. (2007) A French Ellis Island? Museums, Memory and History in France and the United States, *History Workshop Journal*, 63(1), 239-253, Stevens, M. (2009) Still the Family Secret? The Representation of Colonialism in the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*. In Thomas, D. (Ed.) *Museums in Postcolonial Europe*, London: Routledge, 2009.

such terminology. Furthermore, the battle between arts and ethnography was equally visible in the gradual quest of the museums for decolonization and integration of cultural diversity.

Meanwhile, Arab and Islamic arts and cultures and their encounters with France were marked by a very different history, that of Orientalism and exoticism. The long history, the scientific discoveries and the prolific cultural production of Arab cultures could not be reduced to the label of “primitive” which was applied to African societies. This hierarchy of fantasies about “other” cultures offered *le monde arabe* a different place in the French colonial imaginary. However, an institutional equivalent of the MAAO for Arab and Islamic arts did not exist in France until 1987, when the Institut du Monde Arabe was inaugurated. The Louvre holds a significant collection of Egyptian antiques but an area dedicated to Islamic arts from more recent times is scheduled to open only in 2011.³³ Therefore, an official cultural space where colonial and post-colonial representations of Islamic and Arab cultures and communities could be observed, addressed, challenged and contested did not exist in France until the mid-1980s. If a battle of discourses surrounding arts from Africa and Oceania was possible due to the multitude of official spaces of display dedicated to these geographical regions, a similar conversation about Arab cultures would not be possible in France until the existence of the IMA.

I argue that the IMA represents the first post-colonial institution dedicated exclusively to the display of Arab and Islamic cultures. Since 2007, the CNHI became the site of dialogues around issues related to histories of colonial and post-colonial immigration and its temporary and permanent exhibitions touched on cultural aspects of North African communities. Furthermore, a new Institut des cultures d’Islam (ICI) is scheduled for opening in 2012 in the Goutte d’Or neighborhood, at the Northern border of Paris. The ICI website stated that “l’esprit de son

³³ Le Pavillon de Sessions at the Louvre houses, since 2000, a rich collection of works of art from Africa, Oceania and the Americas. Musée Dapper, un espace d’arts et de cultures pour l’Afrique, le Caraïbes et leurs diasporas was opened in 1986 in Paris.

organisation à ce niveau rappelle celui de l'Institut du Monde Arabe, mais la différence se situe dans le nom même de cet institut qui se veut porteur d'une identité culturelle et non pas ethnique ou religieuse" ("ICI", n.d.). Despite the incontestable significance of the IMA in the French post-colonial cultural context, the Institut is left out of the literature on French cultural policy, museum studies and post-colonialism. I argue that the IMA constitutes a space where French cultural policy can be connected with colonial institutions which predate the Ministry of Culture and which were crucial in crafting French identity and culture during colonialism.

Spaces of otherness at the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale in Paris: Exhibitions, print culture and leisure

"Cultural hierarchy" represents the theme of another French colonial *grand projet*. From 1878, when the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro was inaugurated until 1937, which marked the opening of the Musée de l'Homme, French people at home were familiarized with the colonized subjects in the context of colonial exhibitions. Colonial exhibitions were also contributing to the display of the "other", even more significantly due to the popular and informal character of the event. People were more attracted by the spectacle under the Tour Eiffel or in Bois de Vincennes than by the cold displays of objects and human skulls inside the museums' walls. Benoit de l'Estoile (2007) argued that the 1931 Exhibition Coloniale in Paris "was a key moment in the history of French ethnology in the sense, first, that it allows the links between the development of the discipline and its colonial uses to be deciphered, and second, that it constituted a critical step in the process of disciplinary formation in anthropology" (p. 342). Furthermore, colonial exhibitions, which had as their primary goal the regulation of the encounter between French and colonized peoples contributed to the formation of the ideological

and visual repertory about other cultures which persists even today (Girardet, 1972; Henry, 1985; Blanchard et al, 1995; Blanchard et al, 2003; Blanchard & Lemaire, 2003b).

Cultural events such as colonial exhibitions told stories about the “other” to those who could not travel to the colonies. These stories were embedded with the ideologies of the French empire and their primary goal was to increase support for the colonies among the French at home. Furthermore, the exhibitions were also intended to build a better sense of national identity, forged around a common imperial project, to which all citizens must participate, by settling in Algeria, visiting the exhibition or purchasing oranges imported from Morocco. These gestures of belonging to the nation, as intentional as joining the overseas settlers or as mundane as cooking with products from the colonies, were outcomes of the French propagandistic and educational initiatives. Even if the reception and the understanding of the colonial project was fragmented and often incoherent, in 1931, “jamais d’autre part, l’idée coloniale ne semble avoir suscité dans l’opinion plus d’intérêt, plus d’enthousiasme, plus de ferveur...ces années correspondent...à un très sensible élargissement de ce qu’on peut appeler la conscience coloniale” (Girardet, 1972, p. 176). In 1931, the efforts to unite the French under the empire were complex and most French institutions, from the Ministry of Colonies to the French press, participated to this initiative. The 1931 Exhibition Coloniale summed up narratives developed in the previous exhibitions and also categories of knowledge about the “other” forged since the first colonial expeditions during the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte. Colonial exhibition would not have existed without the vast accumulations and collections of information, objects and people from the colonies.

Collecting and relocating knowledge

The process of knowing the “other” through scientific explorations of cultures, societies and geographies represents an integral part of colonial domination. The different European empires initiated “self-conscious projects of collecting and organizing knowledge” to gain power over their colonies (Cooper & Stoler, 1997, p. 11). In this process, the different approaches to collecting knowledge reflected specific national ideologies and larger Western understanding of order as a fundamental unit of social organization. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (1997) gave the example of “‘caste’ in India and ‘tribe’ in Africa, [which] were in part colonial constructs, efforts to render fluid and confusing social and political relationship into categories sufficiently static and reified and thereby useful to colonial understanding and control” (p. 11). In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault explained the Western obsession with classification and the desire to order nature according to clear and confined Cartesian mechanisms. Hinting to the expansion of the European empire, Foucault (2002[1966]) wrote about the new interests generated by the enchantment with ordering things, such as “half-way between husbandry and theory, a curiosity with regard to exotic plants and animals, which attempts were made to acclimatize, and which the great voyages of inquiry or exploration...brought back descriptions, engravings and specimens” (p. 137). At the same time, the accumulation of knowledge was connected with the developments of scientific thought and methodology in the *métropole*, which did not always coincide with the intentions of the bureaucratic classes of colonizers. For example, wrote Cooper and Stoler (1997), “geographers and other social scientists disagreed among themselves...when confronted with the complexity of the task of rule, colonial elites called on the sort of knowledge anthropologists could supply...yet anthropologists did not always supply the kind of knowledge that fit the neat administrative categories” (p. 14). While

the techniques of collecting were diverse and generated debates among scientists, they nonetheless constructed a tradition for making knowledge about the “other” which persists even today.

Michel Foucault (2002[1966]) associated the beginnings of the natural history discipline with “the ethical valorization of nature,” which implied that lands “that earlier periods had for so long left fallow” (p. 137) must be understood, valorized and modernized. Nature, therefore, became one of the preferred fields of knowledge gathering for the colonial bureaucrats and the teams of scientists. Michael A. Osborne (1994) argued that the colonial administration in France identified in each colony the social and economic zones to be scientifically analyzed according to the envisioned usage of the colony and the expected needs of the settlers (p. xiii). In *Nature, the Exotic and the Science of French Colonialism*, Osborne wrote about the work done by the members of the Société Zoologique d’Acclimatation (The Zoological Society for the Study of Acclimatization) in North Africa in order to alter local agricultural practices to reflect the demand for “exotic” products at home. In the case of Algeria, explained the author, the traditional agricultural crops were very similar with what was being grown in France, especially wheat. Lacking “tropical crops, spices and gold mines,” Algeria’s agricultural geography had to be altered to correspond with the demand for more exotic products. Therefore, “both the legal situation and the colony’s ecological circumstances favored the Society’s essential function, the transportation of foreign animals and plants to new locations” (Osborne, 1994, p. 160). In Algeria, France wished to find a “major supplier of tropical and specialty products” and this desire generated an extensive campaign of alterations, often violent, to the lands and crops of the native Algerians. For example, during the rule of Thomas-Robert Bugeaud in 1847, the French military led a war of razzias, including a systematic “seizure of livestock, the burning of crops

and villages, and the destruction of fruit trees” (Osborne, 1994, p. 163). In these emptied spaces, the botanists and zoologists set up multiple jardins d’essai (test gardens), where they would plant trees and crops imported from other colonies, such as Saint-Domingue³⁴ and Antilles. In this case, the knowledge gathered about the colony was used to alter the local structures of food production to serve the needs of the empire.

The complex processes of collecting knowledge about the geographies and natural resources of the colonies had both an economic and ideological purpose. On the economic level, as it was showed above, the colonies served as forced suppliers of exotic and tropical products. Ideologically, the translation of this data in museums such as Musée d’Ethnographie and Musée National d’Histoire Naturelle (National Museum of Natural History), public parks and colonial exhibitions was intended to assure the support of the populations of home for the empire.

Patricia A. Morton (2003) explained Lyautey’s vision of the 1931 Exposition Coloniale, “he saw the Exposition as ‘the Great Book of the Colonies’ in which the visitor might read the history of the Métropole and its exterior possessions...Within its precincts a complex regulatory system classified all themes and objects from the colonies, as well as the metropolitan exhibits, into appropriate categories” (p. 83). The natural world of the colonies, composed of spices, plants and trees, was one aspect of colonization, which, once categorized and divided, was displayed in the various sections of the exhibition, explained in the official documents produced for the exhibition and on the outside walls of the Musée de la Porte Dorée.

In the Introduction to *Le Livre d’Or de l’Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris*, Minister of Colonies Paul Reynaud (1931) explained the contributions that the colonies bring to France, reminding the readers that “tous en France profitent [du colonialisme]” (p. 9). Thus,

³⁴ Sainte-Domingue was a French colony in the Caribbean. The Western region of the island is now Haiti while the Eastern region is the Dominican Republic.

“déjà la France extérieure est le plus gros client de la France d’Europe et le premier de ses fournisseurs” (ibid.). According to the Minister, France’s presence in the colonies helped the local societies to become modern and the French economy to prosper even at times of economic depression. He asked the French to support this successful system so that France and its colonies achieve “un progrès moral et matériel: plus de civilisation et plus de richesses pour un plus grand nombre d’hommes” (Reynaud, 1931, p. 9). The different sections of the colonial exhibition and the materials published to provide additional information on the event work together to convince the French of the importance to support the empire.

Spaces of display: Seeing the “other”

Information about the colonized cultures was transmitted through multiple spaces at the 1931 exhibition, the most visible ones being the informative exhibitions located in the pavilions dedicated to individual countries and the Palais de la Porte Dorée. The informative exhibitions contained historical and factual information about specific colonies, with an emphasis on the positive changes in the development of agriculture and industry influenced by the colonial encounter. Maps, simplified statistics, products and industrial technology were displayed in order to show the positive outcomes of the colonial empire. The narrative of progress in the colonies defined by the colonial encounter coincided with stories about economic prosperity in France. Such a story is also told by the Palais de la Porte Dorée.

One of the most important spaces of display at the exhibition was the Musée Permanent des Colonies, the only building planned to outlive the exhibition as a permanent museum of the colonies, “qui dotera notre pays d’un musée digne de notre empire d’Outre-mer, digne de son passé illustre et de ses richesses innombrables” (Livre d’Or, 1931, p. 19). The Palais sums up, in its history, aesthetics style and sculptured exterior the systems of representation developed

during colonial times which communicated a specific image of colonies to the French at home. Visitors to the exhibition and citizens of Paris passing by the museum during their daily routines were exposed to the esthetics of colonialism and were offered knowledge about the people and natural resources of the various colonies. A visit to the museum's collections was not even necessary in order to access a universe of strong yet docile and content subjects, working with their bare hands to provide France with the much needed supplies of coffee, cocoa, couscous and vanilla beans. These characters populate the sculpted colonial microcosm visible on the outside walls of the museum. Today, the same bas-reliefs communicate with the visitors, with no explanation of the colonial and Orientalist legacies embedded in the visual vocabulary. The images are allowed to live without a clear contestation of what they symbolize and what they represented at the time of their creation.

Together with the Cité des Informations, the information center of the exhibition, the Palais flanked the main entrance to the exhibition and was intended as one of the first stops before the "tour du monde dans un jour" commences. Generally, the museum presents chronologically France's imperial history since the Crusades until the present times and offers detailed information on each geographical region presently under French rule. The museum tells the story of its grand colonial conquests, "montrant comment nos territoires extérieurs ont été conquis, pacifiés, administrés...comment des pays désolés, le plus souvent, où les autochtones mouraient de faim ou succombaient sous les maladies...sont devenus, au contact de la civilisation française, des centres prospères" (Livre d'Or, 1931, p. 19). The exhibitionary spaces of the museum and the bas-reliefs adorning the outside walls of the temple-like building tell a story of serene and peaceful encounters between France and its colonies. Most importantly, they tell a story of modernization through contacts with the culture which is more civilized and more

developed, France. Because France brought the blessing of modern developments to the colonies, it seems natural that *la mère patrie* took back natural resources, which it taught the natives to grow and consume.

The naturalization of the processes of exploitation, framed as “l’apport des colonies à la France” and void of all histories of violence and disruption is central to the frieze that adorns the external walls of the museum. Created by Alfred Janiot, the bas-relief maps out, through a complex network of symbols and figures, the different phases of France’s colonization of the world, “à droite, l’Asie; à gauche l’Afrique; et en retour l’Océanie; au centre la figure symbolique de l’abondance conduisant à la Paix et la Liberté” (Le Livre d’Or, 1931, p. 19; see Fig. 9). The entrance to the museum is flanked by three allegorical characters, symbolizing France, and more generally, the white race and civilization, inspired from the visual vocabulary of Ancient Greek and Roman representations of the female body. Two of the characters, representing Peace and Liberty, flank the entrance, while the third, l’Abondance (Abundance), of a larger size, rests above the entrance, seated, looking upward, overseeing all the French colonial possessions and their resources. The triad Peace-Liberty-Abundance sums up best the ideologies embedded in this complex and sophisticated cultural event. Abundance, represented throughout the frieze by various food products provided generously by the different colonies is what allows France to rule peacefully its colonies and to teach “them” the values of liberty. Food becomes the preferred commodity to be exchanged for lessons in modernity.

While the three female characters are portrayed according to Greco-Romans canons, they are surrounded by elements of modernity, such as ships, factories and railroads. However, all the other characters which represent the colonial subjects are depicted engaged in traditional activities, lacking the same tools of modernity which allowed France to develop. While France

rules with the help of industrialized practices, the colonial subjects work with their hands. In *Le Guide Officiel* of the exhibition, André Demaison (1931) offered the following interpretation of the African and Asian characters included in the frieze, “les muscles des Africains, des Indochinois et des Malgaches ne sont pas des muscles d’esclaves construisant des nécropoles ou des temples, mais des muscles de gens bien nourris qui demandent à la terre, sous notre égide de paix, les richesses qu’elle prodigue en surface” (p. 154; see Fig. 10). The vocabulary used to describe progress and modernity disconnects France from narratives of conquest and repression, alluding to France’s anti-slavery legislation dating back to 1795. Furthermore, welfare and progress are associated with fullness and abundance of food, which are enough to satisfy those who are not equally spiritual with the French. Food represents both the richness of the colonies exported to France but also the completion of the cycle of civilization which teaches the subjects to satisfy their bodily needs. When France colonized these countries, according to *Le Livre d’Or*, the locals “mouraient de faim”. Now, after contacts with the civilized colonizers, the African, Asians and Arabs have plenty of food and are “bien nourris”.

The mapping of the colonized world is realized through the juxtaposing of allegorical characters which embody the racial characteristics assigned, through anthropologic and ethnographic narratives, to the subjects of the French colonies. Furthermore, each geographical area is also represented through the main raw product, mainly agricultural, supplied to France, which is mentioned in large letters close to the name of the colonized country. Therefore, the colonies are represented through a collection of people and raw foods, both categories contributing to and benefiting from processes of modernization (see Fig. 10). *Le Livre d’Or* (1931) described this marriage of humans and resources as “le grand livre des colonies” where “les grands fauves et les indigènes se détachent en larges surfaces planes qui forment, avec les

reliefs qui avoisinent, les fruits, les fleurs, des effets de lumière et d'ombre d'un caractère exquis" (p. 19). Furthermore, "ivoires, bois, fruits, tous les produits, toutes les colonies avec les voiliers, les cargos, les transatlantiques, sont tour à tour rappelés en un symbole saisissant de netteté et de plastique" (p. 19). Despite the unitary and coherent message of progress and abundance embedded in the frieze, each racial group is displayed according to pre-existent stereotypes inherited from scientific accounts and in relation with the degree of modernization France wishes to reveal about a particular colony. Therefore, this frieze tells stories of encounters between France and its colonies. These encounters, according to French administrators, did not have similar results in all the colonies, some being better suited to modernization and assimilation than others. The diversity of contacts between France and its colonies is represented in this bas-relief through different types of colonized bodies, performing agricultural or hunting tasks specific to their geographical area. Each colony is useful to the empire for certain products and, likewise, the empire helps the colonies to achieve their productivity potential, a trademark of modernity.

Spaces for education: Reading about the "other"

The representation of the colonized cultures at the 1931 Exhibition Coloniale was also sustained by a vast print and popular culture. The main components of the colonial print culture available at the time of the exhibitions were exhibition-related materials such as programs, pamphlets, postcards, stamps, flyers; French newspapers and magazine such as *l'Illustration*, *Le Figaro* or *Le Petit Journal*, which featured extensive coverage of the events; and popular literature such as novels, short stories and songs. These textual and visual representations of the colonies were also complemented by commercial trademarks, especially for food, beverages and tobacco. The colonial print culture in France intensified around colonial exhibitions through an

increased interest in the exotic “other” and suggested popular support for the colonial project. While scholars disagree on the extent to which the French in the *métropole* actually favored the overseas empire, the richness of texts with a colonial undertone spoke to the popularity of colonial imagery at that time.

In *The Colonial Unconscious: Race and Culture in Inter-War France*, Elizabeth Ezra (2000) wrote that “these [colonial] images were everywhere and they were inescapable” (p. 2). She continued with a few examples, “the public could read about the ethnographic mission Dakar-Djibouti in Michel Leiris³⁵ highly personal *Afrique fantôme*; ...throughout the 1930s, a growing emphasis was placed on colonial issues in mass circulation papers such as *L’Echo de Paris*, *Le Petit Parisien* and *Le Figaro*; special supplements and even entire issues devoted to the empire were published by *Le Temps*, *Les Annales* and *L’Illustration*” (Ezra, 2000, p. 2-3; see also Girardet, 1972; Montagnon 1988). Besides popular literature and press, intensive propaganda campaigns were targeting the consumption of food from the colonies. Sandrine Lemaire (2004a) investigated the introduction on the French markets of products such as bananas and rice, accompanied by extensive campaigns to encourage the French to “manger colonial” (p. 75). According to Lemaire (2004a), “il est important de s’interroger sur les modalités du passage d’une propagande essentiellement d’information destinée à un petit nombre, à une propagande visant à faire agir chaque Français” (p. 76). The reason for the infiltration of colonial rhetoric in the most mundane and popular cultural spaces was explained by Lemaire (2004b) as the inscription of “la chose coloniale...dans le quotidien du plus grand nombre de Français” (p. 46).

During the exposition, a series of texts were highly disseminated to the public: exhibition guides, maps of the re-imagined Bois de Vincennes and commemorative volumes about France’s colonial empire. Probably the most famous artefact associated with the 1931 exposition is the

³⁵ Michel Leiris (1901-1990) was a French surrealist writer and ethnographer.

Guide Officiel de l'Exposition, recognizable through the image on the front cover which depicts the four racial stereotypes associated with the French empire: Arab, African, Asian and Malgache (see Fig. 11). The *Guide Officiel* included sections for all the countries featured at the exposition, ads for colonial products and general information about the French successes overseas. André Demaison, the author of the *Guide*, reminded the visitors of the primary scope for their visit to the Bois de Vincennes: “Vous êtes ici en dehors de la curiosité, parce que vous avez senti qu’aujourd’hui cette grande collectivité humaine qu’est la France a des horizons plus larges que ceux que vous avez été accoutumés à voir sur une carte de l’Europe” (p. 7). The guide was designed to reflect the greatness of the French empire by inviting the visitors to a “tour du monde en un jour”, which was also the motto of the exposition. A similar presentation of the empire as a collection of cultures, was present in other texts popular during the exhibition: *Le Livre d’Or de l’Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris 1931*, prefaced by Lyautey and other important French colonial officials; *Exposition Coloniale International Paris, 1931: Le Guide Illustré*, with comments by Paul Roue; and *Sur le vif: Exposition coloniale*, an illustration collection of exposition highlights.

The rather homogenous image of the colonies depicted through the printed materials disseminated at the exhibition correspond with what Patricia Morton (2000) called “the unrelievedly positive accounts of the Exposition” in the French press (p. 94). Further, Morton (2003) explained that one of the main reasons for such an extensive and “positive” coverage of these colonial events was of a financial nature as “press associations, colonial journals, and numerous general interest periodicals received large sums of money for articles and special editions on the Exposition, often written from press releases and prepared copy” (p. 95; see also Lemaire, 2000, 2004a; Lemaire & Blanchard, 2003b). Raoul Girardet (1972) explained the

success of the colonial exhibition in attracting very large number of visitors to the infiltration of colonial messages throughout the main communicative networks in France, the press being one of them. Girardet mentions specifically two popular newspapers, *Le Temps* and *L'Illustration*, which serve primarily the interest of the French bourgeoisie and the colonial lobby. For example, “c’est enfin *L'Illustration*, qui se trouve alors à l’apogée de son succès dans la bourgeoisie française dont elle semble refléter assez fidèlement les goûts et les aspirations et dont il n’est guère de numéro, autour des années 1930, qui n’évoque pas les paysages, les hommes ou les événements de l’outre mer” (Girardet, 1972, p. 181). The cooperation between the French press and the colonial government was significant in increasing support for the colonies at home and making popular the exotic and Oriental imagery about the colonized “other” (see Fig. 12).

A third group of popular texts which promoted a similar imaginary about the colonies was represented by novels, short stories and songs. According to Sandrine Lemaire (2004b), images of the “other” have entered popular culture through official propaganda, “sa force réelle réside alors dans la constitution véritable d’une culture impériale sans que les Français en soient pleinement conscients” (p. 57). However, outside the official efforts to make the colonial a quotidian business for the French, a popular discourse was forming around the colonies and the colonized people. Colonial literature, especially travel writing and romance novels “proposent au lectorat français des romans, des reportages, des récits de voyage soulignant la nécessité et vantant les mérites de l’intervention française, tout en prolongeant ce que Jean-Marc Moura appelle ‘l’exotisme conquérant’” (Murphy, Ezra & Forsdick, 2004, p. 64). In the 1930s, colonial travel writing was facilitated by easier access to the colonies due to better air and land transportation. The stories that resulted from such travels revealed different sides of the colonial

world: the exotic and the “real”. David Murphy, Elizabeth Ezra and Charles Forsdick (2004) argued that “le divertissement exotique cède à l’instruction souvent polémique, pas encore anti-coloniale, mais jetant quand même les bases d’une critique réelle du système” (p. 65). Despite this critical aspect of colonial literature, the mainstream publications were mostly examples of exoticism and othering. In *Quand on Chantait les Colonies*, Claude Liauzu and Josette Liauzu looked at popular songs composed at the time of significant colonial moments such as the conquest of Alger or the decolonization of Indochina, as examples of colonial discourse visible in the space of the everyday. The authors wrote about the 1930s, “ce ralliement est accompagné d’un élargissement des thèmes: au registre guerrier et patriotique s’ajoute une veine exotique, qui prend une place grandissante” (Liauzu & Liauzu, 2002, p. 35).

Spaces for consumption: Eating the “other”

The encounter between the French and the colonial cultures was solidified through a series of activities of a more leisurely nature. Besides exhibitionary and educational instances the visitors to the exhibition could engage with foreign cultural practices through music and dance performances, demonstrations of traditional crafts and culinary “journeys”. Since 1867, colonial exhibitions have invited the visitors to a *tour du monde*, which could not have been complete without a taste of the cultures on display (see Fig. 13). In 1867, the Turkish café was one of the generic representations of spaces for eating, smoking and relaxation from the Orient. A print from the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale shows the typical setting of the café, with tables set up outside the café, where “café attendants” dressed in Ottoman garments light up the nargilea for the French customers (Çelik, 1992, p. 21). In “Identity under Construction,” Lynn Palermo (2003) wrote about the 1889 Exposition universelle in Paris as a journey, “add a variety of languages, sounds of drums and music, lush vegetation, dancers, and a confusion of

odors emanating from the exotic restaurants and noisy street markets, and it is easy to understand how nineteenth-century visitors could indeed have felt transported to another world” (p. 294, emphasis mine). In the Egyptian section of the 1889 exhibition, the main architectural space was occupied by the replica of a mosque surrounded by souks and bazaars, meant to articulate the spectacle of an Oriental street. However, inside the mosque, the visitors found not places for praying, but spaces for shopping and eating, such as markets and coffeehouses (Çelik, 1992, p. 77-78). During the same event, described Çelik (1992), Algerian and Tunisian palaces were prominently placed at the entrance to the esplanade where the pavilions were arranged (p. 78-79). Behind the palaces, “souks, cafés and restaurants clustered, complete with a replica of a Kabyle village and Bedouin tents” (Çelik, 1992, p. 79). According to Hodeir and Pierre (1991), rue d’Alger represented a collection of aromas, tastes and sensual activities, “tout un appel des sens dont l’exotisme devait excuser jusqu’au moindre frisson libidinale” (p. 17).

Until 1931, colonial exhibitions paid little attention to local architecture and cultural practices when crafting the different sections displaying Arab countries. The general tendency of the architects and designers was to utilize the stereotypes about “un Orient imaginaire et multiforme, peu soucieux de réalité et qui privilégie l’enchantement, le rêve et l’aventure” (Demeulenaere-Douyere, 2006, p. 27). The spaces for eating or drinking coffee and thé à la menthe, modeled after Oriental paintings and written accounts, contributed to the exoticism of the exhibitions and to the overall unawareness of geographical and regional differences.

Demeulenaere-Douyere (2006) described the general design and functions of a *café maure*: “meublés de divans et de nattes, où ‘six domestiques arabes au teint basané, vêtus de robes noires brodées d’or, coiffés de turbans de fine laine damassée, chaussés de babouches, proposent gratuitement café et narguilé” (p. 27). Pascal Blanchard wrote about the generic forms of

exotism embedded in the arrangement of spaces, display of objects and cultural practices and usage of the human element. He argued, “tout est là: le minaret, la musique, les souks, les danseuses, *le café*, la prière, le narguilé... Une certaine typification de l’Afrique du Nord et de ses populations se fixe, semblable à celle proposée par la littérature ou les cartes postales, qui fabriquent en métropole une myriade de stéréotypes promis” (Blanchard, 2009, p. 21, emphasis mine).

At the 1931 exhibition, two eating spaces outline the exotic aspects of the foods from the North African colonies: *le café maure* and *le restaurant exotique*. These two spaces of culinary knowledge embody many of the tensions and anxieties which were representative of the overall colonial encounters between France and its North African colonies: fear of metissage, exclusion of histories of contacts embedded in dishes and practices of eating, and excessive exoticism. Kolleen M. Guy (2010) argued that the racial and cultural divisions which marked the colonial encounter are also visible in the realm of cooking and cuisine, especially in the exclusion of products from the colonies from participation in *terroir*. She wrote, “the notion of *terroir*, with its emphasis on the particularities of environment, geography, and history, served to elevate the genius of the French nation. But it did so in such a way as to deny the colonies and the ostensibly ‘French’ departments of Algeria participation in *terroir*” (Guy, 2010, p. 150). While every French region had its *terroir*, the three departments of Algeria, by law part of the indivisible body of *la mère patrie*, were not included in this system of classification which assessed the Frenchness of a wine, a type of cheese or even a dish. Amy Trubek (2004) gathered a multitude of definitions of the term *terroir*, which can mean, simply “soil” or “dirt”. *Terroir* also represents “a place with specific cultural and historical genealogies,” “a system of ordering and classification” but, most importantly, “the cultural signification of a particular location” (p.

90). To have a *terroir* signifies the belonging to the French nation, together with the other products which form the highly praised gastronomic universe of France. Therefore, “labeling Algerian products as different, by disconnecting them from any aspirations to *terroir* represents the sign of “a gastronomic ‘us’ and ‘them’ that began under colonial rule” (Guy, 2010, p. 150). These culinary divisions indicate also a fear of mixing and influence which might alter French ways of cooking and eating. Guy (2010) spoke about the integration of tropical fruits in the French diets, “for they offered a taste of the ‘exotic’ while doing very little to disrupt or disorder existing French food culture” (p. 151). Similarly, the eating spaces at the colonial exhibition introduced a “safe” culinary experience to the visitors, not too familiar but not too foreign either.

The French in the *métropole*, the intended audience of the colonial exhibitions, were already familiar with products imported from the colonies. Some of these products, such as sugar, coffee and vanilla have been brought to France from the colonies of the Ancient Regime and have lost their exoticism as they became integrated to French cooking. In *Sweetness and Power*, Sydney W. Mintz (1985) wrote that “from 1650 onward, sugar became to change from a luxury and a rarity into a commonplace and a necessity in many nations...sugar penetrated social behavior and, in being put to new uses and taking on new meanings, was transformed from curiosity...into necessity” (p. xxix). Maguellone Toussaint-Samat (2009) told the story of sugar, from its mythological times during the Chinese T-ang Dynasty to the democratization of the product in the eighteenth century, when “like manners and society, those delicacies were becoming democratic” (p. 502). Today, coffee is one of the most popular drinks in Europe and North America but its history of implantation into the international culinary imaginary passed through periods of anxiety and exoticism. Brian Cowan (2005) traced the “social life of coffee” to the first moments the hot beverage encountered the Western traveler. In the seventeenth

century, “the ‘curious-ness’ of coffee and coffee consumption lay in the ways in which the drink and the means of drinking it were bizarre to customary European sensibilities” (p. 19). In *The Coffeehouse: A Cultural History*, Ellis Markham argued that the popularity of Turkish style coffeehouses in Europe and then in North America have transformed the perceptions of coffee, the drinking of coffee and the histories embedded in the coffee bean itself. Markham (2004) wrote that “in the hundred years after the first coffee-houses opened in London, they came to be ubiquitous features of the modern urban landscape, indispensable centers for socializing...the coffeehouse has a vital relationship with coffee” (p. xi-xii). Despite the popularity of cafes in Paris at the turn of the century and their integration to the intellectual and artistic Parisian scene, the *café maure* at the colonial exhibition was molded after a pre-modern coffeeshop, where time stands still and the servers look like characters from an Orientalist painting.

After leaving the Algerian Palace, were visitors are invited to cross the street and enter “des grands jardins méditerranéens [qui] offrent quantité de fleurs, de feuilles, de parfums frais et ravissants” which would eventually lead them to *le café maure*, “avec ses musiques, ses chanteurs, ses danseurs, et le restaurant indigène qui achèvent de donner la note gaie et la couleur locale” (Fontagnal, 1931, p. 40). The visitors are strongly encouraged not to leave the North African section without a stop at the café. Similarly, André Demaison (1931) invited the travelers to experience Morocco at the café, “je crois inutile d’insister sur la visite des souks et du café maure...On n’y joue pas a manille, mais c’est là que les hommes se réunissent, oisifs ou fatigués, pour déguster le thé national à la menthe, le café et ces sucreries de Moulay Idriss précieuses aux palais délicats” (p. 81). In the Tunisian section, *le café maure* was also a space for rest and conversation. Pierre Barrioulet (1931) described the café, “de l’autre côté, sur la place El-Barka, un café maure est installé où l’on sert aux visiteurs des boissons indigènes, café

arabe, thé à la menthe, sirops de violettes ou de roses,” (p. 47). The long and complex history of coffeehouses and their social roles in the Arab world is reduced to spaces where visitors can consume primarily two of the beverages most commonly associated with the Orient, coffee and mint tea. Some of the *café maures* also offered hookas and the spectacle of Oriental life, including belly dancers and waiters dressed in Arab ware. This interpretation of the “other’s” spaces does not correspond with the functions and practices associated with cafés in most of the Arab world. Gerard-Georges Lemaire (2003) spoke about “les fonctions essentielles du café dans le monde arabe...D’abord, il était extrêmement important pendant les fêtes du Ramdam... au café, laisser traîner l’oreille pour capter l’humeur du moment ou écouter les voyageurs racontant leur périple...lorsque les journaux sont apparus, on allait au café pour les lire” (p. 31). The coffeehouse was not only a place to drink coffee but also a socio-cultural universe where stories and news circulated, opinions were formed and disseminated and people kept the community alive. Lemaire (2003) concluded, “les Occidentaux n’ont pas compris qu’on pouvait être oisif, y flâner ou rêvasser” (p. 34). The café was also a space for intellectual debates and a place for reading because “le livre, associé au café dès le XVIIe siècle, l’est toujours aujourd’hui...C’est ce que l’on constate dans le milieu des bouquinistes qui a su développer une sociabilité particulière où boisson, amour des vieux livres et plaisir d’être ensemble sont en parfaite harmonie” (Zarcone, 2003, p. 38). Lemaire explained that the origins of “le café littéraire,” popular in France at the time of the colonial exhibitions, were connected with café cultures in North Africa, especially Egypt. However, this artistic and intellectual legacy was left out from the design and function of the *café maure* at the exhibition.

Each North African section includes a *restaurant exotique* or *indigène*, where foods of the “other” completed the cultural experience of the visitor. In the Algerian pavilion, the

restaurant was attached to the café but neither the *Livre d'Or* nor the *Guide Officiel* explained the types of foods included in the menu. Algerian dishes, less important than the raw products imported from Algeria and excluded from the French *terroirs*, were not properly introduced to the visitors. However, Demaison referred to mutton and couscous as the national dish of Algeria, so it is likely that the restaurant served this dish to the French. Henri Grance and Florence Barriol (2010) investigated “le marche de la graine de couscous en Europe,” via Algeria, where the company Ferrero started to industrialize the traditional process of making the grain, “le roulage à la main de la semoule” (p. 84). In 1953, the two Ferrero brothers started a factory in Provence, which still exists and produces couscous today using the same industrial techniques developed half a century ago. The Ferrero-Couscous website explains that “au même titre que les pâtes ou le riz constituent des aliments de base pour les Italiens ou les Chinois, le couscous représente pour les populations du Maghreb un aliment de base et un pilier identitaire” (“100 ans de couscous”, n.d.). Marceau Gast discussed the origins of couscous and the diversity of recipes and opinions about couscous that spread, unequally, throughout le Maghreb. For example, the invention of the grain of couscous “n’a pas été reçue comme novatrice et digne d’intérêt, parce qu’elle venait des Berbères, toujours déconsidérés par les Arabes” (Gast, 2010, p. 75). Farouk Mardam-Bey (1998) wrote about the regional and local diversity of the couscous dishes, influenced by the availability of ingredients and by the traditions of families and communities (p. 75-78).

Even if couscous was primarily an Algerian dish, also very common in Tunisia, both the *Livre d'Or* and the *Guide Officiel* spoke extensively about couscous in reference to Moroccan cuisine, named by Demaison (1931) “une des plus fines de l’Islam” (p. 81). The culinary achievements of the Moroccan cuisine, together with peace and modernization, are attributed to

the colonial encounters with France, “[qui] y donne la stabilité qui lui manquait, indispensable à l’esprit de cohésion et de persévérance” (Demaison, 1931, p. 81). In “Le Maroc à Vincennes,” Rene Leclerc dedicated a section of the article to “restaurant et café maure,” the two culinary establishments in the Moroccan pavilion. Leclerc (1931) wrote, “à l’extrémité des deux lignes de souks, l’ensemble indigène est terminé par deux éléments indispensables à son évocation complète” (p. 59). If the knowledge of Algeria could not have been complete with the tasting of Algerian wine and the experiencing of Tunisia would have been incomplete without shopping for dates and oranges in one of the souks, Morocco’s essence was in its dishes. Leclerc (1931) continued that “tout cet ensemble forme la partie attractive, pittoresque, exotique, mais aussi celle qui révèle l’âme profonde et charmante et si variée du Maroc” (p. 60). In the *café maure*, the visitors could taste “thé à la menthe, aliment indispensable au riche comme au pauvre et savourer la boisson douce, parfumé, que n’oublie aucun de ceux qui y ont trempé les lèvres” (Leclerc, 1931, p. 59). Together with tea and coffee, the customers could also try a variety of mini-cakes and candies such as Kob orghzal and Moulay Idriss, two popular brands of candy at the time (ibid.).

In the restaurant, a vast selection of North African dishes explained the culinary diversity of the Moroccan cuisine as “le restaurant offre de son côté, la série inoubliable des plats maghrébins; la pastille aux amandes, les couscous multiples, les méchouis, les tadjjin aux olives, aux raisins et la multitude des hors-d’œuvre, desserts à la fois douçâtres et relevés, poivrons, tomates, piments” (Leclerc, 1931, p. 60). This extensive collection of North African dishes, offered on the premises of the Moroccan restaurant, suggested little awareness of the regional diversities due to the grouping of all North African cuisines under the generic label of “maghrébins”. The application of an ideology of *terroir* to the food and foodways of the

colonized countries was made impossible by the deeply embedded cultural and racial divisions promoted by the colonial regime. The exoticism of the eating places at the colonial exhibitions was required by the civilizing mission and by the complex system of differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Food at the colonial exhibitions was in the service of colonialism.

Conclusions: The legacy of colonial representations

This chapter suggested that post-colonial cultural institutions such as the Institut du Monde Arabe are in dialogue with a rich colonial legacy of racial and exotic representations of the “other”. In order to decipher the contemporary politics of display of cultural institutions in post-colonial France, I argue that it is necessary to observe the position of the specific institution in a larger network of historical encounters and representations. To do so, I explored the systems of display crafted during colonialism in the context of ethnographic museums, colonial exhibitions and residual architecture in France. I pointed out some of the characteristics of specific systems of representation and I focused on three contexts of othering during the 1931 Exhibition Coloniale Internationale in Paris: museums and exhibitions; print culture; and leisure. This discussion is important in relation to the following chapter, “Political encounters: French cultural policy and the post-colonial condition,” where I explore the exclusionary tendencies of post-1959 cultural policy in France.

CHAPTER 5

Political encounters: French cultural policy and the post-colonial condition

François Mitterrand's speech at the inauguration of the Institut du Monde Arabe in November 1987 suggests the communicative functions often attached to the cultural domain – “vous aussi, chers amis du monde arabe, vous connaissez la culture de la France, son apport original, ses racines profondes, dans le terreau européen et au-delà, Europe ouverte aux influences, aux idées et aux modes d'expression venus de vous et venus de plus loin, par vous, au point qu'il serait difficile que vous vous sentiez *étrangers* chez nous” (Mitterrand, 1987). Mitterrand hoped that due to the newly built Institut du Monde Arabe Arab communities in France would feel less *étrangers*. In this vision, cultural contacts at the IMA highlight the “positive” intersections between France and *le monde arabe*, void of colonial contacts. Culture is used in this context to connect communities through the similarities they share. However, culture is often used in France as a site of nation-making and difference, as it was discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I argue that the development of French cultural policy omitted to take into account the colonial past, which resulted in the disconnect between the governing bodies and the French citizens of immigrant origins. The obsession with the *national* which is visible in most cultural policy projects, from the democratization of access to cultural capital – focused on class inequalities – to the *grand projets* – focused on the cultural rebirth of Paris – often left out the new immigrant populations and their right to culture.

This chapter presents chronologically the national-focused discourses embedded in projects of cultural policy in France. To do so, I will analyze the main phases in the development of cultural policy in parallel with a brief history of colonial and post-colonial immigration to France. More specifically, I will follow the development of French cultural

policy, from the times of the Popular Front until the years of Socialist French Minister of Culture Jack Lang in parallel with the housing policies developed by French officials to deal with the increasing numbers of immigrants from former colonies. I argue that, while French cultural policy was developing discourses and practices with a national focus, French urban politics were slowly pushing the immigrant communities outside the margins of the cities and into the French suburbs, therefore further away from the national core. In this process, the cultures of the “other” were outside the range of action of cultural policy in the formative years of the Ministry of Culture. Such exclusionary practices are consequences of the previous colonial system of representation and of the official silences about France’s colonial past.

The French nation and identity: A few notes

The exclusionary character of French cultural politics is the result of a series of social and historical factors: the strength of the republican interpretation of French citizenship, the narrow definition of the French working class and the lack of political support for the colonial and, later, post-colonial immigrants. Since the aftermath of the French Revolution, many intellectuals, writers, scholars and French officials have crafted the definition of French citizenship. The majority of French policies and political decisions are based on a rather cohesive understanding of what it means to be French.³⁶ Jules Michelet’s vision of a French citizen totally dedicated to the national despite local connections or foreign origins was challenged by Ernest Renan’s view of the nation as a “daily plebiscite”. According to Renan, (1990[1882]), the desire to belong

³⁶ This chapter does not propose to offer an extensive and exhaustive description of the history of citizenship formation in France. For more on French citizenship, please see Brubaker, R. W. (1992) *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Schnapper, D. (1998) *Community of citizens. On the modern idea of nationality*, London: Transaction Publishers; Weber, E. (1976) *Peasants into Frenchmen. The modernization of rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford: Stanford University Press; Noiriel, G. (2006). *Le creuset français. Histoire de l’immigration XIXe-XXe siècle* (2nd ed), Paris: Editions du Seuil; Weill, P. (2005). *Qu’est-ce qu’un français ? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution*, Paris: Gallimard; Sayad, A. (2005) Naturalization in *The suffering of the immigrant* (pp. 225-277) Cambridge, Polity Press

must come willingly and must be accompanied by the adherence to French norms and values (p 19) This idea of belonging to a national group based on republican ideals is at the basis of the highly contested contemporary French model of integration, which requires that the new immigrants adopt French social and cultural norms The problem of this model is, according to Gérard Noiriel (2006) that “le cas français illustrerait une “assimilation forcée” des immigrés . les facteurs essentiels expliquent que les communautés étrangères n’aient jamais pu maintenir leur “identité” au-delà de la première generation” (p 341) ³⁷

The coherent narrative of French citizenship and integration has been further complicated by the legacy of colonialism and post-colonialism While immigration has been constructed as the main problem of French society since the 1980s, many scholars are unearthing the role played by legacies of colonialism in the present unstable relation between France and its immigrants Pierre Joxe stated, “il y a encore chez nous l’habitude d’avoir des sujets, de coexister avec des individus de statut inférieur, de faire travailler à notre profit des hommes n’ayant pas tous les droits de l’homme et encore moins ceux de citoyens d’une certain façon, il manque à la France une prise de conscience sur les crimes commis en son nom durant la période coloniale et durant la décolonisation” (Joxe qtd in Bancel, Blanchard et Lemaire, 2005, p 30).³⁸ France’s memory struggles with its colonial past have been identified in the last twenty years as a main cause for many current social and political conflicts, such as suburban riots and the

³⁷ For more on the French model of integration, please see Schnapper, D (1998) *Community of citizens On the modern idea of nationality*, London Transaction Publishers, Weill, P (2005) *La republique et sa diversité Immigration, integration, discriminations*, Paris Seuil, Boubaker, A (2006) Le ‘creuset français’ ou la légende noire de l’intégration In Blanchard, P, Bancel, N & Lemaire, S (Eds), *La fracture coloniale La société française au prisme de l’heritage colonial*, Paris La Decouverte, Favell, A (1998) *Philosophies of integration Immigration and the idea of citizenship in France and Britain*, New York Palgrave, 1998

³⁸ For more information on France’s relation to its colonial past and post-colonial condition, please see Blanchard, P, Bancel, N & Lemaire, S (Eds), *La fracture coloniale La société française au prisme de l’heritage colonial*, Paris La Decouverte, Sayad, A (2005) *The suffering of the immigrant*, Cambridge Polity Press, Stora, B (1999) *Le transfert d’une memoire De “l’Algerie française” au racisme anti arabe*, Paris La Decouverte, Lorcin, P (Ed), *Algeria and France 1800-2000 Identity, memory, nostalgia* Syracuse Syracuse University Press, 2006

failure of the French educational system to accommodate diversity. Furthermore, immigrant communities were assigned a physical and ideological space at the margins of French society through housing, urban development and educational policies, and they were pushed to compete with the working classes for jobs, housing and social status.

Louis Chavel did a study on French society with a particular focus on class which framed as a main component of the collective French identity. His study was relevant to the general perception members of the French society have of their identities, to the platforms of French political parties and, in this case, to the development of cultural politics meant to include and inspire the members of the working classes. The development of a working class in France has been in the making, according to Roger Magraw, since the 1800s (Magraw, 1992). However, the consolidation of a clear working class identity happened in the 1920s, period which coincided with the industrialization of French economic structures and the development of *cités satellites industrialisées* at the margins of the big cities in France (Faure, 2003, p. 65). This social and economic reality gave birth to “la banlieue rouge” (red suburbs), “le lieu où campe la population ouvrière, chassée du centre, ou les refoulés” (Fourcaut, 2000, p. 176). The *banlieue* becomes the space of the working classes, united by their marginality within the French social space and by their loyalty to leftist parties, primarily the French Communist Party.³⁹ The apogee of political representation for the working classes happened while the Popular Front was in power. Towards the end of WWII and in the aftermath of the German Occupation, the French popular classes entered an undetermined period of “crise” of political representation (Noiriel, 1986; Terrail, 1990; Chenu, 1993).

³⁹ For more on the evolution of the French suburb into a space of the working class, please see Fourcaut, A. (1992). *La banlieue rouge 1920-1960*, Paris: Autrement; Noiriel, G. (2006). *Le creuset français: Histoire de l'immigration XIXe-XXe siècle* (2nd ed.), Paris: Editions du Seuil; Dubet, F. et al. (1992). *Les quartiers d'exil*, Paris: Editions du Seuil; Masclat, O. (2003). *La gauche et les cités: Enquête sur un rendez-vous manqué*, Paris: La Dispute, 2003.

Before 1959: A critical approach to the literature on French cultural policy

In the previous chapter, I discussed the formation of discourses and regimes of displays about the colonial subjects in the context of ethnographic museums and colonial exhibitions. I also suggested that these systems of knowledge about the “other’s” culture, while not organized under an official ministry of culture, act as precursors to the official institution inaugurated in 1959. Therefore, the history of cultural policy in France started before culture was made subject to policy. The regulation of culture in France made official in 1959 through the inauguration of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, showed a strong preoccupation with things of a national nature. The story of French cultural policy features as a main hero the French nation. Since 1959, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has been preoccupied with the crafting of a solid national culture that would increase access to cultural productions, democratize the creation process and offer value to cultural areas formerly known as “low”. Post-colonial immigrants pose problems to this coherent narrative of cultural betterment because representing and speaking for the “others” requires their inclusion in the formation of national identities. In this chapter, I focus on the tensions between the practice of a cultural policy which seeks to re-build the French *national* culture during the *post-colonial* period and the failure to integrate the post-colonial immigrants to the national body.

While French cultural policy can be fairly blamed for exclusionary practices in its relation to colonial and post-colonial immigrant communities, such practices reflect the overall attitude of French politics towards those communities considered external to the national core. The Ministry of Culture was established during the last years of French colonialism and most scholars of French cultural policy consider 1959 the year when French policing of culture started. While there was no official body in charge with developing cultural policies before this

date, culture has been used for quite a while by various institutions engaged in colonial governance to assert Frenchness and to construct identities, both in France and in the colonies. However, very few scholars have paid attention to the intersections between cultural policy, colonial institutions and post-colonialism in France. David Looseley (2004) made this connection arguing that “a social agenda of exclusion...has been the driver of French cultural policy thinking and debate since...1959” (p. 15). While I agree with the observations that cultural policies in France may be categorized as exclusionary, I do not believe that social exclusion was an intended function of the new Ministry of Culture. Being a product of its time, the Ministry absorbed and incorporated the ideologies of a France which was exiting colonialism unprepared to deal with post-colonial realities. Cultural policies were forged in the midst of this transition period and they inevitably reflected the tendency to protect what was known, the national, from what might constitute a “threat”: colonial memories, immigrant communities and post-colonial cultures.

My arguments do not constitute an apology for France’s colonial past and for its post-colonial mistakes. As I will show further in this chapter, French cultural policies were insensitive to changes happening in France after decolonization and failed to include to the national cultural project the many communities immigrating to France from former colonies. The Ministry of Culture can be blamed for not challenging the larger politics of exclusion existing in France since 1959 and is guilty of refusing to accept diversity and multiculturalism as new social realities. However, I believe that the actions of the Ministry of Culture must be observed in the larger context which produced them, going back to colonial times. One way to re-connect the histories of cultural policy with those of colonialism and post-colonialism is by looking at cultural institutions and events which precede the formation of the Ministry of

Culture. One such institution, engaged in numerous cultural productions and projects, was the Ministry of the Colonies, which was in charge, among others, with the regulation of culture in the colonies and with representations of colonized “subjects” at home. The colonial exhibitions, discussed in the previous chapter, were a product of this institution. Re-connecting the Ministry of Culture with previous colonial institutions engaged in the production of culture might explain some of the exclusionary practices of the new ministry and prove certain continuities and ruptures with colonial pasts. A look at the disconnected histories of French cultural policy and the colonial politics of display explains the place occupied by the Institut du Monde Arabe in today’s France. I argue that the IMA finds itself, uncomfortably, at the intersections of these two histories, which have hardly been reconciled, both in France’s cultural reality and in the literature on this topic.

The beginnings of French cultural policy: 1930s-1950s

The development of cultural politics in France, since the times of Francois I⁴⁰ until the less glorious present of Nicholas Sarkozy is inseparable from the formation of a French national culture. The ways in which French kings and, later on, presidents have dealt with matters of culture reflect their interpretations of what it means to preserve the French national heritage and identity. Moreover, the state’s intervention in the cultural field parallels the state’s desire to shape French citizenry and to teach French the meanings of their political and cultural identities. Furthermore, observing the rise and fall of different cultural strategies points out the transitions between the various meanings assigned to “culture”. Finally, the changes and developments in the field of cultural policies, in order to adapt to larger social and cultural contexts, especially

⁴⁰ Francois I was king of France between 1515 and 1547 (also year of his death).

those predicted by the post-colonial condition, allow for the observation of patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

Most scholars agree on a series of key moments in the development of French cultural policy, the majority situated in the second half of the twentieth century, after the formation of the Ministry of Culture in 1959. However, argued David Looseley (1995) in *The Politics of Fun*, culture has been used to promote forms of Frenchness even before the French Revolution. Looseley mentioned briefly the roles of François I and Louis XIV in creating royal patronage as a glorification of themselves and their reign but also of the French nation (p. 11; see also Patriat, 1998; Poirrier, 1998; de Baecque & Melonio, 2005). Three institutions were created in the aftermath of the French Revolution to consolidate the connection between state, culture and the French nation: the Musée du Louvre (1793), the École nationale des beaux-arts (1863) and the Institut de France (1795). Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (1989) argued that the French Revolution “created the conditions of emergence for a new ‘truth’, a new rationality, out of which came a new functionality for a new institution, the public museum” (p. 63). The public museum of the 18th and 19th century was initially designed to reveal to the new publics the riches of the church and of the royalty, a sign of their tyranny and decadence. If the princely private collections and the cabinets of curiosity were, prior to the Revolution, restricted to the members of the upper class, the Enlightenment museum envisaged access for all. As Andrew McClellan (2008) noticed, “the museums built by the emerging nation states of the nineteenth century were intended to be open institutions useful to society” (p. 28). Such institutions were also meant to reflect the cultural richness of France and the coherence of its national heritage. However, in the 18th and 19th centuries, France was situated at the low end of the ‘interventionist’ spectrum

(Looseley, 1998, p. 2). The possibility of a cohesive national strategy to “police” culture was still far away.

During the 1930s, French culture came one step closer to its institutionalization. In May 1936, Léon Blum’s Popular Front (PF), an alliance of Socialists, Communists and Radicals, came to power in a context of increasing threat of fascism, “political uncertainty, cultural change and intense activity by a broad-Left intelligentsia” (Looseley, 1995, p. 14). Pierre Cabanne (1981) claimed that “le gouvernement de Léon Blum est le premier, dans l’histoire de la IIIe République , à avoir cherché à accompagner les transformations de la vie ouvrière par une nourriture culturelle accessible à tous” (p. 18). The Popular Front (PF), even if its time in power was short, set the foundations of the discourses and future tensions in French cultural politics. A movement for the people, the PF advocated the need for a culture for the working classes, whose leisure time was spent differently from those belonging to a “higher” culture (Looseley, 1995, p. 13; see also Caune, 1992; Rigby, 1991). The assumed specificity of a working class experience gave birth to policies of leisure “sought to improve the quality of life for the majority of people by extending leisure time, offering leisure facilities and giving access to high culture” (Rigby, 1991, p. 38). These initiatives are known under the name of “éducation populaire” (Looseley, 1995, p. 13; see also Fumaroli, 1991, p. 83).

One of the leaders of this new cultural imperative was Leo Lagrange, French Under-Secretary of State for Sports and for the Organization of Leisure, who advocated the value of “unpretentious pleasures” with a focus on athletic activities as “l’apprentissage d’une discipline de l’esprit ou de la main (Fumaroli, 1991, p. 83-4). Furthermore, Lagrange and Minister of Education Jean Zay, used the mechanisms of *transmission culturelle*, a Popular Front ideology which equates information with education (Ory, 1974, p. 6) to spread culture to the masses. The

Popular Front created a diversity of spaces such as libraries, dance and sport clubs and cultural centers where members of the working classes could acquire a sense of their cultural identity not as inferior to the French “bourgeoisie” but separate and different from it. Joanny Berlioz, member of the French Communist Party, argued in a 1936 rapport to the French Chamber of deputies that “il faut cesser de regarder l’art comme un domaine réservé aux classes les plus aisées, aux spécialistes et aux snobs qui le déshonorent. L’art doit se rapprocher du peuple...en particulier de ces millions de travailleurs qui ont ou vont avoir plus de loisirs” (Berlioz, 2008[1936], p. 21).

This early form of “cultural interventionism,” as David Looseley defined the leisure policies of the PF (p. 20) inspired the actions of two youth associations during the dark times of the Vichy Occupation: Jeune France (JF) and Uriage. Jeune France in particular positioned itself as the savior of a decadent and tasteless French culture, ruined by the cinema and the radio. According to the members of JF, what France needed was “a cultural housecleaning that would revitalize taste and prepare a new renaissance of French civilization” (Nord, 2007, p. 694). In order to spread their message and their practice, the JF recruited young artists and writers and trained them to become a veritable “youth labor service corps” and on the inspiration for the future *animateurs culturels*. Functioning under the Occupation regime, JF had to adhere to the exclusive political ideologies of Maréchal Phillippe Pétain but reacted against their rigidity by promoting a traditional France based on authentic French heroes such as Jeanne d’Arc and Roland. An example of such a compromise was the exclusion of foreigners and Jews from the membership of the association (Berges qtd. in Nord, 2007, p. 695) while the white working classes were celebrated and included in this cultural project.

The revival of the French culture under Vichy was to be accomplished without those considered outsiders to the French nation. The colonies played a crucial role in the promise of a *France libérée*. Even if the focus of discriminatory and racial practices during Vichy was the Jewish population, the Petain government developed a solid relation with many of the French colonies. Because the colonies were the only territories over which France was allowed to have full autonomy during German Occupation, the Empire became both the hope and the proof of France's future liberation, "un mythe consolateur" (Blanchard & Ginio, 2004, p. 125-6; see also Jennings, 2001; Cantier, 2002). During Vichy, colonial cultures were brought to France through official propaganda channels: cultural events, such as la Quinzaine Imperiale (1942), colonial movies and documentaries and even geography and history textbooks (Blanchard & Ginio, 2004). However, the colonial immigrants living in France at this time were not part of the cultural projects which crafted the representations of their own cultures. Moreover, the idea that colonial immigrants could be part of the French nation was not yet solidified in the French official imaginary.

There were several communities living at the margins of the French society during the Occupation. Many of the problems experienced by the members of the French proletariat, such as low pay, poor labor environments, lack of proper living conditions and general feelings of malaise and marginalization were also the realities lived daily and even more intensely by the North African immigrants. However, North African immigrant workers during the 1930s and until the 1990s, the decades when some scholars argue that the working class became obsolete, were not assimilated to and not desired by the French working class. The clash between the working classes and the North African immigrants was a result of the efforts of the French colonial officials to keep the immigrants present in France for labor separate from the rest of the

populations (Sayad, 2004, p. 144; Sayad, 1999). Consequently, the regulation of culture in the 1930s and 1940s reflected other exclusionary practices which defined the relation between the French government and the colonial immigrants.

One strategy of segregation was the building of *bidonvilles* at the margins of the cities, where immigrant workers were meant to reside, lacking interaction with the other members of the French society. *Bidonvilles* are poor neighbourhoods built at the margins of the big industrial cities. In France, the first *bidonvilles* were built in the 1940s to host the North African immigrants brought in France to work. The expression “maisons de bidon” indicates housing spaces built from recycled materials, “matériaux de récupération”, meant to be easily destroyed or left to decay on their own. In “Mémoires d’immigrés, l’héritage maghrébin” (1997) (Memories of immigrants, the North African heritage), film director Yamina Benguigui captured the misery of the immigrant men forgotten at the margins of the French society. The leftist parties, who were speaking for the popular classes, did not communicate with the North African workers and did not connect their experiences to those of the larger working classes (Masclat, 2005, 2006). Another main reason for the animosity between working classes and immigrant communities was the competition for jobs and for housing, accompanied by the fear that immigrants would cause the decay of the living spaces in the *banlieue*. Already at the outskirts of the city, the working-class districts were set apart for those who worked in factories. Already a space of social suffering, the French *banlieue* became a site of conflict between different social groups once large numbers of immigrant families were relocated there. Because these communities were primarily considered members of the workforce and their presence in France thought of as temporary, they were also left outside the cultural initiatives of the time. The creation of sport clubs and of leisure activities, such as week-end trip to the beach (Champagne,

2002) was intended for the members of the working class and was structured based on the schedules of popular classes. Their cultures and traditions unrecognized, North African immigrant communities entered the next stage of French cultural politics as outsiders to the nation. However, the failure of the colonial empire overseas and the decolonization of Indochina and Algeria made these new populations more and more visible. Their contributions to France's cultural heritage were often disregarded by the makers of cultural policy during the most significant period in the history of French cultural politics.

The French Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Malraux years: The 1960s

Most scholars writing about French cultural politics agree that the main formative moment in the development of cultural policy was the era of André Malraux, the first French Minister of Cultural Affairs⁴¹. Malraux's grand plan for cultural policy corresponds with Charles de Gaulle's desire to recuperate France after the Occupation and in the midst of a series of significant battles for decolonization overseas, in Indochina and Algeria. In fact, the end of the Fourth Republic was caused by the inability of the government to deal with the many pro-independence and decolonization movements, especially in Algeria (Jackson, 2003; Connelly, 2002; Wall, 2001). Looseley (1995) stated that "de Gaulle returned to power determined to correct France's weakness and reinstate its international prestige. The Fifth Republic was to be a new order, constitutionally, economically, but also culturally" (p. 33). Since 24 July 1959, when the French President signed the decree to form a *Ministère d'Etat Chargé des Affaires Culturelles*, culture became the domain of André Malraux.⁴² The appointment of Malraux was strategic and much needed in France at that time (Looseley, 1995, p. 33; Eling, 1999; Lebovics,

⁴¹ André Malraux was Minister of Cultural Affairs from 1959 until 1969. He left office at the end of Charles de Gaulle's presidency in the aftermath of May 1968.

⁴² For more on the formation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, please see Poujol, G. (1991). The creation of a Ministry of Culture in France, *French Cultural Studies*, 2, 251-260.

1999; Ahearne, 2002). According to Marc Fumaroli (1991), “c’est bien Malraux, avec sa légende, son verbe, son talent pour les coups de théâtre, qui a fait violence aux vieilles pudeurs républicaines et a fait entrer dans les mœurs les Affaires culturelles” (p. 115). Herman Lebovics (1999) called Malraux, not without irony, “the minister of the new public identity” (p. 86) because, since 1958, the future of French culture has been shaped by his vision. Throughout the subsequent cultural regimes, his ideas about what culture should be and do would be accepted, contested and re-written.

If there is one term used to describe Malraux’s philosophy on cultural politics, it would have to be the democratization of culture. Jeremy Ahearne (2004) put it simply, “the principal thrust of this policy is well-known: it looked to give people from all classes and regions access to the great works of culture (particularly French culture)” (p. 16). Well before he was invested in office, Malraux saw the potential for democratization inherent in cultural projects. In 1945, he defended in front of the National Assembly the need “que la culture française cesse d’être l’apanage des gens qui ont la chance d’habiter Paris ou d’être riches” (Malraux cited in Looseley, 1995, p. 36). It comes to no surprise that the Article One of the Cultural Ministry Organization Decree drafted in 1959 by Malraux himself stated, “the Ministry entrusted with cultural affairs has the task of making the major works of humanity, and particularly of France, available to the largest possible number of French citizens; of presenting its artistic heritage to the widest possible public; and of furthering the creation of works of art and the intellect which will enrich that heritage” (Malraux qtd. in Girard, 1997, p. 109). The desire to make culture available to all French citizens was guided by Malraux’s own interpretation of cultural productions as “the highest and most lasting forms of artistic achievement of the past” (Looseley, 1995, p. 36). This rather narrow definition of what the “cultural” in cultural policy should stand for guided the main

policies during the Malraux era, from the highly regarded *maisons de la culture* to the preservation of the French national heritage to the classification of all mass-cultural forms as “‘dream-factories’ pouring fourth a ‘deluge of imbecility’” (Gaudibert, 1977, p. 29). However, nowhere in his project for democratization of the arts and access to the general public is there room for the new immigrant communities or their cultural heritage.

Malraux believed that “great art has a mysterious ability to resonate within all; it does not need to be explained or taught but can be appreciated spontaneously if encountered directly; not mediation, but revelation” (Looseley, 1995, p. 36). However, this vision of culture was an evolution from the Jeune France’s rather narrow list of works of art and of its political affiliations, which excluded artists such as Pablo Picasso, to merit public exposure. According to Phillippe Poirrier (2003), Malraux “attempted to break with the ‘Fine Arts’ mentality...What the Minister really wanted was to encourage contemporary art and stake his policy on new creation” (p. 217). For the Ministry of Cultural Affairs to achieve its goals of democratization, it needed venues where people, throughout rural and urban France, could encounter without mediation valuable artistic creations, from paintings to theatre and music. The first *maison de la culture* opened in 1961 in Havre with a very clear goal: “Il faut que, par ces maisons de la culture qui dans chaque département français, diffuseront ce que nous essayons de faire à Paris, n’importe quel enfant de seize ans, si pauvre soit-il, puisse avoir un véritable contact avec son patrimoine national et avec la gloire de l’esprit de l’humanité” (Malraux cited in Looseley, 1995, p. 41). Named by Philippe Urfalino (1996) “machines à reconstruire le social” (p. 183), the houses hold the promise of democratization and access to culture for all, who would ideally be united by “l’universalité des expériences de l’humanité” with a national focus nonetheless (Urfalino, 1996, p. 327)

A strong national cultural policy required a series of interventions to the French architectural landscape. The desire to expose French citizens to the architectural masterpieces of France was translated into a series of policies and projects which involved the cleaning, restoration and conservation of the most famous monuments in France, including the Musée du Louvre and Palais de Versailles (Looseley, 1995, p. 37). Malraux's successful attempt to preserve these national monuments embodied his belief in the leading role France must play internationally. During his time in office, Mona Lisa travelled to New York and Venus de Milo to Tokyo.⁴³ Moreover, the heritage projects reflected the larger anxieties in France at a time of decolonization and immigration, a time of great change in the social and cultural structure of a nation that calls itself "une et indivisible". It seems that the more the French society was affected by post-colonial cultural diversity, the more cultural policies held tight to ideals of national identity and heritage. Consequently, such policies tend to leave outside their scope the newer immigrant populations, especially those visibly different, with customs and traditions perceived as incongruent with the values prevalent in France. The exclusive nature of the cultural democratizing process mirrored as well other social policies in France in the 1950s and 1960s, such as the building of low rent housing for new immigrants in the French *banlieue* and the structuring of the school curriculum to leave out or even to celebrate France's history of colonialism.⁴⁴

⁴³ For a full account of Mona Lisa's journey to New York, please see Lebovics, H. (1999) *Mona Lisa's escort: Andre Malraux and the reinvention of French culture*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁴⁴ For more on the intersections between education and colonialism in post-colonial France, please see Rioux, J.-P. (Ed.) (1990) *La guerre d'Algerie et les Français: Colloque de l'Institut d'histoire du temps present*. Paris: Fayard, Collective author (1993) *Memoires et enseignement de la guerre d'Algerie: Actes du colloque*. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe and La Decouverte, McCormack, J. (2006) Teaching about the Algerian War in France. In Lorcin, P. (Ed.) (2007) *Algeria and France, 1800-2000: Identity, memory, nostalgia*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

In the 1950s and 1960s, during the *trente glorieuses*⁴⁵, France was rapidly becoming a country of colonial immigration. French sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad envisioned the process of emigration as a succession of three well defined stages, corresponding with the shifting relation between the immigrants, their country of origin and France. According to Sayad, the first phase of emigration, “une émigration ordonnée,” which guaranteed the return to the country of origins of the immigrants who were brought in France to work, ended (Sayad, 1999, p. 60-7; translation mine).⁴⁶ Once the myth of retour became obsolete, the relation between immigrants and France changed as it entered the second phase of immigration, “la perte du control” (Sayad, 1999, p. 67-91). During this phase, argued Sayad, the relation between the emigrant and his country of origins became one of absence and alienation. At the same time, the immigrant cannot become a legitimate member of the new society and his new identity was constructed based on ambiguity and on invisibility. The North African immigrants in France experienced immigration differently from other non-French populations, such as Italians, Portuguese or Eastern Europeans, whose integration to French identity was considered more successful (Noiriel, 2006, p. 69-116; see also Weil, 2004; Derderian, 2004; Liauzu, 2000). The success of their integration was attributed to the cultural and religious similarities between the European immigrants and the French, which facilitated the process of assimilation. According to Patrick Weil (2004), between 1962⁴⁷ and 1973, the French government tried to stop the increasing immigration from North African countries, especially Algeria (p. 250-1). Because these *indésirables* embodied the memories of a colonial past France was hoping to forget, the

⁴⁵ Les trente glorieuses (the thirty glorious years) refers to the 1945-1975 period, which was an economic peak for France. Being one of the winners of World War II, France reconstructed itself after the Occupation using the Fordist economic model of industrial development.

⁴⁶ In *La double absence*, Abdelmalek Sayad looks particularly at the Algerian case. The three phases of emigration from Algeria Sayad identifies are the result of his observation of and interviews with members of Algerian communities in France. However, his findings can be applied to other immigrant communities within France.

⁴⁷ 1962 marks the decolonization of Algeria and the signing by France of the Evian Agreement.

presence and legal status in France of *Maghrèbins* became sites of silent and official discrimination (Fassin, 2002; Gross, 2005).

The end of the 1950s coincides with large programs of urban development of the French suburbs. Faced with new waves of permanent immigration, the French government put the bases of SONACOTRA⁴⁸, a social organization in charge with evaluating the housing situation of new immigrants and, more importantly, with the building of new homes for them, to replace the *bidonvilles*. The first *foyer* was inaugurated in 1959 in Argenteuil. The main goal of these new *foyers* was to offer a temporary residency to immigrant workers and their families in the hope that they would return to their country of origins. This apparently noble housing initiative represented for Sayad and many other scholars a measure to police the new populations by isolating them in “special” buildings at the margins of the cities. Therefore, “par lui-même, par son implantation, par son architecture, par la disposition interne de son espace, le foyer se trahit comme une résidence particulière, ayant une fonction particulière qui n’est pas seulement de loger, et destiné à des résidents particuliers” (Sayad, 1980, p. 90). Marc Bernardot (2008) recognized the humanitarian nature of this project but was critical of its reflection of colonial relations between France and its former “colonial subjects” (p. 8-11). The politics of segregation and exclusion behind the *foyers* of the 1950s and 1960s were an indication of the relations between France and its colonial and post-colonial immigrants at that time.⁴⁹ If these communities were marginal to the French society, their culture was not recognized and their

⁴⁸ SONACOTRA stands for Société nationale de construction de logements pour les travailleurs. It is governed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Between 1956 and 1962, SONACOTRA was named SONACOTRAL (Société nationale de construction de logements pour les travailleurs algériens) and was specifically designed to assign housing to Algerian immigrants. Since 2007, the organization changed its name into Adoma.

⁴⁹ For more on the history of housing projects in France, please see Bernardot, M. (2007) *Loger et déplacer les indésirables. Sociologie du logement contraint*. In Levy-Vroelant, C. (Ed.), *Logement précaire en Europe. Aux marges du palais* (pp. 286-303), Paris: L’Harmattan, Blanc-Chaléard, M. C. (2006) *Les immigrés et le logement en France depuis le XIXe siècle. Une histoire paradoxale, Hommes et migrations*, 1264, 20-35, Levy-Vroelant, C. (2004). *Le logement des migrants en France du milieu du XIXe siècle à nos jours, Historiens et géographes*, 385, 2004, 147-165.

access to French culture was equally ignored. During the following phases of cultural politics, various officials have tried to make both culture and its policies more inclusive. However, these attempts were weak and lacked political support.

Cultural policy “en crise”: the 1970s

Looseley (1995) noted that “Malraux’s departure heralded a twelve-year period of uncertainty during which the Ministry [of Culture] went in search for itself” (p. 49). Between André Malraux and the future star of cultural politics, Jack Lang, two different presidents and their cultural teams re-defined the scope and the mission of cultural politics, Georges Pompidou (1969-1974) and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing (1974-1981). The events in May 1968 made it clear to all French cultural officials that culture in France must change drastically.⁵⁰ Other social and economic conditions in the 1970s, including “the expansion of broadcasting and telecommunications technologies, the emergence of youth culture, interest in the diverse cultural identities of micro-communities...economic recession” constructed a new reality for culture and its policing (Looseley, 1995, p. 50). One of the major ideological shifts happened in the definition of the “cultural,” no longer the domain of *haute culture* but the newly conquered territory of *la culture populaire*, for the people, but, more important, by the people. Brian Rigby (1991) spoke of this shift, when “the definition of the cultural field has been vastly widened to include forms which would previously not have been considered worthy of inclusion in a cultural history of France...strip cartoons, science fiction, pop music, TV programmes – all seem to be acknowledged as entering into the cultural sphere” (p. 161; see also Ory, 1983). Jean-François

⁵⁰ For more on May 1968 in France, please see: Aron, R. (1968). *La révolution introuvable: Reflexions sur la révolution de Mai*, Paris: Fayard; Touraine, A. (1979). *May movement: Revolt and reform*, New York: Irvington Publishers; Feenberg, A. & Freedman, J. (2001). *When poetry ruled the streets: The French May events of 1968*, Albany: SUNY Press; Seidman, M. (2004). *The imaginary revolution: Parisian students and workers in 1968*, New York: Berghahn Books.

Sirinelli and Rioux spoke of the shift in values which took place in the post-1968 cultural context in a changing French society. They argued that “les années 1960 ont constitué pour ce système de valeurs une période tourbillonnaire qui a commencé à le placer en porte à faux par rapport à une société en pleine mutation (Sirinelli & Rioux, 2005, p. 339).

Access to high culture, which was the main concern for the leaders of cultural policies until the end of the 1960s was no longer a desired strategy for French culture because “the traditional culture prized by Malraux is largely irrelevant to the ‘cultural reality’ of the vast majority and certainly quite alien to the young and to some ethnic groups” (Looseley, 1995, p. 51). This new more inclusive and open vision of culture required the re-evaluation and re-imagining of Malraux’s doctrines. The new Minister of Cultural Affairs Jacques Duhamel (1971-1973) “called for a policy which facilitates individual creativity and recognizes diversity” (Looseley, 1995, p. 51; see also Urfalino, 1996, p. 243-72). Malraux’s *action culturelle* is replaced in the 1970s with *le développement culturel*. Besides making culture accessible to French populations, Duhamel targeted “la vie culturelle primaire,” which includes “architecture, design, l’environnement naturel, les mass media, la publicité” (Urfalino, 1996, p. 246). The cultural “liberation” of the 1970s decentralized the decisions making process of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs by involving local communities, municipalities and association together with “non-cultural” political organisms such as the Ministry of Education and mass media outlets such as Radio France Culture (Girard, 1997, p. 113-16). Therefore, as Ahearne (2002) summed up the ideological trends of *développement culturel*, “there is room for direct encounters with the artistic heritage envisaged by Malraux, for the demands of autonomous ‘creation’, and for the forms of animation extending to ‘the whole field of culture’” (p. 14).

The 1970s also marked the beginning of a new cultural tradition, which connected directly the structure of the Parisian landscape with the tastes of the President of the Republic, the building of *grand projets*. Pierre Cabanne (1981) spoke about Pompidou's opening of a contemporary art center on the plateau Beaubourg: "pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la République le chef de l'Etat se déclare un connaisseur, un amateur et un collectionneur d'art contemporain" (p. 247). Pompidou's successor, Giscard d'Estaing, with a more traditional taste and a focus on the preservation of French architectural culture, initiated the transformation of Gare d'Orsay into a museum famous for its French impressionist and post-impressionist collections (Looseley, 1995, p. 135; see also Collard, 1992; Jenger, 2006; Collard, 2008). Furthermore, Giscard d'Estaing initiated two other projects to be completed during the Mitterrand-Lang years: a science and industry museum and park on the site of the abattoirs La Villette and an institute for the Arab world. The diversity of these cultural projects together with the support of a strong network of *animateurs culturels* and local cultural centers speaks to the changing nature of cultural politics in France. However, the new field of culture was not inclusive enough to incorporate and recognize the colonial and post-colonial North African communities, who were not only more visible but also more aware of their marginalization.

In Sayad's conceptualization of Algerian immigration to France, the 1970s corresponded to a third stage, "une 'colonie' algérienne en France" (Sayad, 1999, p. 91-4). In this context, the myth of *retour* to the country of origins was completely replaced with the reality of a permanent residence in France. At this point, emigration brought to France women and children, creating a structure of permanence. The formation of strong diasporic networks in France did not result in the harmonization of the relations between the immigrants and the French but contributed to the formation of "petites sociétés autonomes," disconnected from other older immigrant

communities and from France as a whole. According to Noiriel (2006), this decade witnessed the birth of the second generation of immigrants, during which “l’enfant acquiert ses premiers apprentissages au sein de son milieu d’origine...les immigrants de la première génération repliés sur ‘l’entre soi’ communautaire... se heurtent aux normes dominantes du pays d’accueil” (p. 213). This is also the time when *la génération beur*, who was extremely active in claiming the colonial past of their parents in the 1980s, was born. The childhood of the future members of the *beurs et beurettes* movements was marked, according to Noiriel (2006), by “l’héroïsation du récit migratoire” and “la mythologie des origines familiales” (p. 216; see also Hargreaves, 2006). Despite remembering their arrival and establishment in France as heroic and transformative, the parents who make up the first generation of immigrants were suffering their marginal position in silence. Moreover, the clash between immigrants, who were yet to find political support and representation and the French working classes intensified even further and coincided with the disconnect between the “proletariat” and the leftist parties.

In the 1970s, as France exited the prosperous *trente glorieuses* and suffered the consequences of the oil crisis in the Middle East, the *banlieue* became the site for social struggles between those who share a working class identity and the post-colonial waves of immigrants, whose children, born on French soil, were French citizens. More and diverse individuals compete for less jobs in the big industrial complexes in suburban France. In *Rétour sur la condition ouvrière*, Stéphane Beaud and Michel Pialoux (1999) observed the gradual deterioration of the working class identity at a time of modernization and increased immigration.⁵¹ These feelings of alienation, together with fears of losing social and cultural

⁵¹ For more on the development of the French working class, please see Noiriel, G. (1986). *Les ouvriers dans la société française, 19^{ème} – 20^{ème} siècle*, Paris: Seuil; Pialoux, M. (1992). Le vieil ouvrier et la nouvelle usine. In Bourdieu, P. et al. (Eds.), *La Misère du monde*, Paris: Seuil.

repères would reach their climax in the late 1980s. However, the 1970s witnessed the origins of future instances of racism, often fuelled by the managerial class, in the workplace and in the suburban living spaces. Alain Faure (2003) looked in depth at the representations of these marginal suburban spaces in the French imaginary throughout time and concluded that “l’usage consacré dans les années 1960 et 1970, c’est bien plutôt l’association entre banlieue et ennui, et même déprime. Une idée reçue de l’époque est bien celle du grand ensemble qui rend fou” (p. 66; see also Masclet, 2006). The 1970s was the age of HLMs (*habitations à loyer modéré*) meant to house the immigrant families brought together in France by the policies of *regroupement familial*. If the *banlieue rouge* with a strong working class membership ever existed, it was now challenged by new communities with new traditions and new cultures. Many scholars have accused the French government of being “inhospitable” with the new members of the French society (MacMaster, 1997; Ben Jelloun, 1999b; Hargreaves, 2006), transforming the narrative of discrimination into the main reality of the immigrants’ lives. The 1980s witnessed major changes in the realities of the new generations of immigrants but also in the structure of cultural politics.

The Socialists and the *grands projets*: The 1980s

The era of François Mitterrand and Jack Lang brought back to power the ideals of socialist governance and opens a new and “fun” stage in the relatively dormant field of cultural politics since the times of André Malraux. Many of the cultural projects initiated by the Socialist government attempt a break with the cultural past but many also stay the same. According to Looseley (1995), “despite all the talk of radical change, therefore, Malraux’s heritage-democratization-creation trilogy was not fundamentally questioned and, like the Gaullian decade,

Lang's first ten years were to see considerable advances in high-cultural facilities" (p. 95). If Malraux's goal was democratization of high culture and heritage and Giscard d'Estaing's preference was for the preservation of heritage, Lang's new objective for cultural policy was *la création*, defined by Looseley (1999) as "new professional work" in all domains (p. 7-8; see also Caune 1992; Eling, 1999). In *Ici and Maintenant*, Mitterrand (1980) himself explained the basis of his cultural policy project, "a critical understanding of the cultural state of the country; an ethic of life based on the material and spiritual expansion of each individual; and a plan for change capable of enveloping education, information, science and art" (p. 156). Therefore, creation would become the domain not only of well established artists but of all communities who wish to take part in various forms of *action culturelle*.

Expanding the meaning of culture was not a new endeavour of cultural politics. Since the events of May 1968, presidents and ministries of culture have popularized culture allowing it to include forms of everyday cultural consumption such as television, comic strips and jazz music. Lang took this idea to a new level by creating national institutions to go along with these new fields of culture. Ahearne (2004) explained that "Jack Lang famously looked over his time in office to break down the barriers between culture and 'life itself'" (p. 125). In a famous and equally criticized speech given by Lang at a conference of culture ministers organized by UNESCO in Mexico City, the Minister stated that "art represents first and foremost an art of living...[therefore] we [the French government] are encouraging all forms of creation, and giving active support to national cultural industries in such domains as cinema, publishing and record production" (Lang qtd. in Ahearne, 2002[1982], p. 116). Lang's generous and "fun" cultural programme was reflected in Lang's public image of a cultural leader presenting himself as "the smart-suited intellectual, socially minded entrepreneur à la Bernard Tapie" (Looseley,

1995, p. 158). Jean-Paul Enthoven described “le style Lang” as “boy-scoutisme charmeur, saturé de convictions; look d’éternel Chevalier à la rose – irrite autant qu’il séduit” (Enthoven cited in Looseley, 1995, p. 159; see also Desneux, 1990; Caune, 1992). Lang’s desire to be seen as a supporter of the youth (including *la génération beur*), their culture and their creative capacity was a significant building block for *le tout-culturel*. *Le tout-culturel* was, at the beginning of the 1980s, a largely pejorative media label for Lang’s policies. By the end of the 1980s, this label was descriptive of the actions of the Ministry of Culture and was embraced as a revitalization of traditional cultural politics (Looseley, 1995, p. 127).

This new vision of cultural politics, according to Lang, connected three main dimensions: the popular, the national and the economic. In the same Mexico speech, Lang (1982[2002]) defined the trajectory of the new French cultural politics as promoting the liberation of people’s “energies”, “imagination” and “forces of invention” (p. 112-15). In the music field, for example, Lang initiated a number of measures meant to aid young and independent musicians: the creation and availability of rehearsal facilities; the opening of Le Zenith, the first rock music-only concert hall in Paris (part of the *Cité de la musique* project)⁵²; the development of copyright laws which entitled both record producers and performers to earnings when their records were played on the air. In his policies, Lang did not refer to *création* in general, but to national creation at a time of cultural crisis due to North American cultural industries. Urfalino (1996) observed how the 1980s socialist cultural policies have an anti-American and pro-national flavor. In the Mexico speech, Lang (1982[2002]) spoke of cultural imperialism as a damaging force that “flattens national cultures” and “conveys a uniform lifestyle that some [the US] would want to impose on the entire planet” (p. 114-15). However, argued Urfalino, “lorsqu’il revient de

⁵² For an in-depth look at the development of Cité de la Musique, please see Eling, K. (1999). *The politics of cultural policy in France*, New York: Macmillan.

Mexico, où il a pour une énième fois condamné l'impérialisme culturel américain, Jack Lang rapporte cette fois dans ses bagages un signe d'égalité entre économie et culture...il ne s'agit plus seulement de condamner la contamination de la culture par l'économie, mais seulement sa monopolisation par une seule nation" (p. 318). Looseley (1995) pointed out that for the first time in French cultural history, the Cour Carée at the Louvre was utilized as a site for a fashion show, a practice which would become common during and after Lang's years in power (p. 126). Therefore, a site that is financially and historically priceless, the Louvre, was paired with a cultural space which promises great financial profit, the fashion industry.⁵³

While Lang was involved in democratizing even further the field of culture and in legitimizing previously "unworthy" cultural industries, François Mitterrand was working on some projects of his own, the *grand projets (grand travaux)* or the "architecture of power" (Collard, 2008, p. 1). The president's involvement in building monumental edifices was not new in France. Both Pompidou and Giscard d'Estaing left significant marks on the Parisian landscape via Musée d'Orsay and the Centre Georges Pompidou. However, argued Collard (2008) "although previous projects had certainly been 'presidential', the nature and scale of Mitterrand's grandiose building programme far exceeded that of his predecessors" (p. 197-98). François Chaslin (1985) calls architecture a "curious symptom of the monarchical character" of France, thinking of the legacy of kings such as Louis XIV or Louis XVI on the French architectural patrimoine (p. 12; see also Patriat, 1998, p. 65-89). Similarly, he asked, would there be a "style Mitterrand" in modern French architecture? If such a specific style did not materialize, a certain idea of the city did. In an interview with Catherine Clement, Mitterrand

⁵³ For more on Lang's vision of culture in the service of economics, please see Caune, J. (1992). *La culture en action - De Vilar a Lang: Le sens perdu*, Grenoble: PUG; Hunter, M. (1990). *Les jours les plus Lang*, Paris: Odile Jacob.; Girard, A. (1997). French cultural policy from André Malraux to Jack Lang: A tale of modernization, *The International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 4(1), 107-125.

explained that “bâtir, c’est répondre à une utilité, proposer un contenant pour qu’il y ait un contenu. C’est créer, c’est composer un nouveau paysage pour la ville, un corps familier pour les millions d’hommes qui vivent là” (Mitterrand cited in Clement, p. 289). Therefore, architecture was meant to inspire those who live in the city and to satisfy some utilitarian needs at the same time. It was intended to show not only the already existing greatness of France but the potential for a national rebirth. In a series on *grands projects* in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, titled “Parce que je suis amoureux de Paris” (Because I am in love with Paris), Mitterrand (1984) spoke of his desire to “modeler le regard, la mémoire, l’imagination des générations et des générations...Ce n’est pas une ambition pour moi, mais pour la France” (p. 68-9). During Mitterrand’s years, France gained: a ‘Grand’ Louvre with a glass pyramid; an opera for the people in Place de la Bastille; a Cité de la Musique; a museum of science and technology; a new Ministry of Finances in Bercy; l’arche de la Defense; a park in the Northern limit of the city, La Villette; le Musée d’Orsay; even an Institut du Monde Arabe.⁵⁴

Some more skeptical critics did not see the seven projects, three of them inherited from Giscard d’Estaing, as a purely altruistic endeavor. The potential Pharaonic aspirations visible in the choice of a glass pyramid for the Louvre resulted in the coining of the term “Tonton-Khamon” by *Le Canard Enchaîné*. Another preferred nickname for the President-“bâtitteur” was “Miterramses I”, coined by historian of architecture François Chaslin (Fierro, 2002, p. 175; see also James and Tiersky, 2003). Jacques Renard (1987) posed a series of questions which best describe the debates surrounding the presence of these new architectural sites in Paris, “did it [the programme of grands projets] serve to enhance France’s national prestige, or was it the

⁵⁴ The last four projects, the Défense, the Parc de la Villette, the Musée d’Orsay and l’IMA were inherited from President Giscard d’Estaing. Mitterrand’s role in the development of the Musée d’Orsay is minimal, the museum being recognized as the d’Estaing’s contribution to the art scene. For more details on the specifics of each project, please see Chaslin, F. (1985). *Les Paris de François Mitterrand*, Paris: Gallimard, Favier, P. & Martin-Roland, M. (1997) *La décennie Mitterrand*, Paris: Seuil

equivalent of a royal whim? Does it represent an ill-conceived waste of resources in a period of economic difficulty, or a technological shop window for major French companies?” (p. 129). Even if the stated goals of these projects were to democratize culture, increase creativity and solidify French identity around culture, each *grand projet* generated a series of debates which reflected larger anxieties within French society. For example, the modernization of Louvre by the addition of Pei’s glass pyramid was described by Chaslin (1985) as “une querelle des anciens et modernes” (p. 124). Referring to architect and political militant Roland Castro’s comments, Looseley stated that “the controversy was more political than aesthetic, symbolic of the eternal struggle in France between progressivism and conservatism” (p. 149). Both Looseley (1995; 1999) and Collard (2008) adopted a more balanced view of Mitterrand’s romance with his *grand projets*. Even if they see the validity of the criticism against monarchic and “megalomaniac” tendencies in Mitterrand’s architectural endeavors, they also see the projects as part of larger contexts and realities. For Looseley (1995), “the projects are also bound up with the Left’s entire cultural policy in power” (p. 151), while for Collard (2008), “the highly personalized manner of organizing the execution of the *grands travaux* was motivated by demonstrable concerns to ensure that the programme would not fall foul of the many obstacles that threatened it” (p. 206-7).

In the fervour of redefining France as a leading cultural power in the world, Mitterrand, Lang and their cultural team failed to observe what France represented at that time – a melting pot, *un creuset*, according to Noiriel (1987). The focus of cultural politics was still on rebuilding a republican France and not on incorporating the increasingly multicultural character of the French population to France’s cultural future. This does not mean that the many post-colonial communities in France were not making themselves visible through various venues or

that they lacked local support structures. On the contrary, the eighties was the decade of *la génération beur* and of the Marche pour l'égalité et contre la discrimination (March for equality and against discrimination, 1983); it was also the decade when France's colonial past started to be addressed in main official venues, such as mass media, universities and conferences.

However, addressing social inequalities and promoting cultural diversity were not yet among the many missions of the Ministry of Culture. For example, as explained in Chapter 1, the Institut du Monde Arabe was not initially intended to communicate with the immigrant populations or with the French citizens of North African origins.

The 1980s represents a crucial time in the relation between France and its immigrants, being the decade dominated by vocal protests against discrimination, rising racism due to a powerful radical right discourse and increased violence in the *banlieue*. At the same time, the encounters between older colonial immigrants, the new post-colonial generations of French citizens of immigrant origins (*génération beur*) and French start to escape the boundaries predicted by scholars and created by French officials. The 1980s were contradictory because increasing instances of racism and discrimination were opposed and challenged by cultural encounters between members of different communities. In 1983, the second generation of immigrants from former French colonies, *la génération beur*, organized the first national anti-racist protest in France. The Marche *des beurs* protested against racism in general but it spoke particularly to the many instances of discrimination experienced by North African immigrants of first and second generation and to the absence of colonialism in national memory (Hargreaves, 1997, 2006; Beaud & Pialoux, 2003). Also in 1983, le Front National won its first local election. Following an extreme right ideology, the Front displayed a strong anti-immigration platform, constructing the immigrant, especially the Muslim, as a menace to French society and aiming to

deny immigrant populations access to national history (Mayer and Perrineau, 1996). Moreover, the first riots in the French *banlieue* started in 1979 in Lyon, causing concern about the integration policies imposed by the French government on newcomers (Noiriel, 1988; Weil, 1991; Muchielli and Le Goaziou, 2005).

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, certain common traits can be observed in the development of cultural policies in France. One major goal of these policies was to provide access to culture to those previously deprived of this “*privilège*”. Therefore, the main intended beneficiary of these policies has been, since the 1930s, the French people, more specifically, the working classes and the post-WWII newly formed middle class, considered culturally poor. One could correctly argue that cultural politics in France had as a main goal social (and cultural) inclusion. However, the Ministry of Culture, this new missionary institution, failed to take into account the shifting composition of the French community of citizens and their desire for access to French culture, proving, in fact a social exclusionary agenda. While I agree that we witness instances of exclusion in the debates and initiatives of the official politics of culture, I also argued that social exclusion is not a proposed mission of the new Ministry but a reflection of the general tendency in the French political sphere to keep national and colonial histories separate.

The strict definition of culture, even after it was coupled with the social, mirrors the official fears of dealing with colonial and post-colonial memories. Therefore, “culture” happened to be another political space where the tensions within French society became visible and which denied a proper place within the cultural heritage for colonial memories. I believe that a critical look at the past of French cultural policy must include observations of its evolution in close connection with France’s colonial history, with the colonial tensions which determined the course of culture and with the work of other institutions which predate the Ministry of Culture,

such as the Ministry of Colonies. As I argued previously in this chapter, cultural events such as the colonial exhibitions organized in Paris and Marseille have rarely been incorporated into the history of cultural politics in France, even if their ultimate goal was to introduce France to the cultures of the colonized nations and, consequently, to define French culture in opposition to the “other”. To what extent can we observe the legacy of such *grands travaux* of the colonial past in the *grand projets* of the present? While *national* cultural politics were being produced and challenged, another set of cultural institutions and museums were created in France with the main goal of displaying the “other”. The destinies of these two main areas of cultural intervention rarely intersect in the literature on French cultural policy. On even fewer occasions we can encounter discussions of the place of the Institut du Monde Arabe in French cultural politics and among cultural venues intended for the display of the “other”.

Conclusions: Rewriting French cultural policy

This chapter showed that French cultural policy incorporates projects with a national goal, meant to preserve a republican French identity as inherited from the times of the French Revolution. Such cultural policies often forget to account for the changes taking place within the French community of citizens due to colonialism and post-colonial immigration. In the previous chapter, “Inevitable encounters: From colonial exhibitions to post-colonial institutions”, I looked historically and critically at the development of a visual order about the “other” in various cultural circumstances. I argue that these two histories must encounter each other in order to explain the post-1959 exclusionary practices observed within the cultural policies proposed and implemented by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Furthermore, the various cultural projects organized by the Ministry of Colonies and other institutions involved with the colonial

government in France, especially the colonial exhibitions, should be incorporated to the history of French cultural policy.

The discussion about French cultural policy allows the positioning of the Institut du Monde Arabe within the political and cultural context which produced it. The decision to build the IMA is in many ways a paradox. The institution is centered on Arab culture but it is largely part of a group of *grands projets* intended to glorify the role of France within a global context; the IMA glorifies the classical achievements of *le monde arabe* but excludes references to recent historical events, such as colonialism; the institution is dedicated to Arab culture but is not primarily intended for the Arab communities in France. Inaugurated in the midst of the *mémoire de la crise coloniale* in the 1980s, the IMA rejects its place as a post-colonial institution critical of colonial history. At the same time, the IMA's ideology and mission shifts with every new president and in contact with broader debates regarding colonialism and post-colonialism. The diversity of spaces which compose the IMA also contributes to the fluidity of the institution and its possibility to change. The following three chapters will explore three different spaces at the IMA and their relation with colonial memory and cultural encounters.

CHAPTER 6

Spaces of display: Silencing colonialism

The main moments of public communication at the Institut du Monde Arabe take place in the museum(s) – real and virtual – and the *grandes expositions*. As the official mission of the institute is to build bridges and facilitate communication between cultures, such ideologies are primarily embedded in these exhibitionary spaces, which are also the first encounters between the visitors and the institution. The IMA's spaces of display present chronologically the history of Arab culture and civilization to the French audiences which have an interest in *le monde arabe*. In this chapter, I deconstruct the communicative practices and techniques within the permanent museum, the Qantara virtual museum and the temporary *grandes expositions* in relation with colonial history. In each space, I will look for: (1) the presence of encounters in general, as an exhibitionary technique; (2) the incorporation of colonial contacts to the history of *le monde arabe*; (3) and the construction of knowledge about the Arab world. Through the analysis of these three spaces, I will show that, while they celebrate classical Arab thought and art, they often exclude references to European colonialism.

The absence of the colonial moment from the history of the Arab world is itself an instance of communication which indicates the interconnectedness between cultural institutions, official discourses and larger social anxieties. The rare occurrences when colonial stories are present within these exhibitionary spaces reveal the tensions between processes of forgetting and remembering but also the difficulty of imposing one discourse in a complex and elusive cultural institution such as the IMA. This tension between the absence and presence of colonial themes is the focus on this chapter. I argue that each of these three venues can be analyzed in relation to what they forget to communicate about colonial encounters: their disruptive character to the

narrative of historic continuity advocated within the museological space; their impact on the colonized cultures and societies; and their legacy in post-colonial France.

Reading the spaces of display: A few methodological thoughts

This analytical chapter investigates the main spaces of display at the Institut du Monde Arabe in search for two main narratives: colonialism and modernity. I observe each of these three spaces in relation to the presence of colonial stories and the exhibitionary strategies for “modernizing” the cultures on display. I start the analytical section of my dissertation with a discussion of these three exhibitionary spaces because they rank the highest in the hierarchy of the Institut. The IMA is, first and foremost, “un musée des musées arabes,” attracting audiences primarily with its permanent collection and its highly publicized *grandes expositions*. The visitors are invited by the promotional brochures, the website and the building itself to engage primarily with these main museological spaces and temporary events. I argue that despite the efforts to guide audiences towards these blockbuster cultural productions, other spaces get in the way, distorting the clearly organized narratives and stories. This occurs throughout the complex network of communicative spaces which compose the institution.

In “A Dialogic Response to the Problematized Past,” Miranda J. Brady (2009) explained that the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington D.C. presents itself as a dialogic museum and “it attempts to convince visitors that the version of “truth” that has been privileged by traditional museums is only one possible version among many” (p. 142). In theory, the museum does not claim to possess absolute knowledge about the cultures of American Indians by constantly offering the visitors invitations “to argue with the museum” and by fostering a strategy of collaboration with the native constituency (Brady, 2009, p. 142-3). Despite the various “residual practices and contradictions” Brady identified in this chapter, the

NMAI strives to be an inclusive space for “giving voice” and “multicultural dialogue” (Brady, 2009, p. 133). Therefore, the process of communication between the various communities, objects, technologies and architectural spaces at the NMAI is meant to be open, unexpected, contradictory and challenging.

The IMA, however, defines communication differently. The process of sharing the cultures of the Arab nations with French audiences does not encourage argument with the museum. Pre-colonial intellectual and artistic contacts between Arab and European cultures which highlight the excellence of thought and art are celebrated in the museum’s displays, the textual content of the Qantara virtual museum and the themes of the *grandes expositions*. However, the disruption to this collaborative production of knowledge, caused by colonialism, is never addressed. The preferred reading of the museological displays with an emphasis on continuity and collaboration in matters of knowledge and intellectual production might be resisted by certain communities which compose the French public. The French public is composed not only of individuals with a long French ancestry but also of French citizens of immigrant origins from former colonies and from areas which had no colonial contacts with France. The diversity of this public will create a myriad of interpretations and readings of the proposed spaces. Dialogues and encounters will happen despite some attempts to guide the audience towards a celebration of the European-Arab encounter.

The museum of the Institut du Monde Arabe: How colonialism never happened

The dialogic mission of the museum

The museum of the Institut du Monde Arabe, “le musée des musées arabe,” represents the main space for the display of Arab culture. According to Bassem El-Jisr (1987), Director of the IMA in 1987, “en faisant du musée d’Art Arabo-islamique, l’un des pôles de l’Institut du Monde

Arabe, ses fondateurs ont voulu marquer deux aspects essentiels pour un dialogue des cultures, la connaissance historique et la sensibilisation esthétique et intellectuelle” (p. 9). The themes found in the foundational documents of the IMA which reference communication, cooperation and better knowledge of Arab cultures in France are also embedded in the goals of the museum. The museological space has not been altered since its inauguration in 1987, which makes the analysis of the museum in relation with the mission statement of the IMA even more relevant. Other spaces in the institution have been modified in the past twenty years, but the museum remains unchanged, reflecting the initial ideological concerns of the IMA.

The main narrative developed at the birth of the IMA is also found in the mission of the museum – “faire connaître au grand public, français et européen, l’apport arabo-musulman aux arts, à la science et aux autres domaines du savoir, tel est l’objectif de ce nouveau musée qui s’inscrit dans la mission de l’Institut” (El-Jisr, 1987, p. 9). Christiane Naffah (1987), the chief-curator of the museum, also commented on the function of the museum in relation with its institutional context, “l’Institut est né d’une volonté de partenariat entre la France et les pays arabes. De par sa conception, il favorise une dialectique interdisciplinaire, qui rend au musée sa fonction de lieu d’échange et de réflexion” (p. 12). Further, “il devient aussi la pierre angulaire de la culture arabe dans le tissu urbain parisien” (Naffah, 1987, p. 12). As a space for “exchange,” the museum favours “the encounter” as a strategy for display and telling of Arab history, emphasizing the multiple contacts which produced the Arab civilization. Even the project for the museum was developed by “une équipe franco-arabe, dont la dualité a permis de porter sur cette culture le double regard intérieur-extérieur” (Naffah, 1987, p. 14).

The organization of the museum follows these ideological concerns. The museum takes the visitor through three floors, which correspond to three different stages in the formation of

Arab culture and society. The displays on the seventh floor of the museum are grouped under the title of “La période ante-islamique” (The pre-Islamic period), which coincides with “une présentation de pièces archéologiques [qui] trace les jalons de l’histoire ancienne du monde arabe” (Musée des musées arabes, para. 10). The artefacts in this section commemorate the glorious ages of Ancient Carthage (modern Tunisia), the times of Roman domination and the artistic achievements of l’Arabie Heureuse (modern Yemen). Funeral stones, mosaics, alabaster heads and Christian monograms tell the story of the birth of Islam. The sixth floor hosts “la formation de l’art islamique, les sciences et les expositions-dossiers,” continuing the history of the Arabo-Islamic civilization since the death of the Prophet until the tenth century. This is the time of the two powerful dynasties of the Omayyad and Abbasids that put the foundations of rich cultural centers such as Baghdad and Damascus. This floor also includes a vast collection of astrolabes, manuscripts and scientific instruments which symbolize the apogee of Arab sciences in the 9th century. Lastly, the visitor must descend to the fourth floor, where the artefacts on display correspond to “l’épanouissement de l’art arabo-musulman” from the 10th to 18th century. This level is organized according to geographical areas, including objects from Maghreb and Andalusia; Syria and Egypt; and Iran, Ottoman Turkey and Mongol India. The journey concludes with a display of carpets, “meuble par excellence de la tente comme du palais” (Musée des musées arabes, para. 12). The visitor is invited to walk the museum in a chronological way, with every new floor uncovering a new period of the Arab-Islamic civilization. Once the visitor enters the museum, her journey is guided by smaller and larger galleries connected by staircases and hallways. The mapping of the different artistic, scientific and urban-architectural achievements of the Arab world is meant to offer the walker a general overview of Arab culture. Therefore, “grâce à un déploiement judicieux de ses collections, le

musée a pour ambition de donner à ses visiteurs un aperçu de la civilisation arabo-musulmane et de son art, en montrant ses sources, sa formation puis son épanouissement” (Musée des musées arabes, para. 6).

The educational scope of the museum was explained briefly by Nassef (1987) – “vecteur d’une compréhension du monde arabe et de la civilisation arabo-islamique, le musée de l’Institut a pour objectif, de donner à voir des œuvres et de donner a comprendre une civilisation” (p. 14). As noted in the foundational documents, at the IMA, the encounters with the cultural practices of Arab communities also have the scope of changing the negative images the French population might have about Arabs. According to the “Mission de l’Institut”, “les Français, en effet, connaissaient toujours mal la culture et la civilisation arabes; ils s’en formaient des images incomplètes, fausses, parfois même péjoratives” (Institut du Monde Arabe, 1999, p. 3). To correct such images, the museum would introduce the publics to the intellectual and artistic richness of the Arab civilization. However, despite these noble intentions, none of the documents I consulted explained the roots of such stereotypes in the French imaginary about the Arab communities. The silence around this supposed imaginary about the “other” corresponds with the overall absence of colonial themes from the IMA. If we are to assume that the images the leadership of the IMA is hoping to combat by educating the French about “real” Arab cultures refer to contemporary post-colonial representations of Arabs, why are the stories told by the museum located in a pre-colonial past? As discussed in Chapter 5, the representations of Arab cultures in France today bear the legacy of the sophisticated and complex visual politics developed by the French government during colonialism. If the French government, using the tools of cultural policy, wishes to “take back” some of these representations by focusing instead

on the high moments of the Arab civilization, the more contemporary colonial and post-colonial depictions and translations of the “other” are not really contested but, on the contrary, omitted.

The media discourses constructing the perpetual financial crisis at the IMA as an example of cultural incompatibility and the accusations of cultural misrepresentation in the IMA’s displays are partially generated by the dual position of Arab nations of being in control of their display and lacking power over the portrayal of their own cultures. Being on display is nothing new for Arab cultures as Orientalist literature, paintings and colonial exhibitions have created a rich culture of representations of the “other” for the citizens in the *métropole*. In reference to Orientalism, Edward Said (1979) claims that “the governing verb is *show*, which here gives us to understand that the Arabs display themselves (willingly or unwillingly) to and for expert scrutiny...there is a peculiarly privileged position occupied by the Western Orientalist, whose representative function is precisely *to show* what needs to be seen” (p. 247, emphasis in original). The IMA museum is designed *to show* aspects of Arab cultures to a French audience in a post-colonial context. The challenges of this endeavour come from the history of such representations which carry the legacy of Orientalism and colonialism. This fear of post-colonial misrepresentation or touching of “sensible” issues results in a very cautious and respectable display of the history of Arab civilizations, which is ordered according to “Western” expectations.

Walking the museum

The entrance to the museum on the 7th floor of the IMA is made entirely of glass and adorned with Arabic-inspired decorative motifs. The visitor is not allowed to take photographs and this rule is rigorously observed by the museum guards⁵⁵. At the very beginning of the

⁵⁵ Most museums in Europe and North America allow pictures to be taken of the museum’s permanent collection. Because the IMA’s collection is borrowed from other French cultural institutions, the visitors are not allowed to take pictures of the artifacts on display in the IMA’s museum.

permanent exhibition, a large map enumerates and locates the countries⁵⁶ which compose *le monde arabe* and which are also the founding members of the Institut. The walk through the first museum gallery leads to the discovery of a series of artefacts dating back to the “antiquité et période pré-islamique” with a focus on Mesopotamia, Carthage and Syria, “terres de vieilles civilisations” (Panel 2, n.d.⁵⁷). These objects which range from terracotta urns and fragments of funeral stones to utensils made from ostrich eggs trace the beginnings of the Arab civilization and Islamic religion. This visual enumeration of objects which are the best of their kind reflects James Clifford’s meditations on “majority museums” which displays chronologically the best and most authentic works of a culture or civilization with little information about the context or social value of the exhibited objects (Clifford, 1991). For most part, the objects are left to speak for themselves, asking the visitor to observe similarities or discrepancies between the various artistic styles and also to guess what decorative elements allowed for the grouping of these art objects under the category of “pre-islamic” art. The objects on display show the influences of Roman, Christian and Phoenician art on Islamic cultures.

Even if the specific stories of each object are not highly elaborate, the first text panel in the gallery offers a general definition of “la beauté en islam, un voile fragile et périssable dont les motifs étrangers – hors de ce monde évoquent une présence invisible et une splendeur qui n’est pas d’ici-bas” (Panel 1, n.d.). This rather orientalized definition of Islamic art creates a separation between Western culture and Islamic art, “qui n’est pas d’ici-bas”. Therefore, I suggest that exchanges and encounters take place within this confined space, which is

⁵⁶ The countries listed on the panel are Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar

⁵⁷ I define as “Panels” in my citations the text panels which accompany the objects of display in the IMA museum. Each object is accompanied by a label with explanatory information (type of object, date and material). On each museum floor, two or more panels offer brief complementary information on the period when the objects were produced and on the area of provenience.

constructed as the “other” and in isolation from “ce monde,” which is the external objective reality of the French visitor. By imposing this clear binary from the beginning as a general framing narrative for the exhibition, the curators position the different cultural encounters outside contacts with European cultures. This short text, which comprises almost all elements which Edward Said identified as characteristics of the Oriental – foreignness, otherness, exoticism, mystery, childishness, submissiveness – suggests the visitor a certain reading of the permanent exhibition. This reading is based on a discourse which combines Oriental rhetoric, positioning Arab cultures as “the other”, with elements of modernity.

The knowledge about Arab cultures develops chronologically, geographically and progressively. If the seventh floor is designated to inform the visitors about pre-Islamic times, the sixth floor of the museum focuses on the formation of Islamic arts and on the development of sciences. Gyan Prakash (2004[1996]) wrote that “like historicism that collects and arranges discrepant histories in History, museums have wrested fragments from elsewhere to reassemble and resemble the story of Man” (p. 209). The author made reference to the Lahore Museum in Punjab as described by Rudyard Kipling in the novel *Kim* (1901). In *Kim*, the museum contained a collection of “Greco-Buddhist sculptures, friezes of figures in relief, fragments of statues and slabs, books, manuscripts and maps” which indicate the Western bias of collecting and display (Prakash, 2004[1996], p. 211. While distanced in time from colonialism, the museum at the IMA displays in a similar manner, offering physical evidence for the chronological stages of development of the Arab civilization. Therefore, the gallery on the sixth floor becomes the stage for encounters between great dynasties of the Arab world, which produce a new culture of luxury and opulence replacing “la simplicité bédouine,” and scientific discoveries essential to Western knowledge. The two dynasties which encounter each other in chronological succession on the

sixth floor of the IMA are the Omayyad and the Abbasid, both highlighted for architectural grandeur and scientific achievements, two knowledge areas highly praised by Western modern thought.

Science occupies a significant place within the modern structure of knowledge and the importance of science is reflected in the space allocated to Arab scientific production in the museum. The fusion of categories of knowledge such as mathematics, astronomy and medicine, the three scientific areas developed significantly by the Arab intellectuals and savants during the Omayyad and Abbasid dynasties is the main theme of this gallery. The fifth text panel explains that during the eighth and ninth centuries, “maisons pour savants” were created by royal bureaucrats in the great urban centers such as Damascus, Samarra and Baghdad. In these “maisons,” scientists and linguists tried to decipher scientific knowledge inherited from the Greeks, Babylonians and Indians. During these two centuries, according to the text on the same panel, Arab language becomes the language of knowledge and science. Great emphasis is placed on the fact that Arab intellectuals did not only translate scientific information but, most importantly, added to it and improved it.⁵⁸ Therefore, the process of translation of scientific treaties inherited from the Greek Empire “n’est pas une simple transmission de la pensée, mais ça démontre originalité et innovation” (Panel 5, 2010). This idea of translation and innovation is stated on the IMA website, according to which “les princes, en encourageant les recherches dans des domaines aussi divers que les mathématiques, l’astronomie, la médecine ou la physique ont

⁵⁸ This aspect of knowledge transmission between Greeks and Arabs seems to be a “controversy” within the academic community which works with the IMA. While I was in Paris (Summer 2009) doing research at the IMA, the 14 Mai Jeudi de l’IMA, “Les Arabes et la Grèce Les enjeux d’une controverse” addressed this issues. The need for this debate was generated by the publication of a volume by Sylvain Gouguenheim who claims that transmission of scientific knowledge happened directly between Greeks and Romans, eliminating the Arab interventions

conduit les savants arabes à traduire et enrichir les savoirs hérités de l'Antiquité, ensuite largement diffusés en Occident" (Musée des Musées Arabes, para. 11).

If pre-Islamic art was exemplified through objects of high artistic value, Islamic scientific thought is displayed through a collection of mathematical and astronomical instruments centered on the astrolabe. The IMA houses one of the most significant collections of astrolabes in the world. The astrolabe is an astronomic instrument invented during the Hellenistic world and developed by medieval Islamic scholars valued primarily for its scientific purpose but also for their aesthetic qualities. Within the museum, the collection of astrolabes is displayed in transparent glass cases, the objects being suspended at the eye level and juxtaposed on the glass wall which opens towards the Seine. In this context, the astrolabe becomes a symbol of scientific discovery but also an art object to be admired for its artistic beauty. The selection of the most representative objects to explain the development of scientific thought corresponds with the practice of displaying knowledge adopted by "majority museums". The intense participation of Arab scholars and savants in matters of science legitimizes the existence of the IMA within a Western context. The focus on fragments of knowledge produced by the Arab world also limits the types of encounters addressed in the exhibitionary space.

The visitors leave the sixth floor and continue their journey to the last section of the museum, situated on the fourth floor. This large gallery reflects the last chronological phase of development of the Arab civilization, divided based on the geographical provenance of the objects on display. The three groups of "dynasties musulmanes" depicted by the exhibition are: les dynasties musulmanes du Xe au XVe siècle en Espagne, Afrique du Nord et Proche-Orient (Panel 6, n.d.), les dynasties musulmanes du Xe au XVe siècle en Orient (Panel 7, n.d.) and "l'âge d'or des empires" du XVIe au XIXe siècle, comprised of Iran, Ottoman Turkey and

Mongol Indian (Panel 8, n.d.). Each geographical area is assigned a long display table covered in glass which houses a variety of artefacts significant to each area. The IMA website informs that “toutes les pièces présentées ici témoignent de la perfection technique atteinte par les artisans musulmans dans tous les domaines de l’art: céramique, bois, métal, verre...” (Musée des musées arabes, para. 12). The three text panels offer factual information about the dynasties that ruled a particular area during the period of time highlighted in this gallery. For example, the visitors find out that Maghreb was occupied by the Arabs in 710, while the two main dynasties, the Almoravides (1056-1147) and the Almohads (1130-1269) perfected several architectural practices, such as the building of colossal and luxurious mosques. A significant section of the fourth floor gallery is dedicated to “le tapis dans le monde musulman,” defined briefly as “espace sacralisé pour la prière...[et] un petit monde” (Panel 9). This is where the chronology of the Arab civilization ends, with the very brief explanation that the end of the great Arab empires happens at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.

What is absent from this collection of cultural encounters which produced the great Arab civilization is the encounter with the European cultures, which disrupted traditional systems of knowledge and disturbed local cultures and communities. Within this set of encounters, the most disruptive is colonialism. Accordingly, the most significant absence in the museological space is represented by colonialism. Not all Arab countries have been affected by French colonialism but for a significant number of nations, especially in North and West Africa, colonialism is the most prominent disruption in recent history. The progressive and chronological process of formation of the Arab civilization century resulted in the formation of nation states. However, colonialism disrupted this process by generating a rapid and violent un-making of national spaces and communities. The politics of European empires are part of the history of *le monde arabe* and the

actions of different colonial powers on Arab states dictate the post-colonial map of encounters between France and its former colonies in North Africa. This ending of the permanent exhibition omits this significant aspect of Arab history and excludes the colonial moment from the formation of Arab cultures. The efforts of the curators of the main museum to make Arab culture familiar to French audiences is translated into a respectful and coherent narration about decorative arts, scientific objects and exotic textiles. The types of encounters included in the exhibitionary space construct *le monde arabe* as a unitary cultural structure composed of harmonious internal contacts. These internal contacts generate the rise and fall of empires, the transfer and production of knowledge and the creation of an artistic language specific to the Arab world.

Virtual knowledge: Mediterranean encounters

A recent addition to the IMA exhibitionary space, Qantara: Patrimoine méditerranéen, traversées d'Orient et d'Occident (Qantara: Mediterranean Patrimony between East and West) offers a more dialogic and interactive model for the display and interpretation of *le monde arabe*. This cultural initiative represents the collaborative work of seven countries (Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Spain and France⁵⁹) whose histories intersect and communicate within the space of the Mediterranean Basin. Qantara has both a physical and a virtual component. The project was initiated in 2008 with a series of multimedia interactive exhibitions in all seven partner countries and culminated with the inauguration of the Qantara virtual

⁵⁹ The partner institutions in each country are Institut du Monde Arabe (France), Ministère de la Culture – Direction Générale des Antiquités (Lebanon), Département des Antiquités (Jordan), Fondation El Legado Andalusi (Spain), Institut National du Patrimoine (Tunisia), Direction du Patrimoine Culturel (Morocco), Ministère de la Culture (Algeria), Egypt and Syria are invited partners

museum in 2009⁶⁰. Complementary to the temporary exhibition and the virtual museum, the leaders of this project published a comprehensive catalogue which follows thematically the content of the exhibition and of the virtual museum.

The website of Qantara explains in detail the mission of this project, “[qui] veut construire ou plutôt consolider le pont entre le nord et le sud, entre l’est et l’ouest de la Méditerranée” (“Projet”, para. 3). A large geographical area with common cultural, political and religious characteristics, the Mediterranean Basin becomes the loose identity thread between Arab and European cultures, including France. These “other” cultural communities are no longer positioned as the “other” due to the network of inter-cultural encounters which blurs the divides displayed within the permanent collection. According to this new narratives constructed around the development of civilizations, “ce projet permet d’apprécier la circulation des objets, des arts et des idées, de prendre la mesure de leurs origines souvent mêlées” (“Un projet Euromed”, para. 5). The international team of scholars, curators and designers who put together this project understands the Mediterranean space as “une Méditerranée fière et heureuse de sa diversité, adossée à l’Europe, à l’Afrique et au Proche-Orient, et apte à se placer au premier rang des nouvelles entités mondiales” (“Un projet Euromed”, para. 7). This celebration of diversity and cultural contacts does not signify that the IMA’s dominant narrative about France’s colonial past is ready to surface. “The colonial question” is still one of the major absences within these new spaces of display. The partner countries are willing to discuss pre-colonial cultural encounters and challenge the chronological sharing of knowledge but these new dialogues do not eliminate dominant museological practices.

⁶⁰ The virtual address of Qantara is <http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/index.php> and the website can be accessed also through the IMA website.

The Qantara exhibition which was on display on the sixth floor of the IMA in 2009 for a period of six months offered an interactive space to the visitors, who were invited to select the information they wished to access through the use of technology. No longer required to follow a prescribed trajectory throughout the museum, the visitors could select the order in which to access information about various aspects of Arab culture, such as urbanism, war culture or art. However, the different technological hubs within the exhibition fall behind the technologically mediated spaces at other North American museums such as the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC (see Brady, 2009). During my several visits of the Qantara exhibition, I attempted to use the technological outlets, comprised of large television screens and digital information kiosks. At the very beginning of the exhibition, a touch screen monitor invited the visitor to explore the website of the Qantara virtual museum. Despite several attempts, I repeatedly failed to access the website due to general Internet malfunctions, internal errors or slow connectivity. During the one instance when my attempts were successful the website worked very slowly and froze as a new page was loading. Besides this monitor, the exhibition contains five large television screens, each of them equipped with two sets of headphones, so two visitors can view and listen to the same information simultaneously. The main problem with this rather simple arrangement of technological devices was the inconsistent volume programmed for each television screen. The very low volume of certain recordings contrasted with the very high volume of the neighbouring ones, creating a clash of sounds making the information difficult to hear and follow. Several times during my visits, I noticed that many visitors stopped paying attention to the televised information and abandoned the station before the recording was over due to this inconsistency in the volume of the outlets.

Despite the technological glitches that impose certain boundaries on the access to information, Qantara embodies some traits of the “dialogic” museological space described by Miranda Brady (2009). In reference to the NMAI, which is ideologically imagined as a “dialogic approach to communication” and representation, Brady (2009) argued that these dialogic intentions enter often in contradiction with naturalized museum practices (p. 134-5). This debate between traditional museological systems of display which impose specific meanings on audiences and dialogic spaces where audiences themselves made meaning resonates with James W. Carey’s discussion of communication in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (2008[1988]). Carey (2008) identified two alternative conceptions of communication: the transmission model, “defined by terms such as ‘imparting,’ ‘sending,’ ‘transmitting,’ or ‘giving information to others’” (p.12) ; and the ritual view, where “communication is linked to terms such as ‘sharing,’ ‘participation,’ ‘association,’ ‘fellowship,’ and the ‘possession of a common faith’” (p. 15). If the first model of communication implies a unidirectional circulation of messages and a rigid structure of power relation, the second model implies a more democratic production of knowledge and maintenance of social order. I argue that, while the permanent collection at the IMA embraces the transmission view of communication, Qantara invites various publics to participate in the process of making meaning. While the spaces imagined by Qantara’s creators might not reflect directly Carey’s ideal definition of communication, “a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed” (Carey, 2008[1988], p. 19), they nonetheless include a more communicative and dynamic encounter with Arab cultures.

The collection and display of knowledge in the Qantara exhibit is done thematically and through the emphasis on cultural contacts. While the objects displayed in the IMA’s permanent

museum are accompanied by very little historical and cultural information, the objects showcased in the context of the Qantara project are discussed in relation with: the specific practices related to them, the historical conditions of production and the cultural contacts which produced them. The exhibition, the virtual museum and the catalogue are organized around six themes: la ville, les religions, les savoirs, la guerre, pouvoir et diplomatie, art de vivre. The separation of cultures into diverse and broad thematic spaces ranging from practices of the everyday to scientific discoveries to governmental strategies mirrors the democratization of the cultural field and the vision of the museum not as a repository of beautiful yet decontextualized objects but as a space of conversation between objects with specific histories and functions.

As described in Chapter 5, the official definition of culture applied to cultural policies became more inclusive towards the 1980s. If André Malraux showed his preference for high arts and access to high culture, the Socialist Jack Lang understood culture more broadly, to encompass even “the lowest” of the cultural forms of expression such as movies and TV shows, the Internet, hip hop music and cartoons. Culture in the IMA museum is strictly defined as a collection and display of art objects of high artistic value. Even if some of the objects on display were part of daily routines of eating, bathing or praying within their original cultural contexts, their status in the museum is of decontextualized art objects which have lost their social functions. In reference to Western practices of collecting, John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (1994) wrote that “the great canonical collections, with their temple-like architecture, their monumental catalogues...testify to the paradigm of Beauty...they carry such weight as to seem incontrovertible while the histories to which they give rise appear equally impervious to query” (p. 4). Within the different spaces of the Qantara project, the knowledge of the Mediterranean culture combines the mundane with the exceptional, while different objects and practices are

offered detailed histories. This attention to context, I argue, comes from the de-othering of Arab cultures, which are now observed not through their foreignness but through their capacity of producing encounters with European cultures such as France and Spain.

Mapping cultural encounters

These historical encounters between Arab and European cultures within the Mediterranean context are represented on a series of interactive maps on the Qantara website (“Histoire et territoires”, n.d.). These maps are also reproduced as a separate chapter in the exhibition catalogue. The map, I argue, is utilized as a unifying tool. For James W. Carey (2008[1988]), “the map stands as a representation of an environment capable of clarifying a problematic situation. It is capable of guiding behaviour and simultaneously transforming undifferentiated space into configured – that is, known, apprehended, understood – space” (p. 21). According to Carey, the map can represent not one but multiple realities based on what the producers of these maps wish to communicate. Therefore, “different maps bring the same environment alive in different ways” (Carey, 2008[1988], p. 22). For example, a map which isolates *le monde arabe* from the other European empires tells a different story of Arab cultures than a map which emphasizes the multiple encounters and contacts that took place historically between cultures. The interactive maps included on the Qantara website depict a large and diverse geographical area in movement, constantly shifting and re-configuring space and power. The narrative that Qantara embraces and promotes is that of dialogue, because “souvent déchirée dans son histoire, la Méditerranée n’a jamais été une frontière mais un trait d’union dans le temps et l’espace de multiples civilisations et cultures: elle reste le creuset de notre unité autour de valeurs bien plus importantes que les apparentes dissensions” (“Le projet Euromed”, para. 4).

The series of maps which explain the different contacts that took place with the Mediterranean context are grouped under the title “Histoire et territoires” (History and territories) on the Qantara website and under “Cartographie du bassin méditerranéen, 750-1700” (The Cartography of the Mediterranean Basin) in the exhibition catalogue. The ten maps correspond with the ten centuries which are the focus of the Qantara project, “de la fin de l’Antiquité tardive et l’avènement de l’islam au XIX^e siècle, fin de l’Empire ottoman” (“Un projet Euromed”, para. 4). Each map is broken down in color coded geographical areas which correspond with the empire, the caliphate, the kingdom or the dynasty occupying a certain territory at a specific point in time. Each map emphasizes the centrality of the Mediterranean Sea, which is the main point of reference regardless of the changes that take place around it. Badr-Eddine Arodaky (2008) explained that “l’espace méditerranéen, pour unificateur qu’il soit par sa position centrale, par sa propension naturelle à exalter l’harmonie et la lumière, à délivrer la leçon des formes, est un espace également soumis à des revirements” (p. 10). Because the maps are displayed chronologically, the viewer can easily observe the changes that happen in the division of land and of power. Most importantly, the succession of regimes of powers shows the different political and cultural owners of the same territories. For example, the map labelled “1000”, in reference to the time period reflected in the image, shows the region which is now Morocco under the occupation of the “royaumes Zenetes”, while the following map, “1100”, shows Morocco under the occupation of the Almoravides. Similarly, until 1300, the Southern regions of Spain were occupied by the Muslim Almohade dynasty while during the 16th century, Spain is conquered by the armies of Charles Quint. These maps show a world in constant movement “qui n’a rien d’uniforme ni de systématique. Jusqu’à la fin du XVe siècle, alors même que les draps de Flandres envahissent les marchés du Caire, la verrerie émaillée des Mamluks,

leurs métaux incrustés d'or et d'argent...sont importés en Europe et continuent d'exercer leur influence” (Arodaky, 2008, p. 11).

La vie religieuse

The Mediterranean space is primarily observed through the encounters between the three major religions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism, which produce diverse bodies of knowledge and material cultures with multiple similarities. The online section “La vie religieuse” describes the three faiths in terms of their commonalities rather than their conflictual pasts. For example, “bien que les tenants de ces trois religions se soient beaucoup massacrés au Moyen Age (conquêtes, saccages, procès, expulsions), ils partagent des traits psychologiques communs. Tous considèrent Abraham comme le premier témoin de la foi monothéiste. Tous considèrent l'exil, la fuite au désert, comme une épreuve spirituelle” (“La vie religieuse”, para. 3). François Zabbal (2008) wrote in the Qantara catalogue that “chacun à sa manière, les trois monothéismes ont entrepris de recomposer les anciennes religions du salut afin de fixer un rapport au ciel et au monde à prétention universelle. Il est en résulte une conception du Bonheur terrestre qui a marqué de son empreinte la civilisation dite occidentale” (p. 37). The common traits and beliefs of the three religions are further exemplified through the knowledge systems they co-produced.

Architecture, religious objects and the practices associated with religious rituals are the main areas of investigation on the website and in the catalogue. The first architectural space presented in the catalogue is Église Saint-Sophia de Constantinople, which was built by the Emperor Justinian as a Christian edifice but was transformed into a mosque after the Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople in 1453 (La religion, 2008, p. 38). Saint-Sophie was not only re-appropriated by the Ottoman leaders but also served as a source of inspiration for other architectural projects. Therefore, “il faut encore rappeler que si Sainte-Sophie a servi de source

d'inspiration aux bâtisseurs ottomans, c'est le cas de l'architecture byzantine en général. De plus, d'autres églises byzantines ont peut-être aussi été utilisées comme modèles, comme par exemple Saints-Serge-et-Bacchus à Constantinople" ("Influence de l'église", para. 6). Another example of borrowing and "re-cycling" of religious spaces is Mosquée Katshawa in Alger. The brief explanatory note in the catalogue stated that the mosque was built during the Ottoman occupation of Alger and its architecture combines Turkish and Byzantine influences. The same note also explained that "durant la période *coloniale*, la mosquée est transformée en cathédrale, fonction facilitée par son plan proche des constructions chrétiennes...Après *l'Indépendance*, le monument retrouve sa fonction originelle" (La religion, 2008, p. 43, emphasis mine). This fragment represents the first reference to colonialism in the exhibition catalogue. The several introductory essays written by officials of the IMA and of the Qantara project made no reference to colonialism or the Algerian Independence. For many individuals browsing the exhibition catalogue, which was displayed next to the digital kiosk in the Qantara exhibition, the reference to colonialism probably remained hidden as it is part of a side note in small font accompanying one of the many images in the illustrated volume. This marginal positioning of colonial references within the catalogue mirrors the general relation between colonial histories and exhibitionary spaces within the IMA.

Most of the encounters between cultures and religions happen in the distant pre-colonial past which surrounds the knowledge on display with a "mythological" aura. The Orient has served this purpose within the Western imaginary for centuries. Orientalism, as defined by Said (1994[1978]), "it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (p. 1). A long-lasting system of knowledge about the Orient and about the

Other has been created by European-Orientalists since the 18th century. For many citizens of colonial France and Great Britain, the only knowledge about the colonies came from an Orientalist perspective, often illustrated within colonial exhibitions, colonial publications, posters and academic and professional conferences. Qantara challenges these structures of knowing the “other” by creating a narrative based on encounters and intersections between the Orient and Europe. However, the historical objectification of the Orient within the knowledge produced by colonial regimes and Orientalist scholars is not directly contested. The new order of displaying Arab culture in the various spaces of the Qantara project positions the “other” as part of “us” without integrating the history which created and disseminated representations of the “other”, which is the history of colonial encounters. The culture of Arab nations is therefore positioned in the “in-between” space between mythology and modernity.

The religious objects highlighted by the Qantara creators reflect this new politics of display as objects are carefully contextualized, described and placed at the intersection of multiple communities. The objects and works of art range from mosaics to fragments of altars to mundane items used in religious ceremonies. For example, the section on “*mobilier et objets religieux*” from the Qantara catalogue opens with the image of a mosaic depicting “*la coiffe de Théodore Métochite*”, important Byzantine art patron and advisor to the emperor. The focal element of this fragment of mosaic is the headpiece worn by Métochite, which is considered to be an “Oriental” *skiadion*, “une coiffe au sommet pyramidal qui donne de l’ombre, portée a cette époque par l’empereur et les membres de la cour” (*Mobilier et objet*, 2008, p. 63). Another item presented in the catalog is a fragment of an ivory cross decorated with vegetal and animal motifs. The explanatory note states, “les mascarons et surtout la nature de l’œuvre, destinée au culte

chrétien, indiquent qu'il s'agit d'artistes mozarabes, dont les sources d'inspiration sont au croisement des cultures arabe et chrétienne" (La religion, 2008, p. 64).

Online, a much larger constellation of objects is available to the virtual visitors. One object highlighted on the website is a fragment of plate which depicts "la descente de la croix," one of the most popular Christian iconographic images. About this fragment, the website writes, "par sa technique et son style, le tesson se situe donc dans la lignée de l'art syro-égyptien du XII^e siècle, avec des références iconographiques à l'art byzantin développé à partir de 1164, et surtout dans les années 1180 - 1200. Toutefois, cette pièce date sans doute de la fin du XIII^e ou du début du XIV^e siècle, étant donné ses nombreuses allusions à l'art il-khanide" ("Fragments de plat", para. 6). One of the more quotidian objects on the website is "la mesure d'aumône," a unit measure for grains. The practice of measuring grain is related to the donations in the name of the Prophet by Muslim believers. However, "bien que différente, on retrouve la pratique de l'aumône légale dans la religion juive, *zedaka* en hébreu, qui vient du terme biblique *zedek* qui...fait référence à un acte obligatoire... On retrouve également chez les chrétiens cette idée d'aumône, mais qui se double d'un second sens, absent dans le judaïsme et l'islam, celui de la charité" ("Mesure d'aumône", para. 4).

Guerre et pouvoir

Another topic included in the Qantara project is "war and power", two themes which refer to the making and un-making of civilizations. In "Guerre en Méditerranée" (War in the Mediterranean), Beatrice Patrie (2008) wrote that "la guerre fut un des moyens utilisés, à vrai dire quasiment seul jusqu'à une période récente, par les Etats méditerranéens pour imposer leur influence respective. Depuis la civilisation mythique de Troie jusqu'à la guerre du Liban...les conflits n'ont cessé de jalonner l'espace méditerranéen" (p. 127). Patrie included examples of

older and contemporary conflicts such as the battle of Kadesh, where Ramses II wins against the Hittites, the victory of Yarmouk, the 1187 battle of Hattin and the 1967 six year war which concluded with the format of “l’Etat Hebreux”. The article mentioned the maritime power of the British Empire, which I interpret as a loose and indirect reference to colonialism, and the first and second World Wars (Patrie, 2008, p. 127-9). Conquest and power struggles are described as “natural” steps in the achievement of nations and communities. According to Patrie (2008), “la guerre en Méditerranée a été le plus souvent l’affirmation de la domination momentanée d’une civilisation, conçue comme l’expression d’un mode politique, économique, culturel tout autant que religieux. Cet ajustement violent entre intérêts antagonistes a souvent occasionné d’importants déplacements de populations” (p. 128). In the preface to the section on “la guerre,” Patrie (2008) clarified the two types of war identified within the Mediterranean context: “le choc de l’instantané et le conflit de longue durée” (p. 128). None of the conflicts attached to colonialism and independence, such as the conquest of Alger in 1830s or the Algerian War of Independence, are included in the narrative of war associated with the Mediterranean Basin. This silence reflects larger problems posed by post-colonial terminology. As Patricia Lorcin (2006) pointed out, the Algerian War of Independence was not referred to as a war until late 1990s as the title of “des opérations de sécurité et de maintien de l’ordre” was preferred (xxv; see also McCormack, 2006; Stora, 1999; “La guerre sans nom”, 1992).

The exhibition, the website and the catalogue construct a vocabulary around war and conflict but exclude references to European colonialism or to struggles for decolonization and independence. Great Britain is mentioned among the military powers which attempted to invade the Mediterranean Basin. However, France, being part of this geographical area, is positioned as an “insider,” sharing the “frustration” of being invaded by an Anglo-Saxon power (Patrie, 2008).

This possibility of empathizing with the other cultures of the Mediterranean space places France, one of the major colonial powers of recent history, in opposition with Great Britain. The histories of colonialism and the encounters which happened since the 1830s, when France invaded Algeria, are left out of the general story of the Mediterranean cultures. The conflictual encounters between Orient and Occident are reduced to a series of well-known contacts such as the crusades, “un moment clé des rencontres entre l’Orient et l’Occident, au cours desquelles les échanges artistiques, commerciaux et scientifiques se sont intensifiés en Méditerranée” (La guerre, 2008, p. 130).

The term “colonization” is used rarely and only in a general reference to territorial expansion. For example, “il peut s’agir pour le nouveau régime de s’implanter dans les zones pionnières de *colonisation*: les califes omeyyades multiplient ainsi au cœur de la steppe syrienne la construction de fortins connus sous le nom de ‘châteaux du désert’” (La guerre, 2008, p. 146). Emphasis is placed on military architecture, military knowledge and technological developments which can be applied in warfare. The history of fortifications within Islamic cultures is related to the multiple attacks from the “flotte byzantine” at the end of the eighth century (La guerre, 2008, p. 145). The Qantara website dedicates an extensive and detailed explanation to the formation of “la chevalerie” of the Byzantine Empire and its Muslim counterpart, *la furûsiyya*. The common traits and the difference between the two types of cavalry are discussed in great detail, with the following conclusion, “ainsi, la *furûsiyya* est-elle le fruit d’une synthèse de diverses influences. Elle est portée, surtout en Orient, au niveau d’un art élaboré très particulier à la civilisation arabo-musulmane et qui n’a rien à envier à la chevalerie de l’Europe occidentale” (“La chevalerie”, para. 27).

Art de vivre

Because the Oriental discourse is not questioned or challenged directly in any of these three spaces, some of the themes included in the Qantara project bring to life an Orientalist understanding of Arab cultures, which emphasizes the tensions produced by different strategies of display. This tension is best revealed by the section on “Art de vivre”. Paul Balta (2008) wrote in the Qantara catalogue, “mer des miracles et des migrations, de toutes les migrations – des hommes, des plantes, des plats, des mots, des parfums, des modes. Ces modes qui, à toutes les époques, dans tous les pays riverains et dans les îles, expérimentent si merveilleusement l’art de vivre à travers les hasards de la vie, les humeurs d’une société, le goût du plaisir” (p. 180). One of the central aspects of “l’art de vivre,” which refers in particular to quotidian practices of the royal courts, is the festivity. The Qantara website informs its visitors that “en Andalousie, au Maghreb, au Proche-Orient, un festin doit s’accompagner de musique et de danse. Dans les riches demeures, le jardin intérieur remplace la cour. A ceux qui sont loin de la mer, une pièce d’eau centrale, où s’entrecroisent les canaux, offre l’image du *Paradis*” (“L’art de vivre”, para. 5, emphasis mine). Cuisine is one of the arts and daily practices which offers Mediterranean cultures “raffinement” and “la dimension du *mythe*” (Balta, 2008, p. 180, emphasis mine). The exoticism of the Mediterranean cuisine is implied through the mentioning of spices and condiments “comme l’huile d’olive et l’huile d’arganier, la coriandre, le cumin, le curcuma” (Art de vivre, para. 3).

Because the grand narrative of the Qantara project is the encounter, the “oriental” language present in some sections of the exhibitionary spaces is balanced with themes of cultural contact. For example, the “Oriental Paradise” which was alluded to in Balta’s description of the Mediterranean atmosphere is further explained by the section on “Le jardin en Méditerranée”

(The Garden in Mediterranean culture) in the exhibition catalogue. The reader finds out that “le mot ‘jardin’ pour les Musulmans, les Chrétiens et le Juifs est associé à celui de ‘paradis’...Le paradis est à l’origine un jardin, un lieu de délices où l’homme est débarrassé du Mal et de son corps. L’homme terrestre qui crée un jardin, cherche à créer un paradis, le Paradis” (Art de vivre, 2008, p. 199). The de-orientalization of the language about the Arab “other” is the outcome of the many intersecting histories which precede the “objects” on display. Another example is “le motif de la coquille,” detailed in a short video on the Qantara website. The video focuses on one of the most popular decorative motifs of Islamic provenance, the shell. With no audio but a succession of Middle Eastern musical themes, the video identifies architectural structures, from palaces to public fountains, which contains *la coquille*. The video presents, among others, la coupole du *mihrab* de la Grande Mosquée du Cordoue in Spain, la Mosquée al-Qadr (1106) in Tunis and Chateau d’Ajlun (1189) in Jordanie. The spread of an Islamic element of décor to different parts of the Mediterranean Basin takes away from its exoticism as *la coquille* acquires a geography and a history of influences. Another video contains an interview with a Tunisian professor of human sciences on the topic of hammam. The de-mystification of the Islamic baths is accomplished through a didactic discussion of the influences acquired from the Roman *terme*, le hammam being described as the “heir” of Roman public bathing spaces (Le Hammam, 2010). Moreover, the meticulous comparison between the components and functions of the hammam and those of the *thermae* eliminates the mysterious and exotic aura which accompanies the hammam in the Western imaginary.

Because the colonial contacts are omitted from the stories about Mediterranean cultures, the history which generated the Oriental discourse and the exoticism of the Arab world is also missing. The interactive maps which frame both the website and the catalogue end in the

seventeenth century showing a world dominated by the Ottoman Empire, which spreads from Damascus to Oran. However, history continues after 1800 and the map of the Mediterranean basin continues to change due to European colonialism. France, who is placed on the maps as part of the Mediterranean cultural space is itself a crucial factor in the modification of geographies and cultures of Arab countries. However, colonialism continues to be absent, visible only when paired with themes related to conquest and war. Colonialism refers in this context to conquest of lands and peoples during the formative moments of great civilizations within the Mediterranean context. In opposition with these lengthy processes which result in new civilizations and empires, colonialism happens quickly and destabilizes the network of contacts depicted by the Qantara project. While Qantara approaches the history of *le monde arabe* through similarities and encounters rather than difference and isolation, it still leaves out the most significant encounter of contemporary history: European colonialism.

Grandes expositions: The debut of the colonial narrative

So far, this chapter has looked at the two main spaces of display within the IMA – the permanent collection and the Qantara virtual and physical exhibition – and focused on the exclusion of colonial references from these spaces. A third space of display is highlighted within the foundational texts of the IMA as being of great importance to the knowledge of *le monde arabe*, the *grandes expositions* organized annually or biannually at the Institut. Exhibitions, due to their thematic focus on a specific body of knowledge or geographical space, punctuate the stories which are most often told by the curatorial and intellectual communities at the IMA. Moreover, these exhibitions represent sites which might act as extensions of the exhibitionary space of the museum, making obvious the bias towards specific fragments of knowledge. At the same time, exhibitions can add to, contradict, interpret and even challenge themes discussed in

the permanent collection. The analysis of these diverse exhibitionary spaces in dialogue with each other can clarify further the complexity of cultural institutions. My analysis of the grandes expositions, done through an investigation of the exhibition catalogues and the French press, focuses on the representation of encounters. If the museum and the Qantara project included formative encounters in reference to the contacts between cultures in the process of nation making, will the *grandes expositions* make reference to the more problematic encounters, which disrupted the linear course of history, such as colonialism?

The first *grande exposition*, “Égypte-Égypte,” curated by Christiane Naffah, opened its doors to the public in July 1989 and was described in *Institut du Monde Arabe: Vingt Ans d’Activité* as “une sélection de 27 chefs-d’œuvre d’art égyptien de tous les temps: pharaonique, copte et islamique exposés pour la première fois à Paris. Un “musée imaginaire” audiovisuel présente au public les mille facettes de l’Égypte éternelle” (IMA, 2002, p. 47). According to *Le Monde* journalist Michel Guerrin (1993), the role of Edgard Pisani, the President of the IMA at the time, was crucial in the success of the exhibition because “il a favorisé l’admission de l’Égypte dans l’Institut (boycottée à cause des accords de Camp-David), concrétisée par l’exposition “Égypte-Egypte” en 1989 qui a installé l’IMA sur la scène culturelle parisienne”. A chronological exhibition, “Égypte-Egypte” focused on the artistic creativity and excellence of the Egyptian civilization, from the times of the pharaohs to those of Islam. In the “Avant-propos” of the exhibition catalogue, Franco Maria Ricci⁶¹ (1989) explained the general vision of Egypt expressed in the show, “tout au long de l’histoire, l’Égypte a créé des chefs-d’œuvre qui ont enrichi la civilisation universelle...Ce qui compte, c’est ce peuple qui donne naissance à des génies...ce peuple qui, par ses œuvres, semble avoir vaincu le temps” (p. 11). This exhibition spoke of encounters in so far as they influenced the development of Egyptian art. Contacts with

⁶¹ Franco Maria Ricci is a well known Italian publisher of art books and exhibition catalogues.

other civilizations were not problematized in terms of power relation or political domination but are understood as natural steps in the formation of a civilization and culture. Jean Lacouture wrote in “Une et multiple...” (One and many...) about the serene encounters which shaped the history of Egypt – “depuis des millénaires, cette vallée plus accueillante à l’homme qu’aucune autre au Carrefour des mondes, étroite ligne de vie au cœur des déserts, aimant voyageurs, conquérants et nomades” (p. 13).

Similar *grandes expositions* with a focus on artistic production have highlighted cultures such as Syria, Sudan, Yemen and Lebanon, where encounters were acknowledged but also naturalized. “Syrie: Mémoire et civilisation” (Syria: Memory and civilization) opened at the IMA in 1993 and was organized by a large group of curators, scholars and artists from France and Syria. The main curator of the exhibition, Annie Caubet, was also the curator of “antiquités orientales” at the Louvre. Writing in the introductory essay for the “Syrie: Mémoire et civilisation” exhibition catalogue, Najah Attar, the Syrian Minister of Culture, discussed the purpose of the exhibition in the context of Syria’s own experience with cultural contact. Therefore, “la coexistence ouverte sur des perspectives d’égalité est l’espoir, le vœu, le moyen et la fin de l’actuel combat de l’homme. Face aux ennemis de cette égalité, le besoin s’impose d’une trame fraternelle dont le tissu est l’œuvre des plus grands penseurs de notre époque” (Attar, 1993, p. 5). These ideas, together with the rest of the essay mirror the mission of the IMA, which aims to rehabilitate Arab cultures at a time of international tensions and conflicts. Culture, specifically art, becomes the site for this legitimation. Attar (1993) continued, “dans cette exposition archéologique et les activités culturelles annexes, nous sommes à la recherche de ce duo: l’utile et l’agréable, sachant que c’est le savoir qui, au bout du compte, nous libérera” (p. 5). Just like the IMA museum, the exhibition is ordered chronologically from 1 000 000 BC

until the beginning of the twentieth century, which is a curatorial approach popular with “majority museums”. The French press was generally positive in relation to this exhibition, which, according to *Le Monde*, “devrait presque faire jeu égal avec l'exposition sur l'Egypte qui avait attiré 400 000 curieux en 1989” (“Ile de France: Reperes, 1993). Armelle Cressard (1993), art critic for *Le Monde*, called the exposition “superbe” praising it especially for the representation of “le Grand Siècle de Damas”.

Two other *grandes expositions* continued this tradition of chronological displays of beautiful but decontextualized objects: “Yémen: Au pays de la reine de Saba” (Yemen: The country of Queen Saba, 1997) and “Liban: L'autre rive” (Lebanon: The other shore, 1998). The 1997 *grande exposition*, “Yémen: Au pays de la reine de Saba” was curated by a team of archaeologists and historians coordinated by Julien Christian Robin, archaeologist at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS). The exhibition was described by *Le Figaro* art critic Guy Baret (1997) as “pas seulement un voyage dans un espace d'une bouleversante beauté, c'est aussi une plongée dans le temps, dans un passé qui affleure à chaque instant du périple”. Baret (1997) also pointed out that the IMA was the first cultural institution to host a large exhibition about Yemén, to which other museums in the United States and Europe have contributed with art objects. Emmanuel de Roux (1997) emphasized the focus on encounters and contacts highlighted throughout the exhibition. Therefore, the visitor “trouvera heureusement dans cette exposition bien d'autres sujets d'étonnement et un parcours historique assez clair. Ce qui est très bien mis en relief, par exemple, ce sont les relations que ces peuples coincés au bout de la péninsule Arabique ont su entretenir, depuis la plus haute Antiquité, avec le reste du monde connu” (de Roux, 1997). In the exhibition catalogue, Hana Chidiac (1997), one of the curators of the show and presently in charge with the North African art collection at the Quai Branly,

wrote that “contrairement aux pays du Proche-Orient, qui très tôt dévoilèrent la richesse et la grandeur de leurs anciennes civilisations, le Yémen a gardé jalousement les mystères de ses origines...L’exposition présentée à l’IMA, une première, invite le public à un voyage dans les temps anciens” (p. 14). It is the mystery which surrounds the Yemen culture and civilization which is captured in the exhibition, together with the ability of the Yemen culture to adapt through the contacts with its neighbours. The encounter is a theme prominent in this exhibition as well, but contacts are fixed in a pre-Islamic time.

In October 1998, the IMA hosts the *grande exposition* “Liban: L’autre rive”. This exhibition, in collaboration with the National Museum of Beirut, is the first international cultural initiative organized by the Lebanese Ministry of Culture after the end of the civil war in 1990. The curatorial team was supervised by Valeria Matoian, expert in Syrian culture and archaeologist at CNRS. In the coverage of the exhibition, the French press focused, critically, on the diplomatic scope of this show to rehabilitate the culture of Lebanon without mentioning the ravages of the war. According to Emanuel de Roux and Frederic Edelmann (1998), “La France et le Liban se retrouvent donc à l’Institut du monde arabe (IMA) autour d’une exposition ambitieuse et problématique: Liban, l’autre Rive. C’est le point fort d’une série de manifestations, diplomatiquement dosées. Elles dureront tout l’automne, et chacune des communautés du pays pourra s’y retrouver, sans risquer de tomber sur les sujets qui divisent”. In the content of “Liban: L’autre rive”, the preferred metaphor is “mosaic”. In the catalogue of the *grande exposition*, Lebanese author Amin Maalouf (1999) framed the exhibition as an example of the diversity which is characteristic to Lebanon “cette diversité est souvent présentée aujourd’hui comme une faiblesse congénitale du pays, alors qu’elle constitue...sa principale raison d’être. Mosaïque de communautés, le Liban? Sans doute” (p. 15). However, the diversity

of Lebanon was justified and celebrated in terms of pre-colonial encounters with other civilizations. The recent political issues related to the civil war which might disturb the linear development of Lebanon culture were left out from the discourse of the show.

Another group of *grandes expositions* – “Delacroix: Le voyage au Maroc” (Delacroix: The voyage to Morocco), “Matisse au Maroc” (Matisse in Morocco), “L’Algérie en héritage: Art et histoire” (Algeria in perspective: Art and history) and “De Delacroix à Renoir: L’Algérie des peintres” (From Delacroix to Renoir: The artists’ Algeria) – explore the contact between French artists and North African countries in the 19th century. For the first time in the context of a *grande exposition*, history did not end in the 1800s. These exhibitions, through their topics, touch on colonial encounters, representing them as formative to the local communities. In these exhibitions, cultural encounters were no longer “natural” occurrences within the grand development of civilizations but specific intersections between cultural groups, internal and external to *le monde arabe*. I argue that it is in this series of exhibitions that the colonial becomes visible.

The 1994 exhibition entitled “Delacroix: Le voyage au Maroc” was organized by a group of renowned French curators from the Musée du Louvre and the museum of the Institut du Monde Arabe. The “conseiller scientifique” for this show was Maurice Arama, also a frequent writer from the *Qantara* journal. This was the first *grande exposition* which discussed the contact between Western cultures, exemplified through French artist Eugène Delacroix, and Morocco, a land subjected to French colonialism. Mohamed Bennouna (1994), Director of the IMA at the time, described the image of Morocco in the work of Delacroix as “une cascade de sensations profondes, des saveurs, des parfums, des images qui défilent, confuses, violentes, tendres...dans ce pays, le temps lui-même s’est oublié” (p. 15). In the exhibition catalogues,

French writer Edmond Charles-Roux (1994) spoke of Delacroix's relation to Morocco, which developed during the artist's 1832 six-month long voyage to the North African land and wrote that "Delacroix ne fut pas de ceux qui usèrent de la terre d'Islam comme d'un support à leurs fantasmes. Le Maroc de Delacroix est un pays vrai" (p. 17).

In "Le Voyage," a chapter in the exhibition catalogue, Maurice Arama described the historical context for Delacroix's voyage to Morocco. Arama (1994a) presented in detail the collaboration between the painter and the French government, as Delacroix travelled to Morocco with a French diplomatic mission led by Comte de Mornay in the aftermath of Algeria's conquest by France. While Edward Said and other scholars⁶² would associate the painter with the Orientalism movement, the exhibition denies such "charges" by positioning Delacroix as a connoisseur of the Orient. Well-known Moroccan poet and writer Tahar Ben Jelloun (1994) described the Orient as "un malentendu, un mirage, une promesse qui apaise un imaginaire surexcité" (p. 21). However, Delacroix discovered the Orient "pas comme un souvenir, mais comme univers" (Ben Jelloun, 1994, p. 22). Furthermore, "par-delà la découverte d'un pays et d'un peuple, c'est la révélation de la lumière et de ses multiples incidences sur les formes et les couleurs qui constitue la clé de l'aventure initiatique de Delacroix" (Serullaz, 1994, p. 135). This exhibition celebrates Delacroix's appropriation of Morocco without questioning the Orientalism which abounds in his paintings and sketches, culminating with the famous 1834 "Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement" (Algerian women in their apartment)⁶³. Despite a lack of critical reflexivity on Delacroix's preference for an Orientalist visual vocabulary, this exhibition mentioned the colonial encounters between France and Algeria, introduced

⁶² For example, MacKenzie, J. M. (1995). *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Irwin, R. (2006). *Dangerous knowledge: Orientalism and its discontents*. New York: The Overlook Press.

⁶³ This painting has inspired the novel with the same title by Algerian author Asia Djebar, who is very critical of the women's role within the Algerian society and in the Arab context more generally. See Fig. 14.

colonialism to the history of the Arab world and involved France in processes of conquest and “oriental” representation.

Almost one century after Delacroix discovered Morocco, French artist Henri Matisse traveled to North Africa to create his own version of Morocco. “Le Maroc de Matisse” is part of a larger cultural series of events dedicated to Morocco which were organized at the IMA, “Le Temps de Maroc” (Time for Morocco). The exhibition, which opened in 1999, was curated by IMA’s Brahim Alaoui in collaboration with a team of international curators from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. In the exhibition catalogue, Ben Jelloun (1999) wrote that “le Maroc de Delacroix ne sera pas celui de Matisse...[...]. ‘Le Maroc de Matisse’ est une source inépuisable de couleurs méditerranéennes où domine un bleu subtil, gracieux, extrême et changeant” (p. 15). Matisse travelled to North Africa in the midst of French colonialism, without being part of a state-organized expedition and with different artistic sensibilities than Delacroix. Creating in the Fauvist tradition, Matisse’s interest lied less in a literal translation and documentation of the various cities he visited but more in colors, lights and motifs he could borrow and interpret. Writing for the exhibition catalogue, Remi Labrusse (1999), art historian and specialist in the works of Matisse, argued that “il [Matisse] ne se préoccupe pas d’imiter un des styles ou un des techniques de l’Islam; plutôt, il recueille une proposition globale de rapport aux formes artistiques...est d’autant plus féconde qu’elle ne se définit pas en tant qu’influence mais en tant que dialogue” (p. 32). Matisse’s work was not discussed in relation to the politics of his time, colonialism, or with the problematic usage of the “other” as a constant source of influence or object of analysis. It seems that, in the case of Delacroix, it was too early to talk about colonialism as he paints in early 1830s, while in the case of Matisse, it is almost too late to

address the French empire, as he paints in an artistic context which defines itself as revolutionary and disconnected from political realities. When is it, then, appropriate to discuss colonialism more directly?

In 2003, French President Jacques Chirac in collaboration with Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika inaugurated “Djazair, une année de l’Algérie en France” in an attempt to make Algerian cultures known to French publics. The IMA celebrated this initiative by organizing two *grandes expositions*, “De Delacroix à Renoir: L’Algérie des peintres” and “L’Algérie en héritage: Art et histoire”. For the first time in the history of the IMA, the historical connection between Algeria and France was acknowledged and celebrated⁶⁴.

However, the present harmonious encounters presented by these cultural collaborations hide a history of colonialism, where encounters have lacked this harmonious dimension. The history of French colonialism in Algeria was excluded from the two *grandes expositions* and all the other complementary events and publications. The past colonial encounters between France and Algeria are to this day the most avoided political subjects while, at the same time, the most visible testimonies of France’s colonial past (see Stora, 2004; Lorcin, 2007).

“Algérie en héritage: Art et histoire” opened at the IMA in October 2003 as a Franco-Algerian cultural collaboration. The two main curators of the exhibition were Brahim Alaoui, Director of the IMA museum and Najib Ferhat, professor of prehistoric history in Alger. In the preface to the exhibition catalogue, Denis Bauchard (2003), President of the IMA in 2003, emphasized the historical connections between France and Algeria, conveniently excluding the violence and intensity of the Franco-Algeria colonial contact. Bauchard (2003) wrote that “de par sa proximité géographique, historique et humaine avec la France, aucun pays plus que

⁶⁴ There have been in the past small exhibitions and public events focused on the Algerian War and Algeria’s relation to France (especially in 1994, when Algeria celebrated 30 years since its Independence). However, these events were marginal if compared to other high profile exhibitions organized by the Institute.

l'Algérie ne pouvait prétendre à ce que son patrimoine fût présenté, dans toute sa splendeur et sa diversité, à l'Institut du Monde Arabe" (p. 11). "L'Algérie en héritage" was mostly about a pre-colonial Algeria divided into "trois grands moments: la préhistoire, l'Antiquité and l'époque musulmane" (Ferhat, 2003, p. 12-3). The chronology offered on the exhibition website ends in 1830, with the "débarquement français à Sidi Ferruch" (Chronologie, 2010). This moment coincided with the beginning of French colonialism in Algeria and North Africa. One chapter in the exhibition catalogue, "La ville d'Alger: Son développement depuis la période médiévale" (The city of Alger: Development since Medieval times), was dedicated to the urban development of Algiers. Highlighting the main moments in the formation of Algeria's capital, Algerian archaeologist Omar Hachi spoke in great detail about the changes that took place during the medieval times. Approximately half a page was dedicated to Alger after 1830 with no reference, however, to the French invasion and re-structuring of the city. The closest reference to the French governance of Algeria is in the following lines, "l'augmentation de la population européenne fut à l'origine de nouveaux quartiers qui se distinguent par leur architecture différente; une ville nouvelle voyait le jour" (Hachi, 2003, p. 270). Moreover, the conquest of Algeria by France was referred to as "la chute d'Alger en juillet 1830". Despite the diplomatic attempts to purge "colonialism" from France's historical encounters with Algeria, the meeting of these two nations in the context of the exhibition makes colonial history visible. Nadjib Ferhat (2003) offered a possible connection, "le souhait de l'exposition, outre l'échange entre l'Algérie et la France, est aussi de maintenir le lien entre immigrés de toute génération avec la culture de leur pays" (p. 13).

The second exhibition designed to celebrate the Franco-Algerian encounter, "De Delacroix à Renoir," spoke directly of colonialism but through the angle of Orientalist art.

Colonialism was not celebrated but it was depicted as the historical context in which Orientalism influenced French arts. According to Brahim Alaoui (2003), chief curator of the show,

au moment où l'Algérie et la France se rapprochent à nouveau pour examiner ensemble une page de leur histoire commune, l'exposition de l'Institut du monde arabe entend contribuer à ce dialogue, non sans rappeler que ces tableaux et photographies orientalistes ne se réduisent pas nécessairement à la logique coloniale sans laquelle, paradoxalement, ils n'auraient pu être conçus (p. 15).

The exhibition focused on a period which was often missing from other exhibitionary spaces, the conquest of Algeria by France and the few decades after France's military victory. The period between 1830 and 1880 was discussed in terms of the artistic encounters between French painters and the people and urban landscapes of Algeria. In the chapter titled "Images coloniales?", Stéphane Guegan (2003), scientific consultant for the show and Director of conferences at Orsay Museum, argued that "à en croire cependant tout un pas de l'historiographie récente, prompt à réduire toute forme d'orientalisme à une entreprise impérialiste de dépréciation univoque, voir et représenter l'Algérie moderne à travers 'cet imaginaire d'un passé continu' serait un déni d'identité" (p. 19). The main premise of the exhibition was to re-open discussion on the potential value of Orientalist art independent of the colonialism which produced it. Such a reasoning would not be problematic had colonialism been discussed, critiqued and included in the main discourses at the IMA. The separation of Orientalist art from its colonial context in a general environment of absent colonial memories in France is an indication of the broader contemporary memorial crises.

Conclusions: Colonialism, the great exhibitionary taboo

The comparative analysis of the three spaces of display – the museum, the Qantara project museum and some of the *grandes expositions* – reveals a diversity of exhibitionary practices which prove the attempts of curators, scholars and bureaucrats to re-invent Arab culture

and reflect upon the changing role of the IMA within the post-colonial context. Despite a unifying unwillingness to discuss colonial histories, each space communicates different stories about the Arab world. The permanent collection stays the closest to the official mission of the IMA, acting as a “majority museum” (James Clifford). The Qantara virtual museum follows loosely the format of a “dialogic museum,” which is organized according to themes and allows the visitors to create their own journeys through the exhibitionary space. The *grandes expositions*, due to their temporary nature, fluctuate between traditional and dialogic politics of display depending on the thematic focus. Some exhibitions reflect the official version of history constructed within the permanent collection while others take on directly subjects related to colonialism.

The museum, Qantara and the *grandes expositions* construct *le monde arabe* according to a series of past contacts which often end around 1830, the year when France invaded and conquered Algeria. Generally, the more modern encounters with France or other European empires are rare and depoliticized. Even in the most “daring” *grandes expositions*, the historical contact with France is disconnected from colonialism and when colonial encounters are depicted, they are not critiqued or explained. For the IMA, *le monde arabe* appears to be a coherent space dominated by internal contacts, which, even when violent, are “natural” steps within the development of civilizations. This narrative of “natural encounters” coincides with a very specific representation of Arab knowledge based on chronology, progress and intellectual production. Knowledge about the “other” is arranged in such a way as to correspond to the expectations of a “Western” audience. This ordering of knowledge based on traditional categories of knowledge production such as art and science, legitimizes Arab cultures and the existence of an institute dedicated to them. Such processes of cultural translation are indeed

necessary when audiences external to a cultural context are introduced to that culture. At the same time, communication about other cultures in these spaces of display constructs an incomplete history of the Arab world. At the IMA, the representation of cultural contacts and the ordering of knowledge result in the absence of colonial stories. The following chapter, “Spaces for education: Writing fragments of colonial history” will observe the inclusion of colonial stories through the investigation of the *Qantara* journal.

CHAPTER 7

Spaces for education: Writing fragments of colonial history

One of the main missions of the Institut du Monde Arabe is to educate the French publics about Arab culture. This goal is partially accomplished in the main museum, the Qantara project and *grandes expositions*. Further, the institution is very active in two other areas, both with an educational scope – publications and cultural events – intended to complement and enhance the knowledge acquired through the encounter with the spaces of display. Both the publications and cultural events build on themes already developed through the exhibitionary spaces. For example, each *grande exposition* is accompanied by one or more publications, a *dossier spécial* in the pages of the *Qantara* magazine and a series of public lectures, seminars and conferences. In this chapter, I analyze the content of the *Qantara* magazine, the major publication at the IMA, in order to explore further the representations of colonial history. Moreover, I pay close attention to the depictions of encounters between different cultures and communities in the larger context of shaping knowledge about *le monde arabe*.

I selected the publication primarily because it represents a prime space for the dissemination of knowledge about the Arab world. Second, the content of *Qantara* and its producers are highly connected with the institution. Third, the magazine covers a very vast period of time, from the Ancient world to the present and features a multitude of writers, many of them connected with colonialism either directly or through the topics which they study. This chapter will start with a history of *Qantara*, focusing on the mission of the magazine in relation with the larger context in which it exists, the Institut du Monde Arabe. Further, the chapter will explore the formation of a fragmented colonial narrative, critical of France's colonial empire and

the post-colonial crisis of memory. I will explore this colonial narrative through the comparison with another discourse featured even more prominently in *Qantara*, Orientalism.

The history of *Qantara*

Qantara: A bridge between cultures

The ideological mission of the Institut du Monde Arabe to function as a bridge and as a channel of communication between two disconnected “civilizations” is also the premise of *Qantara, le magazine de l’Institut de Monde Arabe*. The first issue of *Qantara* opened with an editorial which positioned the magazine as part of the project to revive the Institut after a period of crisis. This crisis referred to the multiple struggles for financial survival faced by the IMA, which escalated into questions about the legitimacy of the institution in France. It is in this context that *Qantara* came to life, in order to prove that the IMA was capable of producing a high quality intellectual space where discussions about *le monde arabe* could enrich the overall French cultural context. For this reason, the beginnings of *Qantara* started with an editorial titled “La fin d’une crise,” where managing editor and president of the IMA Edgard Pisani (1991) claimed that “jeune encore, l’Institut a mué. C’est en adulte qu’il aborde son avenir. Il le fait avec un sens accru de ses responsabilités, en sachant que sa tâche ne sera jamais facile parce que deux civilisations ne se rencontrent jamais sans se heurter. Mais il y dans ce heurt même une infinie richesse. Ce magazine en sera l’expression” (p. 3). Not only is *Qantara* an extension of the conversations shaped by the IMA’s exhibitionary content, but the magazine also embodies the similar ideological mission of the institution: to unite two civilizations whose previous contacts have not always been peaceful. On the contrary, continued Pisani (1991), these past encounters, which indirectly reference colonialism, were often violent and “hurt” (heurter) these

two civilizations (p. 3). However, according to Pisani (1991), any violent contact has the potential to result in “une infinie richesse,” which is the focus of the magazine (p. 3)

A note in small font on the front page of the magazine explains that “*Qantara* signifie en arabe le pont, l’arche, la passerelle” (La rédaction, 1992, p. 3). The metaphor of “the bridge” is common at the IMA and it was recycled and reused to name the new virtual museum and international project initiated in 2008. As explained in the previous chapter, the Qantara project carried similar aspirations with the magazine as it highlights the points of contact between several cultures and communities within the Mediterranean Basin, including France. Furthermore, the bridge, as a channel of communication and dialogue between cultures is the ideological foundation of the IMA itself. To emphasize the need for cultural connections between France and *le monde arabe*, Edgard Pisani (1992) wrote in another editorial, “Qantara a reçu le meilleur accueil des deux côtés de la Méditerranée, car il répondait à une attente, à un *besoin* de se connaître, toujours renouvelé, toujours à réinventer” (p. 3, emphasis mine). Therefore, Pisani recalled in his editorial the broader concerns of the institution he managed: to enhance communication between cultures through an exploration of Arab history and culture, to be communicated to the French audiences in various spaces at the IMA.

The anatomy of the magazine

Qantara is a magazine about Arab cultures and societies, which covers a vast spectrum of topics which range from more traditional cultural practices such as art, literature and architecture to everyday and popular cultural expressions such as food, travelling and cinema. The timeline of the magazine spans over centuries of cultural production, from the Ancient times to the present. The first issue of *Qantara, le magazine de l’Institut du Monde Arabe* appeared in the Fall of 1991 and included a series of short articles and three *dossier spéciaux*. In the following

issues, the structure of the magazine changed, with the addition of new sections and a lengthier *dossier spécial*, but the general focus of the magazine stayed very much the same. The title of *Qantara* changed twice, first in the fifth issue (Fall 1995), when the magazine was renamed *Qantara. Cultures en mouvement (magazine édité par l'Institut du Monde Arabe)* and second, in the sixteenth issue (Summer 1995), when the magazine was titled, this time permanently, *Qantara: Magazine des cultures arabe et méditerranéenne*. The magazine also increased its number of pages from 39 in the first issue to 82 in the last issue. This change in number of pages reflected the addition of new sections but also the expansion of the *dossier spécial*. The magazine features very few ads and mainly for products and services related to the IMA, such as the renting of spaces for private functions, or with Arab culture, such as music, magazines or books.

The magazine is centered on a *dossier spécial*, “véritable axe du numéro, pour faire chaque fois le point sur une question majeure” (Fabre, 1992, p. 3). The *dossiers spéciaux* represent a feature of French print culture. Most newspapers and magazines such as *Le Monde Diplomatique* or *Le Figaro* include series of articles covering a specific topic. If the IMA’s main exhibitionary spaces are the *grandes expositions*, *Qantara*’s equivalents are the *dossiers spéciaux*, which group together a series of articles, between ten and fifteen, which explore one specific topic. Often, the topic of the *dossier* is inspired by the *grande exposition* on display in the Institute.⁶⁵ The *dossiers* approach very diverse topics which reflect the culture and

⁶⁵ Every *grande exposition* at the IMA is accompanied by a *dossier spécial* in the pages of *Qantara*. Here are the issues which reflect on topics and themes addressed by the *grandes expositions*: Issue 9 (Fall 1993) – “L’orient ancien, entre Syrie et Mésopotamie”, Issue 13 (Fall 1994) – “L’orientalisme et après?”, Issue 22 – “Le Soudan entre Niger et Nil”, Issue 25 (Fall 1997) – “Reine de Saba. Eclats d’un mythe”, Issue 29 (Fall 1998) – Beyrouth de la cité des lettres à la ville du futur”, Issue 33 (Fall 1999) – “Singulier Maroc”, Issue 41 (Fall 2001) – “Le siècle du Saladin”, Issue 45 (Fall 2002) – “L’épopée du cheval d’Orient”, Issue 49 (Fall 2003) – “L’Algérie des peintres et des écrivains”, Issue 53 (Fall 2004) – “Égypte, une passion française”, Issue 61 (Fall 2006) – “Venise, porte de l’Orient”, Issue 65 (Fall 2007) – “De Tyr à Carthage, légende des Phéniciens”, Issue 69 (Fall 2008) – “L’Égypte après Bonaparte”, Issue 73 (Fall 2009) – “Jerusalem. Le fervent et la guerre”

knowledge produced by *le monde arabe*, often in contact with other cultural and political communities: (1) some *dossiers* deal with contemporary, political and social issues⁶⁶; (2) other discuss knowledge produced by Muslim and Arab scholars, artists and philosophers⁶⁷ (3) while some dossiers focus on one geographical area or urban center⁶⁸. What connects the dossiers and all other sections and articles included in *Qantara* is their relation with *le monde arabe* and the network of encounters between Arabs and Westerners they all address.

An investigation of the table of contents of the *Qantara* issues reveals the changes in the content of the magazine since its first issue. Initially, *Qantara* was divided into a series of topics which explored various aspects of Arab cultures. Up to the fifth issue of the magazine, the content featured the following sections: “L’événement”, which discussed the current exhibitions at the IMA; “Cinéma”, which looked at Arabic movies, film festivals, actors and directors; “Des idées et des livres,” where the readers could find information on current and older books about *le monde arabe* or written by Arab scholars and authors; the dossier spécial; “Photos,” which highlighted images from photography exhibitions organized at the IMA or at other cultural institutions in Europe; “Arts,” which included interviews and opinion stories on Arab arts; “Ville en mouvement,” which featured articles about Arab urban environment and information about exhibitions and events in cities other than Paris; “Mémoires,” which included literary accounts of

⁶⁶ Issue 5 (Fall 1992) – “Parlez-moi d’Europe”, Issue 6 (Winter 1993) – “La mosaïque des Balkans”; Issue 7 (Spring 1993) – “Être arabe, regards croisés”, Issue 10 (Winter 1994) – “La création au féminin”, Issue 17 (Fall 1995) – “Monde arabe, monde musulman Les territoires de l’appartenance”, Issue 26 (Winter 1998) – “De la culture arabe en France”, Issue 30 (Winter 1998-1999) – “Melting France mémoire et cultures immigrés”, Issue 59 (Spring 2006) – “Le Maroc, demain”, Issue 73 (Fall 2009) – “Jerusalem, le ferveur et la guerre”

⁶⁷ Issue 3 (Spring 1992) – “Une civilisation du livre”, Issue 15 (Spring 1995) – “L’image entre le sacré et le profane”, Issue 19 (Spring 1996) – “Langue arabe, le parole et la plume”, Issue 28 (Summer 1998) – “Avveroés l’Andalou un croyant rationaliste”, Issue 41 (Fall 2001) – “Le siècle du Saladin”, Issue 50-51 (Winter-Spring 2004) – “Le Caire de Mahfouz”, Issue 54 (Winter 2005) – “La belle histoire des Mille et Une Nuits”, Issue 60 (Spring 2006) – “Penser l’état arabe, le système Ibn Khaldoun”, Issue 68 (Summer 2008) – Oum Kalsoum La diva arabe”

⁶⁸ Issue 4 (Summer 1992) – “La Méditerranée arabe”, Issue 6 (Winter 1993) – “La mosaïque des Balkans”, Issue 12 (Summer 1994) – “La ville arabe L’architecture dans la cité”, Issue 24 (Summer 1997) – “Jordanie Cités et déserts” Issue 31 (Spring 1999) – “L’Irak, de Babel à Babel”, Issue 36 (Summer 2000) – “Boire et manger en Méditerranée”, Issue 43 (Spring 2002) – “Lumneuse Alexandrie”, Issue 67 (Spring 2008) – “Tanger Légendes et séductions”, Issue 75 (April 2010) – “L’Iran Chute et les Arabes”

historical events, places and figures; and “Invitation au Voyage”, an informative section about travelling to Arab countries.

The structure of the magazine changed slightly starting with the fifth issue, which also marked one year since the founding of *Qantara*, and more noticeably with the tenth issue, which celebrated two years of publication. In the “Editorial” to the fifth issue of the magazine, editor-in-chief Thierry Fabre, also well known French writer, spoke of the changes to the structure of the content. Generally, the restructuring of the magazine is meant to offer “un nombre de pages plus important, afin de donner à lire pour tout un semestre” (Fabre, 1992, p. 3). More specifically, these changes include “de nouvelles rubriques: *Intérieurs*, *Le Temps des Saveurs*, pour dévoiler la culture au quotidien et déguster des arômes insoupçonnés” and “un dossier [spécial] plus fouillé” (Fabre, 1992, p. 3). “Intérieurs”, a section about interior spaces of the Muslim household and urban environments, such as hammams, courtyards and balconies, will have a relatively short life in *Qantara* but “Le temps des saveurs” is, until today, one of the most popular sections of the magazine. In 1999, “après deux ans d’existence, *Qantara* connaît un nouveau développement” (La rédaction, 1999, p. 3). With this tenth issue, several changes were made by the editorial team of the magazine, including two new sections, “une entrée dans la fiction avec ‘De la coupe aux lèvres’” and “une ouverture vers le monde juridique avec ‘Le temps du droit’” and “plus d’information venant directement du monde arabe, plus de livres et de photos, un meilleur équilibre texte/image, des portraits d’artistes, une invitation au voyage plus prolongée” (La rédaction, Winter 1999, p. 3). In addition, the *dossier spécial*, “qui donne à chaque numéro toute sa portée” was further expanded to reflect the renewal of the magazine.

As the magazine grows and the number of topics increases, the editorial team re-organized the content into seven overarching categories. In “Actualité”, the readers were

informed about “nouvelles d’ailleurs,” both cultural and political, new websites about *le monde arabe* and opinion pieces on topics of the present. The section “Histoire” addressed issues related to the history of Arab societies and zoomed in on political and military leaders of *le monde arabe*. “Arts” offered information about music, cinema, exhibitions, theatre and photography. The “Dossier” continued to be the central section of *Qantara*, touching on issues of most interest to the Arab world. Several pages were dedicated to the exhibitions and cultural events organized by the IMA, which solidify the relation between the Institut and the magazine. In “Villes,” several articles walked the reader through exhibitions and events related to Arab cultures organized in various Arab and European cities, while “Voyages” invited the readers to taste foods and experience geographical areas outside of the Western world. “Le temps du saveur,” now titled “Saveurs” was placed under this section. Lastly, “Litterature” included information about new books on different topics related to the Arab world and short fiction works by contemporary Arab authors. Despite all these changes in the structure and content of *Qantara*, the unifying threads of the various narratives remain the same: modernity, encounters and movement.

Colonial and post-colonial encounters: Remembering French colonialism

If the main exhibitionary spaces at the IMA rarely made reference to colonial histories and memories, several articles and dossier in *Qantara* addressed colonialism and post-colonialism directly and critically. The colonial story told throughout several issues of *Qantara* included direct and critical references to colonial domination, reflections on the situation of colonial memory in contemporary France and discussions about post-colonial culture and immigrants. This colonial narrative was not as solid, coherent and comprehensive as those which define the other domains of knowledge, such as art, architecture and literature discussed in

the pages of *Qantara*. The lack of a coherent narrative about French colonialism and of a continuous investigation into the colonial past and its legacies is primarily due to a number of inconsistencies: the lack of a regular presence of colonial themes in the magazine; the indecision about the effects of colonialism on post-colonial realities; the celebration of certain aspects connected to colonialism, such as Orientalism. Consequently, the story about colonialism is fragmented and the relation between colonial histories, post-colonialism and immigration is only periodically visible.

The unclear place of colonialism in the larger narrative of the magazine is caused by the sometimes nostalgic search for Orientalist discourses and memories, present in instances of escapism and exoticism. Paradoxically, colonialism is condemned and interrogated but aspects of it are desired and manifested. I argue that this tense relation with colonialism reflects larger political and social anxieties in France which result in broken and often incomplete narratives about France's colonial past. Also, the historical events chosen to be classified under colonialism show another bias of both French officials and scholars investigating colonial situations: the Algerian "question". Often, discussions about colonialism and post-colonial immigration center on Algeria, which was a French colony, a site of war and a permanent part of the official French imagination of its place in the Maghreb. Nonetheless, the focus on Algeria results in the marginalization of the other North African colonized spaces from popular discourse (Hargreaves, 2005; Lorcin, 2006). *Qantara* reflects this bias.

Colonial stories

Starting with the first issues of *Qantara*, the topic of colonialism was addressed in relation to French history and national identity. The integration of colonialism to the stories told about the encounters between France and the Arab world was a result of the expanded scope of

the magazine to address political and contemporary topics. The first issue of the magazine featured three different mini-*dossiers*, each corresponding with one of the three months covered by *Qantara*, October through December. For the month of November, the topic of the dossier was “La France coloniale” and it comprised four articles which refer to different encounters between France and North Africa which took place since 1830s, when the French army conquered Algeria. In “Une nation coloniale,” the first article from the dossier, Thierry Fabre spoke about “la France coloniale” in relation to the publication of *Histoire de la France coloniale* (vol.1) in 1991, one of the first books to take on the task of unearthing the complex history of French colonialism. Fabre (Fall 1991) prefaced the article with the following statement, “souvent objet de célébration, rarement question de mémoire, la France coloniale n’était pas jusqu’ici le sujet d’une histoire. Le livre majeur qui vient de paraître chez Armand Colin est l’occasion d’un premier bilan sur cette période controversée” (p. 17).

This article connected for the first time France and colonialism and positions colonial histories within the context of France’s “tradition” of forgetting traumatic events. Therefore, “face à cette propension bien française à occulter les événements traumatiques de son histoire, dont le régime de Vichy et la guerre d’Algérie sont les principaux nœuds, ce livre a l’immense mérite de faire réapparaître tout un continent enseveli” (Fabre, 1991, p. 17). The Algerian War was presented as part of France’s history through its association with another moment which caused controversy over processes of remembering and forgetting, the Vichy regime. The recently published book is praised for unearthing these forgotten memories about French colonialism, of which most traumatizing event remains until today the Algerian War. Furthermore, the volume embodied, at an epistemological level, *Qantara*’s ideal of reconstituting the history of *le monde arabe* through encounters. Fabre (1991) argued that “sans nostalgie et

avec une grande rigueur d'analyse, les auteurs multiplient les approches et *croisent* les angles de lecture" (p. 17, emphasis mine). Moreover, one of the most significant and hidden moments in the history of colonialism, decolonization, "fait l'objet d'un travail en profondeur, à la fois dans l'analyse du jeu des partis, par l'étude de l'évolution des mentalités et des opinions et dans le rôle des forces économiques" (Fabre, 1991, p. 17). This nuanced perspective on colonialism included also discussions of anti-colonial movements and "une conscience impériale tardive," which challenged the myth of a totalizing France coloniale which functioned as a coherent system of power. In addition to the book review, Alain Chenal, counselor to several IMA's presidents, wrote a short article on Charles-Andre Julien, the author of *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord* (1931), a volume which challenged some of the theses proposed by the colonial government to explain the need for colonialism. Chenal (1991) stated that "aucun combat anticolonial ne lui sera étranger notamment ceux du Maghreb. Mais il sera aussi de tous les combats pour les droits de l'homme" (p. 17). This very brief article offered a glimpse of the anti-colonial movements in France, which opposed colonialism and showed the complexity of popular reaction to the French empire.

Another article in the dossier, "Abdelkarim et l'épopée du Rif" (Abdelkarim and the story of the Rif) discussed a less known moment of opposition to France's colonialism, the Rif war in Morocco. Since 1921 until 1926, the communities inhabiting the Rif, the mountain chain at the North of Morocco, fought and resisted Spanish and French military during their colonial expansions. Under the leadership of Mohammed Abdelkarim, *les Rifains* managed to stop the expansion of Spanish troops in Morocco, using guerrilla tactics such as "harcèlements des détachements isolés, attaques nocturnes, savante alternance de férocité guerrière et de libération

des prisonniers” (Goytisoló⁶⁹, 1991, p. 24). Similar tactics, continued the writer, “[ont été] utilisés avec succès par les Algériens, les Vietnamiens et les Afghans dans leur lutte de libération nationale” (Goytisoló, 1991, p. 24). The article praised Abdelkrim for his visionary combination of military tactics with a pacifist and anti-colonialist discourse, which “réunissait ainsi la tradition et la modernité” (Goytisoló, 1991, p. 24). Abdelkrim is quoted questioning the civilizing nature of Western states, in particular reference to France and Spain, “les nations civilisées! Elles viennent civiliser avec des aviateurs...Elles tuent des êtres sans défense et elles les tuent dans l’impunité” (Goytisoló, 1991, p. 25). This testimony to France’s violence raises questions about the entire foundation of French colonialism, which no longer represents an “objet de célébration”.

The second issue of *Qantara* dedicated its *dossier spécial*, “Algérie: Trente ans après” (Algeria: Thirty years after) to the darkest page of French colonialism, Algeria’s Independence. The political undertone of this dossier and its critical post-colonial perspective on France’s encounter with Algeria are singular within the context of *Qantara*. This dossier is the *only* one so far dedicated to colonialism in its most violent form, which places France at the center of colonial histories and in the midst of processes of forgetting and distortion of memories. It is unusual that this apogee came so early in the life of *Qantara* and ended so abruptly. The narrative of colonialism does not die with this issue but becomes, after this point, fragmented, less critical and less about France’s involvement with colonial ideologies and practices. A secondary space where colonialism is brought back to life in the pages of *Qantara* is in the discussions about immigration but very little is said about colonialism itself while the focus is on the diverse realities of immigrants in France, which might or might not have been affected by

⁶⁹ Juan Goytisoló Spanish poet, essayist and novelist who lives in Marrakesh now

colonialism. The much needed dialogue on post-colonialism and immigration lacks a clear historical foundation which would explain colonialism, the civilizing mission and the systems of knowledge about the “other” it created.

The dossier “Algérie: Trente ans après” opened with a militant statement about the duty of the new generation to break the silences surrounding the Algerian War, thirty years after Algeria’s Independence. The dossier’s editors stated, “trente ans, c’est le temps d’une génération, le temps d’une proximité toujours douloureuse, le temps d’une distance peut-être possible. Le temps de s’arrêter, sans se figer, sur le passé. Le temps de questionner la mémoire, de mettre en mouvement ces constellations d’oublis qui portent tant de drames insoupçonnés, d’espoirs inavoués, des perspectives inexplorées” (Collectif, 1992a, p. I). Building on the discourse which connected colonialism and memory in the previous issue of *Qantara*, this dossier centered on the Algerian War as the moment in history without *lieux de mémoires* in contemporary France. Furthermore, the Algerian War and Algeria’s decolonization become in this dossier the subjects of a double perspective, the French and the Algerian, which might contribute to the goal of this unexpected dialogue. The introductory article clarified these goals by stating that “ce dossier est une invitation à créer de nouveaux lieux de mémoire, une occasion de s’interroger sur cette histoire commune, à partir d’un double regard: français et algérien. Là encore, il nous appartient de créer un *pont*” (Collectif, 1992a, p. I, emphasis mine). Thus, this dossier was not solely intended to challenge the colonial past and its contemporary memories, but to advance the goals of the Institut du Monde Arabe itself, to create bridges between cultures. If the main exhibitionary spaces avoided colonialism for the sake of unity and continuity, *Qantara* filled these voids by challenging this silence. Through a critical examination of

colonial themes, *Qantara* becomes, indirectly, a critic of the IMA's silences regarding French colonialism

The definition of the Algerian War provided in the introduction set the tone for the stories covered in the dossier, ranging from “le projet destructeur” of colonialism to “le rôle oublié des femmes” in the war. According to the editors, “la guerre d’Algérie en effet reste un abcès de fixation, un événement traumatique qui pèse toujours sur les sociétés française et algérienne” (Collectif, 1992a, p. I). The first article of the dossier, “La société coloniale: Un double regard” (The colonial society: Double perspectives), juxtaposed excerpts from two texts, one praising colonialism (De Brioux, *Les Beaux Voyages: Algérie*, 1912), one criticizing its discourse (H. Khodja, *Le Miroir*, 1833). The contrast between these two texts was not meant to confuse the reader or to suggest that colonialism might have had some positive outcomes, but to point out the Eurocentrism and the discriminatory ideologies of the colonial project. The editors of the dossier presented the two texts, concluding, “discours si souvent utilisé par le passé et qui, encore aujourd’hui, permet de justifier la possession de territoires en dehors de tout droit” (Collectif, 1992b, p. III). In *Les Beaux Voyages*, a children’s book about a young man’s decision to become a colonial settler in Algeria, French writer Eugène de Brioux (1992[1912]), reinforced the popular colonial thesis according to which the “barbaric” Arabs stole North Africa from the civilized and developed Romans, “[qui] l’avaient pacifiée, rendue fertile. Ils l’avaient couverte de monuments ...Leurs travaux pour l’irrigation des terres font encore l’admiration de nos ingénieurs” (cited in Collectif, 1992b, p. IV). He continued, “les hordes des Arabes envahisseurs sont venues. Ces barbares ont tout détruit, tout brûlé, tout tué, tout rendu à la mort” (De Breaux cited in Collectif, 1992, p. IV). According to the writer, colonization of lands and re-appropriation of North African territories were the duties of the French, whose ancestors were

the Romans, the “true owners” of these lands. Consequently, “nous [les Français] en avons le devoir parce que, de même que noblesse oblige, toute supériorité crée un devoir” (De Brieux cited in Collectif, 1992, p. IV).

The discriminatory undertones of the colonial discourse were further amplified by Hadman Khodja’s dismissal of French colonial practices in Algeria. Khodja, who was recruited by the French colonial regime to be part of the new colonial administration in early 1830s, was able to observe the discrepancies between France’s stated intention of collaboration with Algerians and its actual actions. Therefore, “les dispositions hostiles du reste de la Régence envers les Français sont excitées soit par le fanatisme puisque l’on profane les mosquées, les tombeaux des marabouts et même la sépulture des morts, soit aussi par les mauvais procédés exercés par des administrateurs français à Alger” (Khodja cited in Collectif, 1992b, p. III). Even if Khodja, writing in 1833, was optimistic about the contact between Algeria and France for what this encounter might do for Algeria’s development, he was critical of France’s techniques for pursuing its version of colonialism. His critical glance at France’s politics in Algeria resembled very little the anti-colonial language of twentieth century militants, which is more accusatory, but Khodja set the basis for a vocabulary which exposed France’s violent intrusion in Algeria. He argued, “le gouvernement français ne pourra profiter des avantages de la Régence sans vider ses trésors et exposer son honneur, en faisant la guerre à ce peuple opposé à ses vues” (Khodja cited in Collectif, 1992b, p. III). The violence of colonialism which was sketched in Khodja’s writings is further discussed by two contemporary scholars.

French historian Jean-Pierre Rioux and Algerian historian Mohamed Harbi talked about the memory of the Algerian War in terms of official silences, the fragmentation of collective remembering and the incoherence of the Algerian movement for independence. Rioux (1992)

wrote against those who argued that the Algerian War and its history have been forgotten in France because “la mémoire collective d’un événement n’est constituée qu’à la fin de ce deuil. Autrement dit, la guerre d’Algérie n’est ni oubliée, ni occultée dans la France de 1992: elle est en transit de mémoire” (p. V). The writer sought to deconstruct this “transit de mémoire”, starting from the realization that “il n’y a jamais eu depuis les accords d’Evian, de mémoire nationale française du conflit” (Rioux, 1992, p. V). This absence of a coherent and unitary memory about Algeria’s War denotes, according to Rioux (1992), not the state-orchestrated willingness to forget, which was argued by many French scholars⁷⁰, but “l’incapacité française à insérer cette guerre dans la chaîne du temps long et des événements marqueurs qui soude une mémoire nationale” (p. V). The author made references to public polls done in the past thirty years which pointed out that “the French”, collectively, did not believe the Algerian War was as much a threat to national identity as the Great War or the Occupation. Due to the lack of “reconnaissance nationale,” Rioux argued (1992) that “le souvenir de la guerre d’Algérie s’est privatisé et nous vivons depuis trente ans dans l’éclat des mémoires éparées et concurrentes” (p. V). This fragmentation of the process of remembering was due in part to the multitude of communities affected by decolonization but also to the failure of the French educational system to teach about the Algerian War. The conclusions of the article are optimistic and Rioux (1992) believed that “il y a quelque chance désormais de voir se constituer une mémoire historique de la guerre d’Algérie” (p. VI).

Harbi continued this dialogue with a focus on another set of divisions in memory making, this time in the Algerian context. The focus of the article was the Front de libération nationale (FLN, National Liberation Front), the group of pro-independence parties in Algeria who fought

⁷⁰ Stora, B. (2005). *La gangrene et l’oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d’Algérie*. Paris: La Découverte; Blanchard, P., Bancel, N. & Lemaire, S. (Eds.) (2005). *La fracture coloniale: La société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial*. Paris: La Découverte; Bancel, N. et al (Eds.) (2010). *Ruptures postcoloniales*. Paris: La Découverte.

and achieved the country's independence. This is where Harbi's history began, with a critical observation at the usage of the War's memory within the Algerian post-colonial political system. He wrote, "seul à présider aux destinées du pays, le FLN a confondu son histoire et celle d'Algérie et forgé une tradition historiographique qui prétend montrer que tout changement vient de lui" (Harbi, 1992, p. VI). The story of colonialism told from the perspective of Algerian history was based on a series of myths which construct the FLN as unitary, the Algerian people as unanimous and the military as the only site where anti-colonialism and pro-independence happened. On the contrary, argued Harbi (1992), "l'unité du FLN, comme celle de ses adversaires algériens ou français, sont des mythes [...] et le mythe de l'unanimité des Algériens est facilement démenti" (p. VII). The solidification of binary mythologies about colonialism and the Algerian War resulted in an increasing identity crisis of the Algerian people which "déchiré en profondeur, le tissu social résulte en partie des prédispositions de la sensibilité collective longtemps refoulée, (on savait mais on se taisait)" (Harbi, 1992, p. VII). Both Algeria and France experienced their colonial memories differently, as Rioux and Harbi showed, but the two countries share the same "problematic" event around which they must construct histories.

Djamila Amrane, Algerian militant during the War, now professor of feminist studies in France, argued in the same dossier that the field of knowledge about the Algerian War has expanded rapidly in the last years but with one great absence, "le militantisme des femmes". In "Les Algériennes dans la guerre" (Algerian women at war), Amrane argued that despite being deprived of the most basic rights during colonial times and ignored by the pro-independence movements, "dès les tout premiers mois de la guerre, des Algériennes s'engagent et investissent des secteurs jusqu'alors réservés exclusivement aux hommes: la politique et la guerre" (p. VIII). The author offered information on the number of women who died during the eight years of war

performing the same duties as men, while they received little to no recognition after the war. Amrane provided no detailed stories on specific women engaged in the war but she argued generally for the need to write and make visible their destinies during and after the War for Independence. This brief discussion on Algerian women, even if it lacked the depth of the previous two articles by Rioux and Habri, spoke to the difficulty of remembering an event which existed at the intersection of so many communities and histories. Each community remembers the war differently and often in contradiction with the other parties involved.

The lack of a collective understanding of French colonialism as disruptive and violent, together with a general malaise that prevents speaking about the Algerian War and to make it part of France's history are the main points made by this *Qantara's* dossier spécial. The openness to discuss the Algerian War in the pages of the IMA's official publication coincided with an increasing academic and historical interest in various aspect of French colonialism. Fundamental volumes were published in France at this time, such as Gérard Noiriel's *Le creuset français* (1992), Benjamin Stora's *Ils venaient d'Algérie* (1992) and Charles-Robert Ageron's *Histoire de la France coloniale* (1990). In 1992, the Institut du Monde Arabe was the host of numerous events focused on the memory of the Algerian War, such as the colloque on "Mémoire et enseignement de la guerre d'Algérie" (The memory and the teaching of the Algerian War) (March 13-14, 1992), which was later accompanied by the conference proceedings published in two different volumes⁷¹. Other public events included discussion on topics such as "La société coloniale" (The colonial society), "Raisons et dimensions d'une guerre" (Reasons and aspects of a war) and "Les intellectuels français et la guerre" (French intellectuals and the war). A film series entitled "France-Algérie: Images d'une guerre" (France-Algeria: Images of a war) was

⁷¹ Gervereau, L., Rioux, J.-P. & Stora, B. (Eds.) (1992). *La France en guerre d'Algérie: Novembre 1954-Juillet 1962*. Paris: BDIC; and Collective author (1993). *Mémoires et enseignement de la guerre d'Algérie: Actes du colloque*. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe and la Découverte.

initiated also by the IMA, featuring movies directed by both French and Algerian directors, such as Lakhdar Hamina and Jean-Luc Godard.⁷² A full list with all these events was included in the dossier. From the multitude of events and the extensive discussion about France's encounters with Algeria, it can be inferred that a space of dialogue about the Algerian War was much needed in France. And temporarily, *Qantara* and the IMA provided such a space, unexpectedly honest and critical of France's relation with its colonial past and France's commemoration practices. This space does not single out France as the only force behind colonialism and struggles over memory but also observes Algeria's role in the War and in the post-Independence silences concerning the war dictated by the leadership of the FLN.

The Algerian War has become in the last few years the subject of cinematic investigations and *Qantara* invited French historian Benjamin Stora to comment on this phenomena. In "Le cinéma français affronte la guerre d'Algérie" (French cinema is facing the Algerian War), Stora wrote about the conflicting memories of the Algerian War in the imaginaries of post-colonial France and Algeria. Because of the violent and extreme nature of French colonialism in Algeria and of the brutality of the FLN during the last years of Algerian War, wrote Stora (2008), there was "l'impossibilité de se mettre d'accord sur une commémoration de fin de guerre" (p. 19). Stora reflected on the realism of some of the movies he referenced, emphasizing the exposure of violence and torture. For example, *L'ennemi intime*, directed by Florent-Emilio Siri, "met l'accent sur la cruauté des hommes, dans les deux camps, sur les désirs inconscients des personnages, sur des actes de barbarie insoutenables" (Stora, 2008, p. 19). Other movies, such as *Nuit Noire* (2005), *La Trahison* (2006) and *Mon colonel* (2006) also depict scenes of war, violence and torture. This persistence of violence and the

⁷² A great future project would be to follow the French press during the development of these events at the IMA to observe if these instances of remembering the Algerian War and French colonialism received media attention. Also, it would be helpful to observe the official answers to such events, if there were any.

representation of the Algerian War as “absolument terrifiante” detract, according to Stora, from the complexity of the Algerian battle for independence. He wrote, “mais la vengeance perpétuelle peut-elle constituer la seule explication possible à ce conflit? [...] Comment sortir des faux documentaires, à mi-chemin entre pamphlet de dénonciation abstraite et sensualisme exotique?” (Stora, 2008, p. 20). The cinematic obsession with violence and sensationalism hides the moments of contact between the different French and Algerian groups and communities involved in the War. Stora (2008) concluded, “cinquante ans après, les images sur les écrans n’arrivent toujours pas à rassembler les mémoires blessés” (p. 20).

The colonial encounter with Algeria is generally accepted as the most violent and disruptive of local histories and cultures, representing the focus of debates and interrogations of French colonialism. Consequently, France’s colonial contacts with Morocco and Tunisia are marginally explored. The multiple dossiers spéciaux dedicated to Morocco and Tunisia speak of a more successful cooperation between the two countries and the *métropole*, explained by the shorter and weaker French presence. While Algeria was colonized in 1830, Morocco and Tunisia were established as Protectorates in 1912 and 1881 respectively. They both achieved independence from France in 1956 and their paths to sovereignty were less violent and traumatic for the national community. In the *dossier* “Le Maroc Demain” (The Morocco of tomorrow) (Spring 2006), Mohammed Ennaji (2006), Algerian historian and sociologist at the University of Rabat spoke of the “positive” aspects inherited from the French Protectorate: “Le Protectorat a rompu avec les faiblesses les plus graves de la société ancienne. Il a ainsi mis en place les infrastructures, consolidé l’expansion démographique et créé une administration efficace qui allait par la suite constituer la base de l’État moderne” (p. 28). The author interrogated the works of Moroccan historians who claimed that the Protectorate brought different forms and norms of

modernity to Morocco. Because of the emphasis on post-independence modernities, “il y a un silence assourdissant autour de la période du Protectorat...L’avènement de l’indépendance devient alors la renaissance tant attendue qui va remettre tout sur pied” (Ennaji, 2006, p. 29). Another article discussed the reforms to the “Code de la famille” under King Mohammed VI, revolutionary moment described by President of Femme Action Zhor Rachiq (2006) as “un pied dans la modernité” (p. 40). According to Rachiq, the harmonious contact with France during colonization makes possible for Morocco to accept this encounter as a generator of modern practices, such as equality of men and women in civil unions.

The romanticism which characterized the French-Moroccan encounter was explored in another dossier spécial, “Singulier Maroc” (The unique Morocco) (Fall 1999). Several articles addressed Morocco’s place within the Orientalist imaginary as the subject of desire for painters, writers and photographers. In “Mille et un Maroc,” François Zabbal (1999b) wrote that “le Maroc séduit...plusieurs générations de voyageurs, de spécialistes, d’administrateurs, d’entrepreneurs ...posèrent leur valise pour un temps plus ou moins long sur ce sol” (p. 29). Moroccan novelist and literary critic Salim Jay (1999) discussed about the fascination that Europeans felt for Morocco during colonial times but also before, “les amours littéraires occidentales s’y vivent donc volontiers comme des redécouvertes de soi, retrouvailles affairées avec le meilleur de l’archaïque intime” (p. 35). This rather serene relation between France and Morocco was seen as the result of the visionary ideologies of Hubert Lyautey, the regent of Morocco during the Protectorate. Daniel Rivet, professor of history who specializes in the study of Morocco, wrote in “Un régent incomparable” (An incredible leader) about Lyautey’s fascination with and respect for the Ancient culture of Morocco, which resulted in a very specific politics of conquest. Therefore, “Lyautey a contribué à imposer au sein de l’opinion française l’idée que le Maroc

était un très vieil état Musulman habité par un peuple guerrier, mais chevaleresque...un pays qui...ne devait pas être traité comme une colonie, mais comme un état protégé par la République” (Rivet, 1999, p. 48). This exoticized version of Morocco which coincides with Orientalist imaginaries and memories is preserved in the pages of *Qantara* as if the mentioning of less harmonious encounters would disturb the serenity of the past contacts.

Postcolonial stories

Several of the magazine’s editorials explained that *Qantara* was not only interested in culture and knowledge produced by *le monde arabe* in the past but was also aware of the necessity to explore contemporary aspects of culture. The spectrum of the quotidian is very vast and eclectic, ranging from challenges posed by post-colonial integration to food and cuisine. Nonetheless, these explorations into the contemporary and the everyday are unified by the network of encounters they reveal. Some of these encounters explore the cultural mixing which takes place in a multicultural society, such as post-colonial France, together with the difficulties to “melt” several cultures and religions into one “pot”. Other encounters, in the area of food and cuisine, reveal how much of the ingredients present in the French kitchen and restaurant have deep origins in the Arab world. Furthermore, encounters between ingredients and dishes happen also within the Arab context, where different communities constantly negotiate the ownership over certain foods and traditions.

One of the post-colonial communities which was credited with the launching of a collective consciousness among the immigrant youth is *la génération beur*. The beurs represent the second generation of French-born immigrants from North Africa, politically and socially engaged in the fight against racism and the exposure of collective forgetting. This 1980s generation was very active in the production of films, documentaries, literature and music. In

“Une mouvance en question” (A movement in question), Farid Aichoune (Spring 1992), journalist for *Le Nouvel Observateur* and former *beur*, looked back at the mouvement beur, asking “entre politique et banlieue, entre leaders ‘beurgeois’ et rap agressif, ou sont les beurs?” (p. 14). The author highlighted the main formative moments in the life of *la génération beur*, arguing that the formation of a small “beurgeoisie” resulted in the disconnect of the beur leader from the *jeunes de cité*. According to Aichoune, before 1983, France perceived its *immigrés maghrebins* purely as a labor force. However, “il a fallu attendre la Marche des ‘beurs’ en 1983 pour que s’affirme consciemment l’idée d’une installation définitive en France de la communauté maghrébine” (Aichoune, 1992, p. 14). The 1983 Marche pour l’Egalité in Paris represented hope for the many North African communities for political and cultural recognition but, according to Aichoune (1992), the politicization of the *beur* movement resulted in a general mistrust of the *beur* militants, “soupçonnés d’utiliser la ‘cause’ comme tremplin à leur promotion politique” (p. 14). In conclusion, the author expresses little hope for the future of the *jeunes de cités* to feel integrated to the larger French community because of a lack of political support. Aichoune partially blames this disenchantment on the failure of *la génération beur*.

This rather pessimistic depiction of the *beur* movement, which was much more complex and diverse than it was explained by Aichoune⁷³, is not directly questioned by other articles in *Qantara*. However, aspects of *beur* culture were referenced in two special dossier dedicated to contemporary Arab cultures in France. In “De la culture arabe en France” (Arab culture in France) (1998), Hélène Morin discussed briefly a group of literary works written by members of

⁷³ For more information on the beur movement in France, see Hargreaves, A. (1991). *Immigration and identity in beur fiction: Voices from the North African immigrant community in France*. Oxford: Berg; Tarr, C. (2005). *Reframing difference: Beur and banlieue filmmaking in France*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Tarr, C. (2009). Le droit de cité des cineastes beurs. In El Yazami, D., Gastaut, Y. & Yahi, N. (Eds.). *Génération: Un siècle d’histoire culturelle des Maghrébins en France* (pp. 280-284). Derderian, R. (2009). Quand la deuxième génération entre en scène. Paris: Gallimard. In El Yazami, D., Gastaut, Y. & Yahi, N. (Eds.). *Generations: Un siècle d’histoire culturelle des Maghrebins en France* (294-301), Paris: Gallimard.

la génération beur, such as Mina Sif, Paul Smail and Fouad Laroui. The focus of this short article was on the relation that some of the characters in novels have with the French language. Morin (1998) asked, “comment se réinventer une culture quand on est assis à califourchon entre la France et...Algérie (ou Maroc)...? Par la langue, éternel vecteur d’une identité incertaine, fluctuante et protéiforme” (p. 42). In Sif’s novel, language symbolizes the marker of belonging, as the family of Maghrebins in her novel *Mechamment Berbère* fears the inability to learn French perfectly. One of the characters confesses, “toujours nous avons été brutalisés sur les choses de la langue... Aussi on avait la terreur de n’être que des Français de deuxième ou de troisième catégorie” (Sif cited in Morin, 1998, p. 42). Azouz Begag, in *Zenzela*, wrote with irony, “contrairement à ce qu’on pourrait croire, Mabrouk air-lik n’est pas le nom d’une compagnie de lignes aériennes, mais l’écriture en français de l’expression arabe ‘Félicitations a toi’” (Begag cited in Morin, 1998, p. 42). Through literature, several writers who identified with and wrote for *la génération beur* expressed anxieties and concerns of the post-colonial immigrants.

The dossier spécial “Melting France: Mémoire et cultures immigrés” (Melting France: The memory and culture of immigrants) featured an interview with film director Yamina Benguigui. Benguigui, one of the most vocal women of *la génération beur*, directed and produced a series of documentaries⁷⁴ which made clear the connection between French colonialism and North African immigration to France. Furthermore, her documentaries bring to life post-colonial realities of the different generations of immigrant, some of them who are now French citizens or have been born in France. In “L’heritage de l’exil,” Benguigui (1999) spoke of the ideals and motivations of her generation, “à un moment, des enfants se sont rebellés. De même en France. Je fais partie de ces enfants qui, un jour, ont dit stop. Effectivement, j’ai pu

⁷⁴ Femmes d’Islam (1994); Mémoires d’immigrés, l’heritage maghrébin (1997); Inch-Allah Dimanche (2001); Aicha, Mohamed, Chaib...Engagés pour la France (2003).

faire du cinéma, non sans d'énormes difficultés. Pas seulement en enfant d'immigré maghrébin dans la société française mais aussi avec ma famille" (p. 32). Asked to comment on the lack of collective memories about immigration and colonialism in France, Benguigui (1999) explained the point of view of the parents, who kept silent about their arrival into France – "pourquoi nos parents n'ont-ils pas parlé? Parce que l'histoire de l'immigration maghrébine est honteuse...Nos parents sont venus en France parce qu'ils étaient poussés par le besoin. C'est humiliant de quitter son pays parce qu'on a faim et de venir travailler chez l'ancien colonisateur, l'ennemi" (p. 32). Benguigui made reference to the documentary "Mémoires d'Immigrés" which explores the memories of the fathers, mothers and children of North African immigrants. The director commented on the benefits of the documentary as a medium of expression of such diverse memories, arguing that "avec ce film, la parole se libère enfin. Car pour cette population-là, un film est plus fort qu'un livre...elles [les mères] ne savent ni lire ni écrire, mais elles ont une mémoire incroyable et aujourd'hui, après quarante ans d'interdits, elles racontent" (Benguigui, 1999, p. 33). Benguigui's contribution to "Melting France" set the tone for the critical perspective on France's projects of integration included in this dossier.

The unexpected focus of *Qantara* on "melting France" was explained by François Zabbal in the Editorial section, "L'âge des identités". Zabbal (1999a) argued that "il devenait de plus en plus nécessaire (et urgent) de replacer les thèmes de discussion dans une réflexion plus large sur l'évolution de la société, sur le rapport entre l'individu et la communauté, sur la citoyenneté, la République, la Nation" (p. 3). With the more and more visible presence in France of new cultures and new religions, *Qantara* participated to the discussions and debates about the changing nature of French society. The title of the dossier referenced the metaphor of the "melting pot" used to describe the American model of assimilation characterizing the 1970s,

which hoped to bring together harmoniously the multiple cultures present in the United States. In the introductory article to the dossier, “La mosaïque France,” Leila Kilani and François Zabbal described France’s diversity as multicultural “pour désigner la symbiose qui est à l’œuvre dans *les cités*, au point de contact entre populations immigrées et Français de souche” (p. 28, emphasis mine). The association between North African immigration and the *banlieue* was common in popular French discourses, especially generated by French mainstream media. These deeply embedded social representations were referenced by the editors of the dossier, as they also associated immigration and diversity with the marginal zones of the city, *les cités* or *la banlieue*. This is proven by the selection of the photograph displayed in the introductory section of the dossier. The photograph, titled “Dans la banlieue,” showed a “typical” image from Lens, a French suburb, featuring a group of three children playing football next to a graffiti-ed wall. The background included glimpses of a HLM and the caption read, “ici à Lens, le sport est devenu un moyen d’expression privilégié” (p. 28).

It is accurate that the *banlieue* plays a significant role in the tensions between French and immigrants and in the life of many North African immigrants and French citizens of immigrant origin. However, these tensions, as discussed in Chapter 5, have a long history which involved French colonialism and post-colonial politics. The association of the *banlieue* with immigrants without a detailed discussion of the history behind this association does nothing more than to perpetuate stereotypes about the North African communities in France. Another bias embedded in this representation of immigration is that immigration to France is equal with North African immigration. The title of the dossier, “Melting France: Mémoires et cultures d’immigrés” did not specify that this series of articles looked specifically at immigration from Maghreb.

Therefore, the readers could assume that different immigrant communities were included in the

discussion. Or, on the contrary, the lack of specification might communicate to the French readers that this dossier will be about North African immigrants. The absence of this reference from the title suggests the expectation that, when immigration is constructed as a “problem” for France, the focus of the debate would be on *les Maghrébins*.

The political class, social workers, intellectuals and scholars are involved in “débats enfiévrés” about immigration, which “dévient ainsi une sorte d’objet de laboratoire pour qui veut observer une société construite sur des ‘piliers’ concurrents” (Kilani and Zabbal, 1999, p. 29). Furthermore, the authors continued, the traditional institutions for forging French citizens, the school, the political party, the union and the army are challenged by the new problems posed by integration. The article argued that the blame for the incapacity of republican institutions to accommodate the new types of immigration should fall on the “nature profonde de la nouvelle immigration” (Kilani and Zabbal, 1999, p. 29). Zabbal and Kilani explained that “les grandes institutions républicaines qui avaient si bien assuré l’assimilation dans le corps de la Nation des différentes vagues d’immigrés, depuis la fin du XIXe siècle, paraissaient bien malades” (Kilani and Zabbal, 1999, p. 29). However, “on ne manqua de renvoyer cet échec à la nature profonde de la nouvelle immigration” (Kilani and Zabbal, 1999, p. 29). The label of “nouvelle immigration” was applied to the Muslim communities coming to France from the South, bringing in different cultural and religious practices than the older waves of European immigration. If the Polish or Italians are considered successfully integrated to France, this new wave “alignaient au contraire des différences insurmontables, voire un capital d’hostilités irréductibles héritées de l’époque coloniale” (Kilani and Zabbal, 1999, p. 29). Not only are the new immigrants to be blamed for being racially and ethnically different but they are also accused of hating France because it colonized their countries in the past. The introduction positioned

immigrants and French in constant political and religious opposition and the only harmonious encounters take place in the production of culture. In opposition to culture, religion remains the most debated aspect of integration.

Several articles in the *dossier* framed Islam as a challenge to the French laïcité, recalling France's past successes with the integration of other ethnic communities. Speaking about the integration of Spaniards, Italians and Polish immigrants, French sociologist Edgar Morin argued that their successful "melting" within the French "pot" was possible due to a strong educational system, which might not function as well when dealing with North African immigrants. Morin (1999) wrote, "l'école est en crise maintenant...mais un phénomène de convivialité et d'affinité instinctive se produit entre les populations" (p. 31). An example of this "convivialité" is, according to Morin, Arab music. However, it is the laïcité and its practices which pose the biggest challenge to harmonious contacts outside the cultural dimension. Morin's interpretation of laïcité as "capable de poser de questions en dehors de la religion" suggests that the universal and humanist values of this ideology should not interfere with religious practices. Therefore, "le processus français d'intégration suppose la laïcisation mais ne signifie pas l'abandon de la foi" (Morin, 1999, p. 31). Thierry Tout, director of Fonds d'action sociale (FAS)⁷⁵, offered a similar but more detailed definition of laïcité, "la laïcité n'est pas la négation de toute religion...l'anticléricalisme ou l'antireligion; elle consiste à dire qu'il existe une sphère de pensée privée dans laquelle aucune autorité publique n'a de légitimité" (Tout, 1999, p. 37). This definition was consistent with the types of social and cultural projects run by FAS, which aimed to balance the cultures of the new comers with those of *la société d'accueil* to achieve the desired "mixité culturelle".

⁷⁵ FAS is le Fonds d'action sociale pour les travailleurs émigrés et leur familles – it was created in 1958 to help immigrants to integrate successfully within the French society. The four main area of intervention of FAS are: social work, housing, professional development and culture.

Even if they share slightly different views of laïcité, both Morin and Tout suggested that the lived realities of the immigrants and the contacts with the French were more complex and diverse than the discourses which confined the two communities to “natural” oppositions. Similarly, Jocelyne Cesari, professor of political science at Harvard University, spoke about some common misconceptions about North African immigrants in regards to their allegiance to the Islamic faith. For example, marriages between cousins were decreasing in Algeria and Morocco with an increasing practice of free choice in the search for a partner. In France, the Islamic leaders, the imams, were overworked and lack the resources to respond to all the requirements from the practicing communities. Therefore, “cette inadéquation et déstructuration des communautés d’origine favorise certes l’individualisation des choix religieux, pour le meilleur et pour le pire” (Cesari, 1999, p. 39). According to Cesari, the Islam practiced in France was different from that experienced in the country of origin and Cesari calls this hybrid religion “un islam confessant et séculier” (p. 40).

If religion causes great anxieties for the architects of the politics of integration, culture, represented especially by music and language, mediates with success the interactions between different cultural communities. In “Coeur de cité: La culture adolescente” (In the heart of the suburbs: Youth culture), French linguist and sociologist David Lepoutre discussed the potential of linguistic and cultural practices to produce “la mixité culturelle” which French institutions were either not equipped or unwilling to encourage. Lepoutre described some of the findings of his ethnographic research in La Courneuve, one of the Parisian *banlieue chaudes*. He confessed his fascination with “les pratiques langagières” developed by the youth group, “un parler populaire” with roots “dans le vieil argot du français populaire, les différentes langues de l’immigration et les créations originales du verlan contemporain” (Lepoutre, 1999, p. 41).

Together with this language, the ethnographer discovered a series of practices which, he argued, outsiders might consider gratuitous and violent. Therefore, “en analysant les différentes formes de confrontations, on observe qu’elles sont beaucoup moins désordonnées et ‘sauvages’ (“Le retour des enfants loups,” titrait le journal *Marianne* dernièrement) qu’elles n’y paraissent, et qu’elles s’établissent même selon des modalités bien définies” (Lepoutre, 1999, p. 42). Not only did these youth communities form a coherent cultural system but their practices, “cette culture des rues,” influenced mainstream culture, entering a dialogue with the larger French community. Jean-Pierre Goudaillier (1999), well-known professor of linguistics, called the linguistic practices evolving within the French banlieue “un parler interethnique” which brings together “le français, la langue véhiculaire, et l’immense variété de vernaculaires qui compose la mosaïque linguistique des cités et quartiers” (p. 53). The linguistic identity which forms in these marginal spaces became a means to revolt against social injustice. At the same time, these new languages did not remain isolated to the areas where they develop. According to Goudaillier (1999), “les mots sortent des cités. Leur propagation s’effectue grâce aux contacts que jeunes et moins jeunes appartenant à des groupes sociaux divers ont entre eux. Les media – essentiellement radiophoniques et télévisuels – participent eux aussi à la diffusion” (p. 54)

One area of culture which allows for the diffusion of the “parler interethnique” and for creative encounters is music. Phillipe Mourrat is the director of the Rencontres de la Villette, annual event which brings together various manifestations of *cultures urbaines*, ranging from hip hop to stand-up comedians. He wrote about the artists who participate to the event that “ils sont particulièrement représentatifs du ‘melting-France’ le plus actuel, et acteurs d’un tohu-bohu culturel” (Mourrat, 1999, p. 43). One example of this “tohu-bohu culturel” was the Lebanese rapper Clotaire K, whose music “parle français, libanais ou anglais...donc non content de se

nourrir de sa culture d'origine et de celle du 'pays d'accueil' il va au-delà, comme emporté par l'élan du mélange" (Mourrat, 1999, p. 44). The contacts which take place between different languages and styles of music have very specific meanings for those who produce them. One of these specificities is "l'attachement territorial...il ne s'agit pas de l'amour de la patrie française, mais d'un très fort sentiment d'appartenance à un quartier, une ville, un département" (Mourrat, 1999, p. 44). The possibility for creative and non-violent cultural encounters within the field of musical production does not solve larger problems related to "diffusion et creation artistique," two of the tenets of French cultural policy. Often, wrote Mourrat, the artists from the *banlieue* receive less financial support than well established French artists and they have to work with less equipment and space. In "Marseille, une ville nation" (Marseille, the nation city), the rapper Imhotep told an optimistic story about the city in the South of France and the possibility to produce music in a geographical space which connects France with North Africa. His account is maybe too glorifying of the potential of Marseille to integrate the new immigrants and allow them to perform creatively. In contrast with Imhotep's experience of France, Rachid Taha, one of the most well-known and visionary Algerian artists, sang about "la culture de l'exil" lived by the first generation immigrants, who worked in factories and felt "la douleur et les brûlures de la nostalgie" (Mezouane, 1999, p. 49).

This dossier, together with the other few articles on culture and immigration revealed larger social biases and anxieties around the new immigration from North Africa but challenged some of the popular stereotypes about the youth from the *banlieue*. Religion still dominates the debates about the integration of populations which were faithful to Islam within a secular French republic. However, the contributors who tackle this issue believe that compromise must come from both parties involved in the negotiation of belonging, the French institutions which form

secular citizens and the immigrant communities themselves. When referencing culture, the various authors spoke with optimism about the various encounters generated by the new linguistic practices and music styles developed by the youth in the banlieue. While these positive depictions of these young creators challenged the images of *délinquants* and *racaille* which abound in the French press, they did not interrogate the reasons why young immigrants are destined to live in these decaying suburbs. There was no discussion of the various social and cultural policies developed during the twentieth century which designated the banlieue as the natural space for *jeunes immigrés* and for *Français issus d'immigration*. Moreover, mediations on the close connection between colonial immigration and post-colonial realities, such as institutionalized discrimination, racism or high unemployment, were also missing. These absences and the marginal presence of immigrants in the pages of *Qantara* reflect the tension between writing about the post-colonial realities as part of France's contemporary issues and the othering of the youth and their cultural practices. Just like colonialism, post-colonial immigration lacks a fixed presence in the pages of the magazine, which results in the formation of fragmented narratives about this significant social phenomenon.

Oriental encounters: Critical reflections and nostalgic recollections

A critique of Orientalism

Critical reflections on colonial histories also unravel in another set of debates and dialogues about the legacies of Orientalism. France and Great Britain were “credited” by Edward Said with setting the foundations of Oriental discourses and practices within the West. The systems of knowledge about the “other” developed during colonial conquests, explained Said (1979) “disregards, essentializes, denudes the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region...entire periods of the Orient's cultural, political, and social history are

considered mere responses to the West. The West of the actor, the Orient a passive reactor” (p. 109). With France being a main contributor to the creation of Oriental knowledge and to institutions for the preservation of these orders of knowing the “other”, critical interrogations of Orientalism are always controversial. Furthermore, the close connection between Orientalism and colonialism increases the anxieties generated by public debates on Orientalism. *Qantara* itself has an ambiguous relation with Orientalism, as it is often critical to practices of “othering”, while the language of some articles and dossiers reminds, nostalgically, of colonial times. The third issue of *Qantara* (Spring 1992) featured an interview with Charles Malamoud, renowned historian of India, on the crisis of departments and research institutions dedicated to the study of the “Orient”. Malamoud (1992) blamed this “crisis” on “l’interrogation sur la légitimité de la notion d’orientalisme [qui] sert souvent de prétexte ou de prélude à une interrogation d’un autre ordre: à quoi bon ces études?” (p. 12). The historian, defender of oriental institutions and of the academic enterprise of exploring the Orient was nonetheless sympathetic to Said’s interpretations of Orientalism. He wrote, “Said est le brillant porte-parole d’un courant de pensée qui a été très vivace. Cependant, qu’une catégorie d’orientalistes ait servi l’entreprise coloniale ne justifie en rien une condamnation de la science occidentale; ni le fait que nous soyons extérieurs à ces cultures” (Malamoud, 1992, p. 13).

This short interview set the stage for future interrogations of Orientalism, its connections with the French Empire and its practices in France today. The existence of departments for the study of the Orient in some of the most prestigious French universities such as the Sorbonne poses a significant challenge to thinking critically of France’s role in othering the systems of knowledge produced by Arab countries. The Fall 1994 issue of *Qantara* dedicated its *dossier spécial* to “L’orientalisme et après?” (After Orientalism?) which opened with a full page

reproduction of an Oriental painting, *La réponse* by Ludwig Deutsch (1883). Thierry Fabre (1994), the editor of the dossier, began the introduction with the celebration of Delacroix, who, the author believed, “est devenu, à la suite de son voyage au Maroc, l’exact antidote de ces peintres exotiques. Il a fait l’expérience de l’Autre et son regard s’est profondément transformé” (p. 20). Delacroix is therefore positioned in contrast with other Oriental artists such as Deutsch, who, instead of understanding the Orient, reproduced its most stereotypical aspects. From the succinct presentation of the dossier’s content, it became clear that the articles were not meant to deconstruct the orders of knowledge crafted by France but were intended to suggest the complexity of Orientalist thought and the diversity of representations of the Orient. Therefore, “c’est justement pour tenter de faire de ‘l’Orient’ un sujet de réflexion ou d’action libre que *Qantara* se propose, avec ce dossier spécial, de créer les conditions d’un dialogue et d’une tentative de dépassement de ce débat” (Fabre, 1994, p. 20). Just like Malamoud, Fabre and the rest of the contributors to the dossier were not interested in understanding the origins of Orientalist thoughts or its close connection with French colonialism. Orientalism itself was accepted as a legitimate source of knowledge about the “other”. What this *dossier* argues for is a nuanced reading of Orientalism in order to find exceptions to the general discourse which stigmatizes the “other”.

The artist Eugène Delacroix represents a symbol of the exceptions to traditional Oriental renditions of North African people and places. Art historian Maurice Arama opened his article, “Eugène Delacroix: De l’Orient rêvé à l’Orient vécu” (Eugene Delacroix: From the imaginary to the real Orient) with a brief enumeration of elements to be commonly found in classical Orientalist paintings. According to Arama (1994) “l’orientalisme a ses registres, ses rituels, ses parfums, un bestiaire peuplé de fauves, de lévriers et d’alezans, une palette où le rouge domine.

Il aime l'or et les brillances, les personnages enturbannés, les esclaves, les sultanes, les almées, les favorites qui, la nuit, murmurent mille récits dans les harems et le palais" (p. 21). In contrast to these stereotypical and problematic representations of Arab cultures, Delacroix was presented as the artist who broke these visual codes through his close contact with Moroccan people and landscapes. Therefore, "le voyage au Maroc se mue dès lors en voyage initiatique... Venu chercher 'l'Orient', Delacroix croise, dans une terre qui va hanter son esprit jusqu'au dernier jour, l'Antiquité vivante. Il y découvre 'le sublime', une lumière subtile" (Arama, 1994, p. 24). It is true that Delacroix experienced Morocco and Algeria directly during his travels in North Africa, but his voyage was part of a colonial diplomatic mission initiated by the French government. Furthermore, the artist built on already existing knowledges about the Oriental "other", feeding from the same fascination with exotic, mysterious and private spaces. And the title of the article stated this clearly by classifying Delacroix's work as "l'Orient vécu". The Orient, even if it is lived, is still the Orient.

Speaking from within the Oriental order of knowledge about the negative and positive aspect of Orientalism does very little to challenge the system itself. This relation to Orientalism is obvious in an interview with a well-known professor from the University of Egypt, Abdel-Ghani Baraka, trained as an Orientalist. Baraka divided Orientalism in multiple phases of development, positioning himself among the scholars who challenged the knowledge produced by those Orientalists who collaborated with colonialists. He stated, "une nouvelle catégorie d'orientalistes reprocha à la première son manque d'objectivité et sa tendance à ne trouver en Orient que ce qui confirmait ses désirs et allait dans le sens de son imagination" (Baraka, 1994, p. 25). This new community of scholars "alla jusqu'à prendre fait et cause pour l'Orient, défendit sa civilisation et les valeurs de sa spiritualité en Occident" (Baraka, 1994, p. 25). Even

if paved with good intentions, this road to knowing the “other” reminded of Said’s comments on the passive role of the Arab communities, while the Western or Western-trained scholars are the only active actors. The interviewer asked Baraka to describe the negative and positive aspects of Orientalism. If the negative impact of Orientalism was discussed in terms of “risque culturel et religieux” and the infiltration of “idées, souvent erronées” within the French (or Egyptian) educational system, its main positive contribution revolves around the usage of scientific rationality to understand the “other”. Baraka (1994) argued, “on ne peut nier l’apport des orientalistes en matière de découvertes archéologiques, de recherche et de sauvegarde d’anciens manuscrits... Sans oublier l’emploi de méthodes *scientifiques* et le souci d’exactitude” (p. 26). Both these methodological concerns are themselves very “Western” in nature but the incompatibility between the object of inquiry and the applied method of gathering knowledge is not at all addressed or even accounted for.

Both Baraka and in a later article, Maxime Rodinson, world renowned Orientalist, defended Orientalism and the knowledge it produced about Arabs within an environment of much needed and timely contestations of the foundations of this order of knowing. Baraka (1996) claimed that Orientalist scholars must continuously seek encounters with the Arab cultures in order to encourage dialogue and to “assurer une réelle et féconde rencontre des civilisations,” hinting that Orientalists can continue to depict Arab communities and cultures as long as they employ science and reason (p. 26). In “Fantôme et réalités de l’orientalisme” (Ghosts and realities of Orientalism), Rodinson, one of the most famous French Orientalists, spoke against contemporary definitions of Orientalism which suggested that this system of knowledge is founded on “une maligne intention”. Rodinson (1994) gave the following example of a dialogue between a little girl and her father, “‘Papa, qu’est-ce qu’un orientaliste?’ disait

devant moi une petite fille à son père, un écrivain arabe vivant aux Etats-Unis. La réponse fut en substance: ‘C’est un méchant homme qui dit du mal des Arabes’ (p. 28). To such claims, Rodinson (1994) offered a more precise and analytical definition of the term, “les études sur l’Orient, plus précisément sur les pays et les peuples qu’on avait coutume (et qu’on a encore coutume dans beaucoup de cas) de qualifier d’orientaux” (p. 28).

Rodinson blamed Edward Said and his book *Orientalism* for “les nuisances monstrueuses et proprement mythologiques” associated with Orientalist knowledge. Rodinson (1994) described Said as a Palestinian Christian, “c’est donc un Arabe dont la pureté de l’attachement à l’arabisme est a priori suspecte aux yeux de maints Arabes” (p. 30). The author continued with a psychological profile of Said, whose writings were observed as the cause of the guilt felt by Said because of his departure from Palestine and his new life in the United States. Rodinson claimed, “il [Said] éprouve un vif sentiment de culpabilité et décide de le surmonter par un engagement [idéologique] intense. S’il s’agit d’un intellectuel, cela se traduira par des publications aux formulations souvent excessives” (p. 30). Said’s research was critiqued for essentializing Orientalist knowledge and for misrepresenting the intellectuals, whose work, after all “est conditionné par leur société, avec ses intérêts, ses passions, ses entraînements idéologiques” (Rodinson, 1994, p. 30). This comment implies that Orientalist scholars were conditioned by colonialism, which was the social and political context in which they were all working. However, it is this context of colonialism which Said questioned and which remained absent in Rodinson’s accusatory article. Because, as an Orientalist, Rodinson dismisses his collaboration with colonial politics, he made the argument that the Western depictions of the Orient were no different than any other representations external to the culture on display. Therefore, “comment

pourrait-il en être autrement? C'est un regard de l'extérieur comme l'était celui des musulmans sur la Chine et l'Inde, sur l'Europe même" (Rodinson, 1994, p. 20).

Historian Tarek el-Bachari discussed the relation between Islam and Orientalism, starting from a different definition of Orientalism, in between those offered by Said and Rodinson. El-Bechri (1994) wrote, "par orientalisme, j'entends les études faites par des savants et chercheurs occidentaux sur l'évolution des sociétés musulmanes à partir du christianisme ou d'un athéisme déclaré...Islam représente pour l'orientaliste un simple domaine d'investigation qu'il aborde de l'extérieur de son champ social et historique propre" (p. 32). The writer respected the detailed gathering of knowledge about Arab cultures but was disappointed by the lack of "signification du monde présenté. C'était comme s'il avait contemplé des momies pharaoniques: d'abord ébloui par leur survivance 'extérieure', puis déçu par leur absence d'âme!" (el-Bechri, 1994, p. 33). Therefore, according to the author, Orientalist scholars managed to translate the external elements of Islamic cultures in a language accessible to the Western reader but "éloigné de la dimension spirituelle et socio-historique" (el-Bechri, 1994, p. 33). Because of this superficial interpretation of culture, the Occident was never capable of truly knowing the "other". The author gave two examples: "en 1979, la révolution iranienne surprend les dirigeants occidentaux comme l'avait fait en 1961 la révolution algérienne" (el-Bechri, 1994, p. 33). Hence, el-Bechri (1994) was not critical of Orientalism in its totality but of the practices of scientific research which were incompatible with "la matière étudiée, du fait même qu'ils ne sont pas issus de cette matière elle-même" (p. 34). These methodologies of translating cultures to Western audiences used values and norms valid within an Occidental context, which explained the lack of "signification" and the little authentic knowledge about Arab cultures.

In this close encounter with Orientalism, two main narratives prevail: the absence of colonialism as the main generator of Orientalist knowledge and the dislike of Edward Said's "totalizing" representation of Orientalist thought in *Orientalism*. Most intellectuals who contributed to this dossier pointed out, more or less critically, the negative aspects of Orientalism. The production of knowledge about the Arab "other" during the 18th and 19th centuries contributed to the general mis-representations of Arab cultures due to a superficial and external translation of these cultures and their communities. Furthermore, many stereotypes which exist today within the Western imaginary were traced back to Oriental representations. At the same time, Orientalism was praised for the extensive projects of gathering knowledge and for its role of defending Arab cultures in the West. Orientalism was accepted as an important and necessary contribution to the overall history of knowledge in the West but its connection with and dependency of the colonial enterprise were not problematized. Furthermore, the book which did emphasize this connection, Said's *Orientalism*, was dismissed and harshly critiqued. While Said received plenty of criticism for his depiction of the Orient as a discursive construction of Western thought and for the harsh depictions of Orientalist systems of knowledge, his book focused on the relation between European imperialism and the knowledge it produced about the "other". This connection, which would imply the complicity of Orientalist scholars who are still part of the French academia to the colonial conquests is what bothers most of the contributors to this dossier.

Oriental nostalgia: Voyage and mystery

Despite the critical interrogations of colonialism and Orientalism, certain sections of *Qantara* are sites of nostalgia for a romanticized and exoticized Orient. The desire for the "other" comes from what Linda Nochlin calls "the absence of history". Nochlin (1983)

expanded this idea through an analysis of Jean-Leon Gérôme's *Snake Charmer* (1886), where "Gérôme suggests that this Oriental world is a world without change, a world of timeless and atemporal rituals and customs, untouched by the historical processes that were...drastically altering Western societies" (p. 36-7). Orientalist paintings and literature offer escapism from modernity, while the real spaces of the Orient presented the European traveler with a "poetic of space" and "an imaginative geography" which separate the "other's" spaces from those of the observer (Beaulieu and Roberts, 2002, p. 5). Therefore, the Orient was divided into a series of spaces to be explored and conquered, then categorized and brought back to the *métropole*. Two of these spaces were the urban and rural landscapes of the Orient and the mysterious interiors of the Muslim households, a space of women par excellence. One of the main venues for the exploration of the foreign lands of the Orient was the voyage, the most famous one being the Napoleonic Egyptian Expedition in the 18th century. Paul Smethurst (2009) argued in *Travel Writing, Form and Empire* that "travel and travel writing, and the imaginative geographies they conjured, were crucial to the discursive formation of empire, especially by their insinuation and cementation of crude binaries" (p. 1). Travel developed into a form of knowledge gathering with the increasing number of state-organized expeditions, research grants for French artists and scientific explorations (see Benjamin, 2003, p. 129-90). Travels for purposes of expanding horizons of knowledge are not an invention of contemporary colonialism, as Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubies (1999) argued in *Voyages and Vision*. However, travelling in the colonized Orient solidified the system of knowledge developed by Orientalists, which was brought back to the *métropole* through museums and colonial exhibitions and continue to travel within contemporary imaginaries about the Arab world, as exemplified by the section "Voyages" in *Qantara*.

These voyages revealed both the external and internal worlds discovered in the Orient. Therefore, the invasive character of the European gaze enters the most private spaces of the Arab communities, such as hammams, courtyards and patios, creating myths about the gendering of the Orient. In *Colonial Fantasies*, Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998) discussed Orientalism from a feminist perspective, using the veil as the metaphor for the various acts of the Western gaze to enter the most secluded areas of the women's private spheres. Therefore, "the veil is one of those tropes through which Western fantasies of penetration into the mysteries of the Orient and access to the interiority of the Other are fantasmatically achieved" (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 39). Therefore unveiling women and entering their apartments becomes the equivalent of conquering the colonized countries. In *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula analyzed the role of colonial postcards depicting Arab women in the creation of phantasms about the Orient. The most common depictions of women are in isolation from the male, external world. Thus, "it the women are inaccessible to sight (that is, veiled), it is because they are imprisoned. This dramatized equivalent between the veiling and the imprisonment is necessary for the construction of an imaginary scenario that results in the dissolution of the actual society...in favor of a phantasm: that of the harem" (Alloula, 1986, p. 21). The simplification and exoticization of the feminine universe of the colonized nations resulted in post-colonial stereotypes about the overall position of women within Arab society. The section "Intérieurs" from *Qantara* did very little to challenge these stereotypes.

Starting with the first issue of *Qantara*, the readers were invited to take a trip to *le monde arabe* in the rubric entitled "Invitation au voyage". The voyage is one of the sites where Europeans and Arabs have met even before colonial times, a space of encounters which brings together places and people. The potential for contact embedded in the action of travelling

corresponds with the mission of *Qantara*. The travelling of the French to North Africa made colonialism possible and the same voyages resulted in the creation of Orientalist systems of knowledge. Furthermore, French in the *métropole* were often invited for a “tour du monde dans un jour” by the guides of the various colonial exhibitions. *Qantara* featured several articles which focused on the intentions and expectations of Europeans travelers during their voyages to the Orient. In “Fascination du voyage en Orient” (The fascination of Oriental voyages), Patricia Almarcegui (2003), catalan scholar of comparative literature, argued that “entre 1750 et 1870, c’est pour le lointain Orient que l’Européen part en voyage. En voyage, vraiment? Plutôt en quête de son passé, à la recherche d’un paradis illusoire, image mythique d’un Occident d’avant la chute...” (p. 10). The voyage and the destinations of these travels constructed the Orient as a space of escapism but also as “empreint d’une apathie maléfique, voire ressenti comme une négativité de l’Occident” (Almarcegui, 2003, p. 11). Another usage for voyages to the Orient was the search for “le paradis” and for a humanism not to be found in the Occident. Therefore, “le lieu visité était vu, ou plutôt imaginé, beaucoup plus souvent dans un espace et un temps antérieurs” (Almarcegui, 2003, p. 12).⁷⁶

The first invitation au voyage extended by *Qantara* to its readers took those eager to travel to Hadramaout, “la vallée d’argile”. The travel to “un espace et un temps antérieurs” was obvious in the article’s introduction which read, “traversé par les caravanes, abritant d’immémoriales villes ocre et blanches, cette région du Yémen est le lieu même des échanges entre Arabie et Asie, entre sable et océan, entre passé et présent” (Abdelamir, 1991, p. 38). As a bridge between past and present, Hadramaout became an atemporal space of mystery and

⁷⁶ For more on traveling, colonialism and Orientalism, please see: Lowe, L. (1995). *Critical Terrains. French and British Orientalisms*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Elsner, J. & Rubiés, J.-P. (Eds.) (1999). *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*. London: Reaktion Books; Kuehn, J. & Smethurst, P. (2009). *Travel Writing, Form and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*. New York: Routledge.

escapism. These two rewards of a voyage to Hadramout were clearly stated, “Royaume de l’argile, du soleil et de la chaux, l’Hadramaout apparaît comme un événement accidentel millénaire...indifférent aux événements explosifs qui secouent le monde” (Abdelamir, 1991, p. 39). The emphasis on the potential for escapism, which travelers have found in the Orient since the seventeenth centuries, and on the existence of this space out of time and away from contact with modernity is expressed in the conclusion to the article, “en ces temps de tumulte, partir dans l’Hadramaout c’est retrouver un peu de sérénité perdue, au voisinage de la beauté” (Abdelamir, 1991, p. 38).

The south of Morocco, Petra, Algeria, Liban or Istanbul were all positioned as timeless spaces at the outskirts of modernity which brought visitors close to Paradise. Liban was named “antichambre du Paradis” (anteroom to Paradise) (Barakat, 1992, p. 48), Istanbul became le Sublime, “secrète, séduisante, unique” (secret, seductive, unique) (Balta, Summer 1994, p. 77), the Kasbah from the South of Morocco “rêvent, nostalgiques, à leur splendeur passée” (dreaming with nostalgia of their past beauty) (Michon, Summer 1992, p. 32), while Bou Saada in Algeria is “la cité du bonheur” (the city of happiness) (Kacimi, Winter 1993, p. 56). The voyage to Moroccan Kasbah started with a detailed descriptions of the colors which the visitors would encounter, “des couleurs – l’ocre et le rouge de la terre, le tendre vert des oliviers, des amandiers et des terrasses d’orge et de luzerne, l’azur immaculé du ciel” (Michon, Summer 1992, p. 32). The visual contact with these lands was intended to prepare the senses for the journey to follow, which would take the visitor to the desert, an expected space in any trip to the Orient. Michon (Summer 1992) continued, “personne ne résistera à la tentation d’aller, au levant ou au couchant, fouler le sable des dunes du ksar Tingheras ou de Merzouga pour se baigner dans un flamboiement de lumière” (p. 34). In Algeria, Bou Saada, “aux confins du désert, au confins du

désir,” opened up its deserts to the visitors seeking serenity and silence. Algerian writer Mohamed Kacimi (1993) explained that “soudain, le désert trébuche, oublie l’erg, la dune et le sable qui s’est trop répété. Commence le règne absolu de la steppe, immense cadavre du saurien, ocre, brunâtre, teint de mélancolie, à peine rythmé par de minuscules touffes de thym, d’armoïse et d’alfa, qui donnent si peu de prise au vent du Sud” (p. 56). In Petra, the desert was replaced with “pierres et collines” (stones and hills) but the effects on the visitors were the same and “nimbée de neige la cité des Nabatéens perd ses contrastes solaires, faits de rouges et d’ocres, et devient un étrange cocon pour voyageurs solitaires” (Ghitany, Winter 1995, p. 79).

Similar narrations of voyages were fused in a special issue dedicated to “Le temps du voyage” (Time for travel) (Summer 1995, emphasis in original). In “Prélude au voyage”, Thierry Fabre and Fawzia Zouari (1995) set the mood for the travels to follow defining voyage as “tutoyer l’ailleurs, apprivoiser l’inconnu, se laisser porter par le fleuve de l’inattendu, se laisser surprendre par le mystère, soudain accessible, à portée de main, à toucher des yeux” (p. 4). The voyage in the Orient was different from a voyage in a Western city, where modernity has eliminated the possibility to escape and to find mysterious and unexplored corners. At the same time, the Orient, which invited the Western gaze, allows itself to be explored, conquered, and domesticated. Therefore, “le voyage est une quête, un désir du monde, un apprentissage de l’être à la rencontre de l’Autre. Le voyage est un plaisir, une échappée belle, l’occasion trop rare de renouer avec la ‘vraie vie’” (Fabre and Zouari, 1995, p. 4). This “vraie vie” was a reference to the expectation that non-Western lands would be unexplored, primitive and pure, appropriate for Ghitany’s “voyageurs solitaires”. The editors expanded their explanation of voyage with themes dangerously close to nineteenth century colonial discourse. They wrote, “il suffit que notre curiosité pousse la porte du monde, et voilà que la terre défile en contrées et océans, se rapproche

en imperceptibles rumeurs, s'arrondit et roule dans la paume de nos mains. Nous savons alors qu'il n'y a point de géographie qui tienne devant l'impératif du mouvement. Il n'y a pas d'immobilité qui résiste au désir de voyager" (Fabre and Zouari, 1995, p. 4). The possession of the world in the palms of one's hands and the impossibility of any space to escape the gaze of the traveler were both ideas born out of colonialism, a system of power which aimed to dominate and exploit foreign lands until there was no geography which resisted conquest. Armed with these definitions of voyage, the reader was offered a last invitation, "Entrons donc sans plus tarder dans le temps du voyage, là où se relève la beauté du monde" (Fabre and Zouari, 1995, p. 5).

The places chosen for this imaginary journey acquired mythical dimensions, confirming their timelessness and becoming sites of desire for Western artists and writers. Carthage, the ancient empire which expanded all the way from the North of Tunisia to the North of Spain, was named by the author "la reine vagabonde" in relation to the legend of the lost city. A land of legends, Carthage was conquered by the Roman Empire and partially destroyed after the Punic Wars. However, the time period covered in the article was the time when Carthage was at peace, developing as a prosperous city. The author explained, "grâce à la magie des lieux, le voyage dans le passé de Carthage, par-delà la poésie de l'imaginaire, invite à une méditation sur les bienfaits de la paix" (Beschaouch, 1995, p. 42). A similar aura of myth and atemporality characterizes Cappadocia, a region in central Turkey. French journalist Jacques Lacarriere (1995) found here "un paysage placide, enrobé dans la lumière ocrée de l'automne: une grande plaine couverte de peupliers frissonnant dans le vent, les villages jaunes et gris où pointe ici et là l'index des minarets, des troupeaux de moutons dispersés dans les champs" (p. 65). The stillness of time, depicting a land that lacks movement, was searched by the traveler, who writes that

“nous ne sommes pas ici au commencement du monde mais dans un paysage usé dont la vieillesse est simplement inapparente comme celle des glaciers” (Lacarrière, 1995, p. 66). This lack of movement, which indicated the slow passage of time attract to Aden, in Yemen, artists such as Artur Rimbaud, whose last wish was to die here. Chawki Abdelamir (1995) wrote, “Rimbaud, que le ‘dérèglement des sens’ n’aura pas empêché de partir en chasse de la créature inconnue, cette éponge mystérieuse de la mer infinie” (p. 50).

Another space within Arabic communities where time stood still was the “intérieur” of homes, which was also the domain of women. Just as Delacroix painted Algerian women in their apartments, the articles in the section “Intérieurs” focus on specific areas within a traditional Islamic household. Separated from external realities, these spaces acquired mythical dimensions and the women, even if they hold power over these rooms, balconies and hallways, were trapped and isolated. Berber anthropologist Tassadit Yacine –Titouh (1994) described “la maison Kabyle” as “le monde enchanté,” where women have the right and duty “de décorer le lieu de la vie, le lieu symbolique où se rejoignent le haut, le ciel, l’homme, et le bas, la terre, la femme” (p. 76). More problematic than the clear division between men associated with “le haut” and women with “le bas” was the entire premise of this section which takes the reader in the most private spaces of Muslim families. This curiosity to enter even the spaces which are not meant to be viewed or displayed remind of the Orientalist curiosity to access, discover, conquer and judge all areas of a culture. This desire for absolute knowledge about and exposure of all private spaces of the Arab societies underlines all articles which are part of “Intérieurs”. Furthermore, the clear separation between feminine and masculine spaces as the norm in Arabic societies did not reflect the complexity of gender relations and the challenges to this patriarchic social order by Arab women and feminists. On the maison Kabyle, Yacine –Titouh (1994)

continued “si l’on définit la place publique comme lieu masculin, la maison et la fontaine sont considérées comme des lieux féminins par excellence” (p. 77). In “Le milieu des jours” (Mid-days) Abdelkader Djemai (Fall 1995) spoke about interior courtyards as spaces of quotidian and domestic tasks completed by women; “à l’écart des bruits du dehors, la cour est cet espace retiré où s’affairent les femmes, l’espace du souvenir” (p. 62). In this secluded part of the house, women cook, wash, feed their children, laugh and tell stories. The courtyard “[est] un espace intime qu’aucun bruit de l’extérieur ne venait troubler, séchaient des poivrons, des tomates, des lambeaux de viande copieusement salés...Douce ou épicées, les odeurs de la cuisine flottaient au milieu des braseros, des poêles à frire, des bassines” (Djemai, 1995, p. 63).

These interior spaces are not only meant for domestic chores but also for beauty, sensuality and mystery. Designer Leila Menchari (1994a) described “le coffre” as “un réceptacle de fragments de vie, un lieu de magie et de mystère” (p. 77) present in every home in Tunisia. The exoticism and mystery of these treasure chests came from unexpected objects contained in these private spaces of collecting, “galet fossilisé, fragment de mue de serpent, grain de sel anormalement structuré, provenant des lacs salés” (Menchari, 1994a, p. 77). This artifact was most significant for Arabic women as it became “le complice de leurs espoirs les plus fous” (ibid.). In another article, “Mémoires d’arômes” (Aromatic memories), Menchari presented the geography of her childhood home through perfumes and aromas, all surrounded by exoticism and mystery. Speaking of “les petites dunes de fleurs d’oranger,” the writer describes how the aroma of the orange blossoms creates a dream-like atmosphere which takes over “les vêtements, la chaux des murs, les boiseries” (Menchari, 1994b, p. 77). In this universe imagined as a multitude of perfumes, “le temps ne se mesure plus, il perd toute dimension” (ibid.). In the hidden apartments of Arab women, “bijoux et parures” reveal another dimension of this exotic

space. Yasmine Belhami (1993) wrote that, “au-delà du corps, le bijou attire et protège. Forêt de symboles, il parle le langage de la dame qui s’offre au regard et s’y dérobe” (p. 62). Jewelries did not have only a decorative function for the North African woman described in this article but they symbolized cultural practices inherited from “immemorial” times and rituals of passage such as marriage and baptism. Thus, “plus que témoins, ils tissent dans le secret de nos chambres d’indéfinissables liens. Imprégnés d’une part de notre histoire, si étroitement mêlé à notre intimité, ils s’éclairent de l’aura de nos souvenirs et ravivent nos fantômes” (Belhami, 1993, p. 62).

Conclusions: Writing colonialism and postcolonialism

In this chapter, I showed that IMA’s official publication, *Qantara*, participates to the overall mission promoted by the Institut du Monde Arabe, to educate audiences (in this case, readers) about Arab culture. I analyzed the content of the magazine in search for evidence of colonial history, which I found in a series of *dossier spéciaux* and articles which tackled issues related to colonialism and post-colonialism. The presence of colonial stories, however, is reduced and does not result in a coherent and critical investigation of French colonialism. Further, the accounts of colonialism, colonial memory and post-colonial realities are sporadic and fragmented. The first few issues of the magazine are singular in their critical rendition of colonial history, especially in relation to Algeria and the Algerian War of Independence. After the 4th issue of *Qantara*, stories about the violence of the colonial system and the contemporary *crise de mémoire* are rare and lack the critical perspective of these articles. The diversity of voices in the magazine, some critical of colonialism and other celebratory of some of its aspects, such as Orientalism, result in major contradictions. Just like many other social and cultural spaces in France, *Qantara* is marked by indecision vis-a-vis the memory of French colonialism.

The following chapter, “Spaces of consumption” Encountering the colonial ‘other’ through food” will reflect on the nature of colonial encounters within a different space in the institution, the restaurant Le Zyriab.

CHAPTER 8

Spaces of consumption: Encountering the colonial “other” through food

At the Institut du Monde Arabe, the visitors can walk through the museum, visit one of the temporary exhibitions or browse the *Qantara* magazine in the Library, but they can also experience *le monde arabe* more intimately, through its cuisine. The more formal spaces for the display of Arab culture – the museum(s), the *grandes expositions* and the magazine – are complemented by spaces and practices of the everyday consumption such as shopping and eating. The spectrum of spaces within the IMA which provides a diverse array of experiences, ranging from formal museological inquiries to culinary journeys reflects the re-shaping of cultural institutions into modern spaces of display, education and leisure. The integration of autonomous eating spaces – restaurants, cafes, food courts or espresso bars – to cultural institutions, which goes back to the 1950s⁷⁷, has been perceived by scholars of museum and cultural studies as an example of merging culture and consumption. Very little attention has been paid to the possibility of the eating spaces in museums to contribute to the overall story that the cultural institution tells about the objects on display.

In this chapter, I analyze the main restaurant at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Le Zyriab, through its menus, architecture and décor, as a significant cultural space where the history of colonial encounters overcomes instances of silence which characterize other spaces in the institution. First, this chapter will provide some theoretical thoughts on the role of food, restaurants and menus as relevant communicators of culture. Second, I will explore some of the historical intersections between food and cultural venues in colonial and post-colonial France, starting with the nineteenth century colonial exhibitions. Third, I will use Edward Said’s

⁷⁷ My research so far indicates that one of the first museums to include a restaurant was MOMA in New York City. According to the archives of the museum, the first restaurant at MOMA opened in 1954.

writings on the intersections between culture and colonialism to investigate the colonial contacts visible through the dishes and aesthetics of Le Zyriab.

Food as communication: The social life of menus and restaurants

In the past twenty years, the study of food has grown from a marginal academic movement into a legitimate and popular field of study⁷⁸. As Marion Nestle (2010) wrote, “indeed, the growth of scholarly academic interest in food has been so rapid and extensive that the various approaches to such questions – historical, cultural, behavioural, biological and socioeconomic – are now often grouped under the rubric *food studies*” (p. 160, emphasis in original). While the food studies academic field is a new space for inquiry into facts of a social, cultural, political and economic nature, the interest in food and foodways goes back to the 1940s, when Margaret Mead (1943) problematized the intervention of the United States government on the food habits of Americans. The interest in food habits in relation to social class and cultural capital in the French context were further explored by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1979[1984]) in *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. The ability of food to convey meaning was a preferred topic for structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966; 1968) and Roland Barthes (1957; 1975; 1977).

While the foundations of food studies are rooted in disciplines as diverse as semiotics, anthropology and sociology, most scholars agree that food acts as a communicator. It is the work of Roland Barthes that established food as a system of communication connected with the national or regional space where it is produced and consumed. In “Towards a psychosociology of contemporary food consumption,” Barthes (1975) asked, “for what is food? It is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the

⁷⁸ The official positioning of food studies among other academic disciplines is associated with the inauguration of the first department of food studies (Nutrition, food studies and public health) at New York University in 1996

same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviours” (p. 29). This interpretation of food as a total communicative system is rooted in theories of semiotics, which place the object of study, in this case food, at the center of a network of signifiers and significations. Therefore, continued Barthes (1975), “all food serves as a sign among the members of a given society” (p. 29). For example, explained Barthes (1975), the consumption of simple white bread in the context of day-to-day life differs from the consumption of *pain de mie*, which is associated to high class dinner parties (p. 30). According to Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard (1994), “humans do not nourish themselves from natural nutrients, not from pure dietary principles, but from cultured food-stuffs, chosen and prepared according to laws of compatibility and rules of propriety unique to each cultural area” (p. 76). The equivalence between food and signs is a theme also popularized by the work of Mary Douglas. In her attempts to “decipher a meal,” Douglas (1971) argued that food becomes a code and “the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed” (p. 61).

In this general framework of thinking about food as a system of communication and signification, Marion Nestle (2010) suggested two main directions followed by scholars interested in food: food systems (production) and food culture (consumption) (p. 161). In this chapter, I am interested primarily in aspects of consumption of colonial and post-colonial dishes at Le Zyriab but I investigate at the same time the multiple journeys of ingredients and recipes which make up the menu of the restaurant. I look into these issues through the lens of cultural studies, which, as explained in Chapter 2, places great emphasis on the significance of everyday practices such as cooking and eating. While eating out is a cultural practice it also involves elements of consumerism, closely associated with taste, defined as “the abstract capacity for cultural discrimination” (Hawkins, 2005, p. 341). Therefore, I argue that the presence of

restaurants at the Institut du Monde Arabe should be observed as both a post-colonial cultural practice and a global trend of merchandizing⁷⁹ museums. This chapter will analyze Le Zyriab through an investigation of the menu, which represents the most direct public communication of the restaurant, and the physical space, which reflects the larger architectural narrative of the IMA.

The restaurant menu has only recently become a cultural object worthy of academic investigation. The increasing interest in the culture of menus in different national or local contexts has been fuelled by the development of collections of restaurant menus at some of the largest academic libraries in North America⁸⁰. The extensive collections of menus allow scholars to construct histories of culinary trends, to uncover cultural and social contacts throughout time or to reflect on various relations of power. For Jack Goody, the menu embodies the transition from orality to written culture due to the diversification of dishes offered by modern restaurants, which makes it impossible for the server to remember and to communicate directly to the customer the daily selections. Therefore, restaurant menus “imply not only the complete separation between table and kitchen, but also a marked separation between the servers and the customers, since information about the content of the meal is mediated *impersonally* by a piece of paper” (Goody, 2008[1977], p. 82, emphasis mine). In *The invention of the restaurant*, Rebecca L. Spang (2000) wrote about the first recorded menus (*la carte*) in the 18th century France as markers of status and distinction because, “when ordering from a restaurant menu, the patron made a highly individualistic statement, differentiating himself – or herself from the other

⁷⁹ The concept of merchandizing associated to museums was coined by Neil Harris in *Museums, merchandising, and popular taste: The struggle for influence in Quinby*, I. M. G. (Ed.) (1978) *Material culture and the study of American life* New York Norton (pp 140-175)

⁸⁰ The following libraries and research centers in North America have extensive menu collections in Canada, McGill University Library and the Archives of the McCord Museum of Canadian History, in the US, the New York Public Library, Los Angeles Public Library, Northwestern University Library, Harvard’s Schlesinger Library, Johnson and Wales College’s Library

eaters and their conditions” (p. 77). Restaurant menus in the 18th and 19th century represented a new genre: susceptible to mechanical reproduction, the menu was the first contact between the diner and the restaurant and it resembled, through “its size, typeface and layout,” the newspaper (Spang, 2000, p.184-185). Being available in print, the menus were crucial, together with culinary treatises and cookbooks, to the development of a standardized gastronomic vocabulary (Spang, 2000, p. 187). Each menu, while incorporating this standardized terminology, was also an act of individualism and distinction

One of the first references to the symbolic power of contemporary restaurant menus comes from Roland Barthes. In “The food system,” Barthes (2008[1977]) wrote that “any menu is concocted with reference to a structure (which is both national – or regional – and social); but this structure is filled differently according to the days and the users” (p. 258). In the structuralist fashion, Barthes’ definition positions the restaurant menu as a component of broader social structures, significant in relation to other elements which make up the social fabric. The menu in this interpretation is only a signifier of something else – ex: dietary preferences, structure of meals, etc. Therefore, being only a small part in a larger structure, the menu, according to Barthes, lacks the autonomy to cause change. In this chapter, I conceptualize restaurant menus as material objects with “social lives”.

In “Commodities and the politics of value,” Arjun Appadurai (1997) defined commodity as a “thoroughly socialized thing” which has crossed a series of phases in order to achieve the status of commodity (p. 6-15). While Appadurai framed commodities as static objects of economic exchange, he investigated commodified objects in motion, as they circulate through culture and acquired new meanings in time. I believe that restaurant menus act partially as social and cultural contracts because they circulate between the diner and the restaurateur. While menus

cannot be exchanged for something else, they act as transitional texts between different communities – the diners – and commodities – the dishes. Their function is to communicate to the diner a list of potential culinary choices, accompanied by the promise of a specific experience according to the identity of the eating establishment.

At the same time, restaurants change their menus constantly to accommodate new ingredients, regimes of taste and culinary exchanges. Therefore, without omitting the consumerist mission of restaurant menus, I claim that these texts have a significant cultural value. Liora Gvion and Naomi Trosler (2008) defined menus as agencies of culinary culture which point out social attitudes” (p. 953). Their study investigated the menu culture in United States since the 1960s in order to evaluate the relation between Americans and ethnic communities. The authors used restaurant menus as indicators and agents of change which familiarize the local groups with the new comers. To this, I add that restaurant menus can be analyzed as points of encounter between different cultures at different moments in time. The deconstruction of dishes into ingredients, the investigation of food biographies and culinary travels and the examination of cooking and plating techniques reveal historical contacts specific to a national context, in France’s case, of a colonial nature.

The menus represent the most direct form of communication initiated by restaurants in conversation with their customers. The content and aesthetics of the menu, together with the cooking and plating techniques, the architecture and decor and the constituent communities, reflects the cultural universe of a specific restaurant. According to David Beriss and David Sutton (2007), “restaurants are ideal total social phenomena for our postmodern world” (p. 12). The complex nature of the restaurant space comes from the myriad social relations and cultural contacts which exist in the restaurant. For Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Joanne Finkelstein

(1998), the modern restaurant was a site of status display and the formation of class related habits. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu used restaurants as entryways into the cultural habits of the bourgeoisie and the working class. Finkelstein (1998), interested in similar issues, wrote that “[the restaurant] has proven a domain for imitative public displays, a place where a diversity of styles in human exchange have been practiced and cultivated, and where the influences of social pretensions, guile and the dictates of fashion have been strongly in evidence” (p. 202).

Another set of relations, of particular interest to my dissertation, have been discussed in the context of “ethnic” restaurants. Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli (2002) argued that “the ethnic restaurant is a revealing site of intercultural exchange and appropriation... microspaces allowing for intercultural contact, deterritorialized places where diners can see and touch, even consume the culture of the other on home ground.” (p. 251). Stories about the restaurants serving food and foodways from non-Western countries are usually told from the perspective of a victimized “other” who cannot resist its consumption by the Western diner. In *Exotic appetites: Ruminations of a food adventurer*, Lisa Heldke (2003) wrote about the quest for exoticism and authenticity in the foods of the “other” which transforms consumption of Chinese, Thai or Moroccan dishes into a form of cultural food colonialism. Turgeon and Pastinelli (2002) concluded that consumption of the “other’s” foods in “ethnic” restaurants, “while the willingness to eat the food of others seems to indicate a disapproval of corporate cuisine and a growing democracy of the palate, it appears to be merely another subtle form of postcolonial capitalism” (p. 262). Charlene Elliott (2008) analyzed the packaging of President’s Choice *Memories of...* line of products, concluding that “collectively, PC’s “exotic” labels offer a

romanticized, stereotyped rendition of culture being sold...PC's worldly sauces are a garnish to what "we" already believe the Other to be" (p. 185).

In this chapter, I define post-colonial restaurants as spaces of multiple encounters which assert the importance of the formerly colonized cultures. Consuming Lebanese dishes in the restaurant of the Institut du Monde Arabe brings back memories of the colonial contact visible through ingredients, plating techniques and décor. As suggested by Sara Ahmed, the cultural encounters which happen in the present will inevitably be marked by their past relations, in this case, of a colonial nature. At the same time, the presence of a rich post-colonial foodscape in contemporary France reflects the influence exercised by the "others" on one of the foundational institutions of French identity, cuisine. The popularity of North African and Middle Eastern foods, from the supermarket to the *nouvelle cuisine* restaurant, is not a symbol of food colonialism but a proof of how the "colonies" changed the "empire".

Food and cultural institutions in France: From colonial exoticism to post-colonial *nouvelle cuisine*

The 1980s was a decade of transformations for cultural institutions worldwide. Globally, cultural institutions, especially art museums, "cease to be dull places of education" and are re-invented as "amazing spaces" which combine art and everyday life (Featherstone, 1991, p. 102). The previous "dullness" of museums as educators was replaced at that time with a more spectacular arrangement of spaces and activities, which reflect leisure and consumer-oriented trends. In reference to the Metropolitan Art Museum in New York City, Haidee Wasson (2007) wrote, "mediating and merchandising the museum functioned as a necessary mechanism for mobilizing art beyond the museum's walls, inserting both art and the museum in the ebbs and flows of everyday life" (p. 163). Carol Duncan (2002) made similar remarks about most large

museums in the United States, which “steer carefully between their need to maintain the appearance of disinterestedness and their interest in the budget and attendance-enhancing allures of commerce” (p. 130). The connections between museums and department stores, which merge high art and commercial culture, are considered the outcome of North American capitalism (Duncan 2002; Wasson, 2007). While this trend of merchandizing museums has been studied primarily in the American context, other internationally renowned cultural institutions, such as the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao incorporate similar attempts to democratize culture and make high art more accessible.

The pairing of food and museums is not a new phenomenon, as food has been for quite a while part of the knowledge systems developed about the “other”. I argue that, since the first colonial exhibitions in the mid-nineteenth century, food became a significant component of official cultural spaces where knowledge about the “other” is constructed and displayed. If during the first exhibition which featured a colonial section in 1886, food was sold in street carts inside the “reproductions” of souks and bazaars, in 1931 every colonial section has a restaurant and a café where visitors could try the exotic foods of the colonies. Furthermore, at the 1931 Exhibition Coloniale, all colonial pavilions included sections about the raw materials imported from the colonies and the official guides offer detailed accounts of the products which France managed to introduce in the agricultural cultures of the colonized nations. The sense of colonial pride expressed through food is most obvious on the external walls of the Palais de la Porte Dorée, the permanent museum of colonies. Therefore, narratives about foods range from “exotisme du bazaar” to “investigation scientifique” (Hodeir and Pierre, 1991, p. 140-1).

I argued earlier in the dissertation (Chapter 4) that post-colonial cultural institutions are inevitably faced with colonial images and stereotypes, most of them crafted at the time of

colonial exhibitions. As food was a significant component of this imaginary, I argue that the merging between food and culture in the context of large cultural venues can be traced back to colonial exhibitions and world fairs. One of the main attractions at these events was the experience of foreign dishes and traditional foodways. The food itself and knowledge about food from colonized areas was displayed through a series of spaces in the context of colonial exhibitions. Visitors to these events were invited to taste the “other” at exotic restaurants and *café maures* and to purchase colonial food products from food carts and bazaars. In “Identity under Construction,” Lynn Palermo (2003) wrote about the 1889 Exposition universelle in Paris as a journey, “add a variety of languages, sounds of drums and music, lush vegetation, dancers, and a confusion of *odours emanating from the exotic restaurants* and noisy street markets, and it is easy to understand how nineteenth-century visitors could indeed have felt transported to another world” (p. 294, emphasis mine). In the Egyptian section of the 1889 exhibition, the main architectural space was occupied by the replica of a mosque surrounded by souks and bazaars, meant to articulate the spectacle of an Oriental street. However, inside the mosque, the visitors found not places for praying, but spaces for shopping and eating, such as markets and coffeehouses (Çelik, 1992, p. 77-78). During the same event, described Çelik (1992), Algerian and Tunisian palaces were prominently placed at the entrance to the esplanade where the pavilions were arranged (p. 78-79). Behind the palaces, “souks, cafés and restaurants clustered, complete with a replica of a Kabyle village and Bedouin tents” (Çelik, 1992, p. 79).

At the 1931 exhibition, the spaces for eating couscous and drinking thé à la menthe were modeled after Oriental paintings and written accounts or Oriental scholars and contributed to the overall exoticism of the exhibition. Demeulenaere-Douyere (2006) described the general design and functions of a *café maure* – “meublés de divans et de nattes, où ‘six domestiques arabes au

teint basané, vêtus de robes noires brodées d'or, coiffés de turbans de fine laine damassée, chaussés de babouches, proposent gratuitement café et narguilé” (p. 27). Pascal Blanchard wrote about the generic forms of *exotisme* embedded in the arrangement of spaces, display of objects and cultural practices and usage of the human element. He argued, “tout est là: le minaret, la musique, les souks, les danseuses, *le café*, la prière, le narguilé... Une certaine typification de l’Afrique du Nord et de ses populations se fixe, semblable à celle proposée par la littérature ou les cartes postales, qui fabriquent en métropole une myriade de stéréotypes promis” (Blanchard, 2009, p. 21, emphasis mine). The imaginary about the “other’s” foods as exotic and Oriental persists in contemporary representations of Arab culinary traditions.

Three of the most significant French cultural institutions about the “other” – the Grand Mosquée de Paris, the Musée du Quai Branly and the Institut de Cultures d’Islam – invite the visitors to culinary journeys from “exotic” to *nouvelle cuisine*. La Grande Mosquée de Paris, “aux portes de l’Orient,” welcomes the culinary traveler to “passez les portes de l’Orient et installez-vous sous les arcades en bois de cèdre... Vous voilà déjà très loin, dégustant au rythme de l’Orient TAGINES, COUSCOUS et PATISSERIES dans le respect de la tradition” (“La Mosquée”, n.d.; see Fig. 15)). With no interest in the sophisticated language of gastronomy or *nouvelle cuisine*, the menu features dishes traditionally associated with North African cooking. The dishes are simple, with expected and classical ingredients, served in an atmosphere reminding of the timeless Orientalist imagery, resonating nonetheless of colonial encounters. For example, the customers can order Brick à l’oeuf, Harira, Couscous agneau (lamb couscous) or Tagine agneau ou aubergine (lamb and eggplant tagine), but they can also try some Cocktail aux crevettes (shrimp cocktail), Frites (fries), Sauce béarnaise or Sauce au poivre, the most French of all sauces. Furthermore, the menu is structured based on the Western European

division of the meal into courses, starting with entrées, continuing with a main course and ending with dessert and coffee or mint tea. After the meal, the visitors are invited to experience the Hammam, “délices de corps et de l’esprit” or to shop in the Souk, where “vous emporterez contre vous un petit bout de l’Orient, souvenir de ce voyage où le temps s’est arrêté pour un instant” (“Le hammam - Mosquée”, n.d.). On a much smaller scale, the temporary headquarters of the future Institut des Cultures de l’Islam, housed⁸¹ in an old building in the Goutte d’Or⁸¹, feature a Salon de thé, which also functions as a “café africain”. The small menu, put together by Fatou Camara⁸², features Maffé, “poulet ou viande avec légumes” (chicken with vegetables), Pepe, “soupe avec légumes” (vegetable soup) or Bachi, “couscous prepared Malian style” (Malian-style couscous). These dishes are traditional samples of different African cuisines, presented unaltered to the hungry visitor seeking “authentic” tastes.

Another restaurant, located at the top floor of the Quai Branly invites not the common travelers, but the food connoisseurs willing to spend a little more on an *haute cuisine* experience. Les Ombres, the restaurant at the top floor of Quai Branly, with a fragmented glass ceiling and a clear view of Le Tour Eiffel, offers a menu characterized by fusion and deconstruction of traditional recipes. The name of the restaurant reflects Jean Nouvel’s vision of the museum as a mysterious space to be gradually discovered and explored by the visitor (“Les ombres”, n.d.). The menu reflects intersections between French gastronomy and African ingredients, visible in dishes such as “Salade de légumes croquants au sel de sésame fumé” (Crunchy vegetable salad with smoked sesame salt), “Sole limande en tronçon poêlé, jeunes légumes au gingembre” (Fried sole fillet, baby vegetable with ginger) or “Le cube très moelleux au chocolat Nyangbo” (Soft

⁸¹ Goutte d’Or is a small neighborhood in the 18th arrondissement in Paris. A former working class area, Goutte d’Or is now populated by immigrant communities, especially of African and Arab origins. Many cultural and religious tensions emerge between the older French working class inhabitants and the newer immigrants.

⁸² Fatou Camara is the president of l’Association des femmes dynamiques de la diaspora, a small neighborhood association from Goutte d’Or.

Nyangbo chocolate cubes). Sesame, ginger and cocoa, three of the most popular ingredients from France's former colonies, accompany French and fusion recipes, forming new culinary combinations. The culinary language employed by the chefs and the cooks at Les Ombres embrace narratives of haute cuisine, with complex recipes, layering tastes and ingredients in "creative destructions"⁸³ of tradition recipes.

The main restaurant at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Le Zyriab, also located on the top floor of the IMA, with a clear view of the Seine and the Cathédrale Notre Dame, exists at the intersection of traditional and *nouvelle cuisine* (see Fig. 17). Different from Les Ombres in its ethnic specificity, Lebanese, Le Zyriab offers a menu connected with the past, yet lacking the exoticism promised by the restaurant of the Mosquée de Paris. At the same time, the different dishes on the menu such as Hommos, Tabbouli, Falafel and Baklava represent contemporary interpretations of traditional dishes. The *nouvelle cuisine* aspect is primarily visible in the presentation of the dishes, displayed according to the simple and elegant aesthetics of new gastronomy and in the language used to describe the different foods. The menu at Le Zyriab is not as innovative and "destructive" of traditional dishes as the one offered at Les Ombres, but it reflects modern combinations of ingredients and cooking techniques. Furthermore, Le Zyriab reflects the tensions and encounters which co-exist in the other spaces of knowledge at the IMA, especially in relation to the finding of a balance between tradition and modernity. The cultures of *le monde arabe* are displayed through their encounters with French systems of knowledge, while, at the same time, they remain different through their histories of colonialism and Orientalism.

⁸³ "Creative destruction" is a term borrowed from Karaosmanoglu, D. (2007). Surviving the global market: Turkish cuisine 'under construction'." *Food, Culture and Society*, 10(3), 425-448.

Restaurants exist in museums because food is a relatively “safe” space where visitors can be introduced to the cultures of the “other”. The descriptions of foods on the menus do not have to be accompanied by extensive historical records and explanatory notes, which might reveal unwanted fragments of memory and history, such as colonialism. Eating couscous, visiting an exhibition about Delacroix’s travels to North Africa and reading an article about changes in the urban structure of Tangiers are all encounters with the cultures of the “other”. However, food reveals the least about the culture on display as it requires very little explanation, while it probably satisfies the most the desires for knowing. Because eating is a social and often communal practice, it is embedded with conviviality and therefore reduces memories and histories of conflict in ways in which exhibitionary and textual spaces cannot. Eating is also a less intrusive way of knowing foreign culture, “an effort to play and to learn about other cultures in ways intended to be respectful” (Heldke, 2008, p.328). The introduction of restaurants in museums also reflects, more generally, the diversifications of the experiences offered by the museological space and the expansion of the field of knowledge to include lessons beyond museum tours, written information and self-education through contacts with the works of art. The presence of culinary spaces at the Institut du Monde Arabe extends the knowledge about the Arab world into the realm of the sensorial “everyday”.

Food and colonial contacts: Plating tradition and modernity at Le Zyriab

At the Institut du Monde Arabe, visitors can choose between three eating spaces, each offering a different culinary experience. All these spaces are managed by Noura, a well known food management and catering company in France – “société de gastronomie libanaise”. On the ground level of the IMA, Le Café Littéraire invites visitors to a light menu of sandwiches and Lebanese desserts, accompanied by mint tea or coffee. Le Café is also the location for the

weekly events, Mercredis du café littéraire, which feature literary works, mainly fiction and poetry, by French and Arab authors. For a more consistent lunch and dinner, visitors can take the elevator to the ninth floor, where the other two restaurants are located. Le Moucharabieh, bearing the name of the architectural motif which made the IMA famous, is opened for lunch and functions as a self-serve restaurant. Here, visitors and museum staff alike can choose from a daily selection of Lebanese dishes such as Hommos, Baba ganoush, Chicken couscous or Merghez. The true culinary attraction at the IMA is the “restaurant gastronomique Le Zyriab”, located at the top of the building, with one of the best views of Paris. The restaurant, designed by Jean Nouvel and recently renovated by French designer Didier Labati, is composed of a large and open dining room and a terrace. All three restaurants also function as galleries for exhibitions of contemporary art and photography.

Noura, the management company which runs the three restaurants, was hired by the IMA in October 2007 to take over from the previous company, Yara Prestige, which managed Le Zyriab since 2005. Before 2005, the restaurant used to be run by Sodexho Prestige. The contract with the prestigious food management company Noura was part of the overall efforts to revamp the IMA and improve the quality of services offered by the institution. Before 2005, the restaurant lacked a clear identity and also a spectacular menu to match the great view of Paris. According to Emmanuel de Roux (2006), the main restaurant of the IMA was “médiocre en dépit de sa vue exceptionnelle” (see Fig. 18). Under the management of Sodexho, Le Zyriab featured North African food and was listed among “restaurants exotiques” on the Parisian culinary scene (Monsat et al., 2007). Writing for *Le Figaro*, Collette Monsat et al (2003) spoke about the Mediterranean influences on the menu and the lukewarm impression of the dishes which “ne casse pas trois pattes à un canard”. Another journalist referred to the cuisine of Le Zyriab as

“moyen-orientale” (Michot, 2003). The lack of prestige and identity of the restaurant is obvious in the confusion about the cuisine featured on the menu. One review of the restaurant in *Le Figaro* emphasized the inconsistency in quality of the prepared dishes, “ce restaurant, régulièrement cisailé par des changements de mains, traverse ainsi son temps, chute et se redresse, se méprend et se reprend, déçoit et promet” (Simon, 1999). In 2005, the shift from a vaguely defined cuisine to a strong Lebanese menu coincided with the overall efforts of the IMA’s administrative team to rebuild the identity of the institute and to increase financial revenues.

The restaurant, through its architecture, decor and menu, contributes to the image of Arab culture as a combination of tradition and modernity but holds the promise of colonial encounters. Le Zyriab is a site of cultural encounters between styles of architecture and decor, ingredients and cooking techniques which re-enact colonial histories. How can a restaurant be a space for the representation of history? And what makes Le Zyriab, a place dedicated to the pleasures of eating, a form of cultural knowledge? Situated at the top of the IMA and designed by Jean Nouvel, Le Zyriab participates to the communicative network of the institution. The choices made by the communities involved in the creation and functioning of the restaurant – the architects, the chefs, the servers, the diners – reflect the main mission of the IMA: to provide access to knowledge about Arab culture. Likewise, the restaurant responds, similar to the other spaces at the IMA, to the regimes of vision and taste for the “other’s” culture inherited from colonial times. However, the encounters outlined by the culinary practices and spaces of the restaurant place the contact between French and the Arab world at the center of contemporary Lebanese cuisine. The nature of this encounter, I argue, must be analyzed outside the confines of

the “West vs. Other” model in order to highlight the contrapuntal intersections between cultures in the context of colonial domination.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said looked critically at his own meditations on the Orient developed in *Orientalism*, and he offered a new vision of the West-Other encounter, observing and emphasizing instances of influence and resistance. He wrote that “cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality” (Said, 1994, p. 14). Rather than assuming a binary opposition based on the subjugation of the colonized by the *métropole*, Said suggested a more nuanced reading of the colonial encounter, based on instances of negotiation, influence and contradictions, which he called “reinscription”. To practice “reinscription” means to recognize moments of resistance and the power that the colonized had to influence the colonizer. According to Said (1998),

to achieve recognition is to rechart and then occupy the place in imperial cultural forms reserved for subordination, to occupy it self-consciously, fighting for it on the very same territory once ruled by the consciousness that assumed the subordination of the designated inferior (p. 210).

Therefore, in the case of Le Zyriab, the merging of Lebanese and French cultural practices, recipes and aesthetic elements represents an example of cultural contacts with a colonial history. However, the past relations of power marked by colonialism between the two cultures should not detract from the possibility of Lebanese cuisine to resist acts of exoticism in the present. On the contrary, the merging between traditional Lebanese dishes and French *nouvelle cuisine* speaks to the power of a former colonized nation to “conquer” the culture of the former *métropole*.

The encounter between tradition and modernity in the context of the restaurant is visible from the first contacts with the space through the architecture and decor. Defined as a “total social phenomena” (Berris & Sutton, 2007), the restaurant expresses its identity through a multitude of elements, such as architecture and decor. The modern atmosphere is suggested by

the simplicity of design, the transparency of the space and the lack of decorative motifs. At the same time, the interpretation of the classical moucharabieh, Jean Nouvel's architectural innovation incorporated into the South wall of the restaurant, reminds the diners of the cultural specificity of the locale. Jean Nouvel (1987) explained that "sa symbolique et sa modernité sont fondées sur une interprétation actuelle de l'histoire des civilisations arabe et occidentale...cette géométrie 'technologique' est aussi la transposition actuelle des ouvertures et des motifs les plus nobles de la grande architecture arabe" (p. 81-84). The transparency of the building, which allows for a panoramic view of major landmarks of the city – Notre Dame, the Seine and Montmartre – is another reference to Islamic architecture, where light is essential for the structuring on internal and external spaces. According to Nouvel (1987), "ce qui caractérise la grande architecture arabe, c'est l'utilisation de la lumière comme matériau de cette architecture" (p. 84). The interpretation of traditional decorative elements and their integration into the restaurant decor signifies the connection between the restaurant and the rest of the institution, suggesting both an architectural and ideological continuity. Also, the opting for a modern deconstruction of Islamic motifs contradicts the aesthetic of other Middle Eastern or North African restaurants, such as the restaurant at the Mosquée de Paris, which communicate their identity through exotic and Oriental themes.

Just like the architecture, the decor and atmosphere contribute to the overall experience of fine dining combined with elements of foreignness. The specificity of the restaurant is not lost at the contact with modernity and the diners are invited to a simple and elegant atmosphere defined by "espace aux volumes harmonieux , lignes pures, une lumière apaisante, filtrée par les vastes baies vitrées [et] une vue époustouflante sur les toits de Paris" ("Noura – Le Zyriab", n.d.). Fine dining, a social practice perfected by the French, is characterized by emphasis on atmosphere and

overall experience, which combines food, decor and music. The Noura website characterized Le Zyriab as a “restaurant gastronomique”, which indicates the high positioning of the dining space. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (2004) defined gastronomy as “the socially prized pursuit of culinary excellence” (p. 84). Culinary culture, she wrote, is “anchored in both cuisine – a culinary product – and in gastronomy – a given practice of consumption” (Ferguson, 2004, p. 84). At Le Zyriab, this practice of consumption is expressed through a simple and minimal decor, composed of large round tables covered in white tablecloths, tall brown wooden chairs covered in dark purple fabric and crystal centerpieces with fresh flowers. The promise of a fine meal of gastronomic quality is suggested by both architecture and decor.

The encounters between Lebanese and French cultures are most obvious in the menu. Because the dishes served at Le Zyriab are intentionally de-exoticized, they represent instances of resistance to general tendencies of exoticism present in representations of “ethnic” cuisines, some inherited from colonial times. However, these dishes also conform to the general culinary superiority of French cuisine because their escape from exoticism and Orientalism comes in the form of new associations with the French long lasting traditions of *haute* and *nouvelle cuisine*. At the same time, the Lebanese cuisine embodies the histories of contacts which occurred within the Mediterranean basin long before French colonialism. Anissa Helou (1994) explained that “Lebanese cuisine as we know it today has evolved through these successive invasions with each culture leaving its mark. Those who seem to have left the most perceptible signs of influence are the Egyptians, Persians, Ancient Greeks and Ottomans” (p. 9). Some of the recipes and ingredients, such as Tabbooleh, Warak enab (stuffed grape leaves) and Baklawa have been transmitted and preserved through contacts with other Arab communities. The various culinary contacts between Arab and Mediterranean countries and communities resulted in shared dishes

with local and regional variations. In “Baklava, le dessert des nations” (Baklava, the dessert of many nations), Monique Zeltaoui described the adventurous journeys of the Middle Eastern dessert from the Byzantine Empire to the courts of Marie-Antoinette. Today, wrote Zeltaoui (2009), “elle est partout...et les peuples de l’ancienne Perse et de l’Empire ottoman, de la Serbie à la Turquie, de la Grèce à la Bulgarie...en ont fait l’un de leurs gâteaux nationaux” (p. 74). Despite its myriad historical contacts with other cultures, it is the touch of Frenchness which brings the Lebanese cuisine into modernity. Helou (1994) explained that “the French, whose culinary influence has spread to almost every corner of the western and Middle Eastern world, had in their mere 25 years in Lebanon a strong refining influence on the local cuisine” (p. 9).

The exhibitionary and educational spaces at the IMA center on the intellectual and scientific contributions of *le monde arabe* to Western culture, situating modernity in the context of Arab knowledge. Most elements which compose the IMA wear the stamp of modernity, from the architectural edifice to the display of knowledge about the Arab World in the main galleries of the museum. In this haven of modernity, Le Zyriab, the restaurant “panoramique” situated on the top level of the IMA, contributes daily to this story. A space of the everyday, the restaurant invites the IMA visitors to savour a culinary journey to Lebanon. The journey is meant to be pleasurable but not exotic, it is meant to enhance the senses but not to orientalize the dishes and the décor, and lastly, it is meant to provide accurate culinary knowledge about Lebanese cuisine but not through the tools of tradition. If there is one word that could describe the décor, the food, the presentation of the dishes and the promotional materials of Le Zyriab, that word would be modern. What constitutes the modernity of the restaurant is primarily the embracing of the classical menu structuring and a culinary vocabulary which resonates with French *nouvelle cuisine*.

Reading the menu through colonial encounters

After being seated by servers, mostly male, dressed in impeccable black and white uniforms, the diners are offered the restaurant menus. The simplicity of the menu, covered in black leather, decorated only with the name of the restaurant written in cursive writing in golden letters contributes to the communication of fine dining and modernity. The content of the menu, printed in black on high quality beige paper and follows the structure of the modern menu, divided into appetizers (entrees), main courses (plats) and desserts. *La carte* also includes a list of fixed menus, such as “Menu Tentation” or “Menu Splendeur”. In *The Invention of the Restaurant*, Rebecca L. Spang (2000) described the modern menu developed in French restaurants in the nineteenth century – “first catching the eater’s attention by its format alone, the restaurant menu was an impressive affair, a printed folio text often set in a leather border or affixed to a wooden frame” (p. 185). More than a standardized booklet presenting the dishes served in a restaurant, the menu became also a venue for the development and dissemination of a culinary vocabulary and practices. For example, the diners, as they visited different restaurants, expected to find a familiar structure to the division of the menu and even certain dishes. These expectations, wrote Spang (2000), were related to the “dissemination of specialized terminology to a wider and wider audience” (p. 191). Furthermore, “the spread of the menu’s format and language altered this perception of discrete gastronomic classes, since comparable printed texts asserted that ‘the same thing’ was available in many different restaurants” (Spang, 2000, p. 192).

The structure of the Le Zyriab menu corresponds with the classical format of *la carte* popularized in the nineteenth century but incorporates characteristics of the *nouvelle cuisine* of

the 1960s. According to Cathy K. Kaufman (2003), “contemporary menus, with their playful culinary puns, such as savoury ‘napoleons’ made from layers of carefully grilled vegetables debuted as *nouvelle cuisine*. Lengthy descriptions of each offering on the menu are also a *nouvelle* legacy, as Escoffier’s conventional terms no longer adequately communicate the dish” (no page). The titles of the dishes displayed on the menu are in Arabic but they are accompanied by a brief and informative description of the dish in French. For example, Moutabal is described as “caviar d’aubergines à la crème de sésame, citron et huile d’olive” (eggplant purée with sesame cream, lemon and olive oil) and Chiche touk as “brochettes de poulet marinées au citron et à l’huile d’olive” (chicken kebab marinated with lemon and olive oil) (Le Zyriab carte). In addition to the explanation provided by the menu, the website of Noura includes a link to a “Lexique gourmand” which lists the dishes available in its restaurants with a brief description of the ingredients. Some of the dishes on the menu, such as Tabouleh or Hommos represent popular Lebanese/Middle Eastern dishes, components of the common global food vocabulary.

Every dish on the menu is deconstructed into its main ingredients, showing another trait of *nouvelle cuisine* – freshness and lightness of ingredients – but also the simplicity and purity of the Lebanese cuisine. Moreover, the dishes reveal the history of encounters between ingredients from the Middle East and Europe. Most references to exoticism are left out, while the vocabulary used to describe the dishes borrows from the clarity and care for details of the *nouvelle cuisine*, therefore a language familiar to the French consumer. Residual forms of exoticism are embedded only in the names of the dishes, which are in Arabic, which could also point out towards the desire to display authenticity. Lisa Heldke wrote extensively about authenticity and the search of many contemporary diners for authentic restaurants. In *Exotic appetites*, Heldke (2003) wrote that food adventurers associated authenticity with “faithfulness to

ingredients” and “the culinary essence of a cuisine” (p. 31-33). At the same time, authenticity involves a small dose of exoticism, which creates the illusion of foreignness and voyage. Therefore, “the exotic itself has to fit into some fairly well-delineated categories in order for it even to be detectable as exotic” (Heldke, 2003, p. 21). On the Le Zyriab menu, exoticism is signalled by the Arabic name of the dish, while the familiar is incorporated in the descriptions of the dishes. Overall, most of the elements which constitute the culinary cosmology at Le Zyriab reject the type of exoticism still practiced in restaurants like the restaurant of the Mosquée de Paris. Therefore, the very little dose of “exoticism” embedded subtly in the architecture and the menu is inherited from colonial times but it is also strategically arranged within the context of *nouvelle cuisine* to offer the illusion of authenticity.

Nouvelle cuisine embodies a series of changes to the content and the presentation of dishes which corresponds with the processes of modernization described by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson in *Accounting for Taste*. According to Ferguson (2004), a modern cuisine is a cuisine that travels, changes, borrows and deconstructs but also preserves elements of traditional cooking, the cuisine de *terroir* (p. 23-24). At the same time, *nouvelle cuisine* is a reactionary cuisine, protesting to the culinary orthodoxy of classical *haute cuisine* standardized by Georges Auguste Escoffier in the 1880s. Restaurant critics Henri Gault and Christian Millau defined the tenants of *nouvelle cuisine* in a 1973 manifesto. Among the characteristics of this new cooking philosophy, some of the most significant were: “rejection of excessive complication in cooking”, “heavy sauces are replaced with herbs, lemon juice, butter and vinegar” and “chefs use fresh and authentic ingredients” (Mennell, 1996, p. 163-164). The plating of the dishes changed as well, with an emphasis on simplicity and elegance: the dishes are presented in small portions on white plates, with great attention to chromatic combinations and balance of ingredients.

At Le Zyriab, the rules of *nouvelle cuisine* encounter dishes and recipes traditional to Lebanon. The diners experience this moment of contact by consuming dishes which are cooked based on Lebanese recipes and presented through the aesthetics of *nouvelle cuisine*. This culinary encounter which takes place in the context of a post-colonial cultural institution about the Arab world communicates a series of past contacts of a colonial and pre-colonial nature. At the same time, cultural contacts between the former colony and its *métropole* continue during post-colonial times. The restaurant is a site for all these types of encounters and the menu is the archive of these exchanges. A dish, analyzed through the biography of its ingredients and its final presentation on the plate, communicates the cultural circuits reflected by global food systems and foodways. In “The World on a Plate,” Ian Cook and Philip Crang (1995) described three elements which contributed to the knowledge about food: “settings (the contexts in which they can and should be used), biographies (how they move about the food system); and origins (where food comes from)” (p. 142). To these, I add the practices of display of dishes and a general understanding of the context where the food is consumed – in this case, a Lebanese restaurant in a post-colonial cultural institution in France.

According to Alan Davidson (2002), “two dishes which indisputably belong to Lebanon and Syria and always adorn the mezze table, namely hummus and tabbouleh...have conquered much of the world in recent decades” (p. 534). And Le Zyriab menu is no exception: Hommos, “purée de pois chiches à la crème de sésame, citron et huile d’olive” (chickpeas purée with sesame cream, lemon and olive oil) and Tabboulé, “persil, blé concassé, tomate, menthe, oignons, citron et huile d’olive” (parsley, bulgur, tomato, mint, onion, lemon and olive oil) are at the top of the “Entrées” section. Small portions of Tabboulé are served in white, small and delicate porcelain ramekins which offer a strong contrast between the white of the container and

the healthy green of the dish. Furthermore, the dish is decorated with an accent of red and yellow, as half of a plum tomato and a slice of lemon adorn the salad, creating another set of contrasting chromatics (see Fig. 19). This simple salad, composed of fresh ingredients, contains one of the most common grains of the Lebanese cuisine, *burghul* (bulgur).

According to Helou (1994), “bulgur is a staple ingredient of Lebanese food, used sparingly in dishes such as *tabbooleh*...or as a main element in mountain dishes such as...*bil-banadoorah* (cracked wheat with chick peas and meat)” (p. 16; see also Kanafani-Zahar, 2010, p. 93-103). The making of bulgur in rural communities in Lebanon was a social ritual involving both women and men, with the women cleaning, washing and boiling the wheat, while the men transported the dried wheat to be grounded (Helou, 1994, p. 16-17). Due to the popularity of bulgur in Lebanon, Farouk Mardam-Bey (1998) called the Lebanese people “les champions de la tabboule” (p. 95). Paul Balta (2004), in *Boire et Manger en Méditerranée* also praised the dish, comparing it with its North African counterpart, where bulgur was replaced with couscous (p. 68). Considering the long history of this dish in Lebanon, its presence on the Le Zyriab menu is expected. However, from a common dish, Tabboulé becomes a marker of *nouvelle cuisine*, combining the same ingredients in innovative ways. A classical recipe of Tabboulé, according to Claudia Roden (2000, p. 76) and Anissa Helou (1994, p. 71-3), includes diced tomatoes within the composition of the dish. In fact, all ingredients are cut and chopped and mixed together. However, the chefs have extracted the tomato from the dish and have used it as an element of decor, together with the sliced lemon, to create contrast with the main dish.

Another staple of Lebanese cuisine is Falafel, “croquant de fèves et pois chiches à l’huile de sésame” (deep fried chickpeas patties with sesame oil) (“Le Zyriab”). Similar plating techniques are applied to the display of the falafel patties, which reaches the plate accompanied

by a generous dollop of Tahini (sesame paste) one of the main ingredients of the famous fried food. The dish, composed of multiple small and fried patties, is displayed on a transparent rectangular plate, resting on a bed of greens and adorned with a long bouquet of dill. In one corner of the plate, the white sesame sauce rests sprinkled with a few leaves of parsley. A plum tomato brings an accent of red, while a few wedges of lemon wait to be squeezed by the fingers of the food adventurer. Falafel, while a dish imported from Egypt, has become a very popular fare, present on “mezze” platters and in sandwich shops throughout Lebanon (Helou, 1994, p. 48). Just like Tabboulé, Falafel is not associated with high cuisine as it is mainly consumed as a street food or part of Lent by Christian communities in Arab countries (Davidson, 2002, p. 343). The main ingredient in Falafel is chickpeas, one of the most common grains in North Africa and the Middle East. Its origins in North Africa, in the vicinity of Egypt, chick peas spread rapidly through the Maghreb, in Tajines and as a side dish to the couscous broth, and the Middle East, in the famous Hommos (Mardam-Bey, 1998, p. 121-5; see also Helou, 1994, p. 19-20; Davidson, 2002, p. 200-1). At Le Zyriab, Falafel is plated according to the standards of *nouvelle cuisine*, accompanied by Tahini and decorated with dill, which originated in Eastern Europe, and lemon. From a common and casual dish, Falafel is transformed into a sophisticated *hors d'oeuvre*, proving that even the most common foods become extraordinary once in contact with the rules of *nouvelle cuisine*.

About Aysh el-Saraya (The Bread of the Seraglio), Helou (1994) wrote, “I am not sure why this bread pudding has been given such a grand name. It uses stale bread which is first soaked in caramelized sugar syrup, then covered with clotted cream and garnished with nuts” (p. 217). Regardless of its humble ingredients, it is one of the most common desserts on the Lebanese table and also at Noura. Aich al Sarail, “spécialité de pain et de fruits secs, macérant

dans un sirop de sucre, crème de lait” (specialty dessert made of bread and dried fruits macerated in sugar syrup, milk custard) has been slightly modified to contain dried fruits, while the clotted cream has been replaced with a simple milk custard. The traditional recipe requires the two flavours of the Middle East, orange blossom and rose water. When presented to the diner, the dessert is arranged in a transparent cylindrical glass, layered carefully starting and ending with the bread mixture. On the top of the second layer of bread rests a colourful bed of ground pistachio nuts, topped with a dollop of whipping cream decorated with a single piece of red dried fruit (see Fig. 20). Once again, a simple and rather humble dessert was transformed into a culinary masterpiece.

Without any doubt, the encounter between Lebanese traditional dishes and France’s *nouvelle cuisine* is transformative. There are very few cuisines which have not been somehow altered by the vocabulary and practices of the French cuisine but it is important to understand the different histories which mark these intersections. In the case of Lebanese or North African culinary culture, the encounter with the French happened during colonialism, a time when many local structures have been altered and reconstructed in the image of the French. This contact was therefore forced and artificial as it imposed a certain vision of civilization, where individuals often eat and socialize in restaurants, structure their meals in different courses and embrace specific table manners. The civilizing rituals of the French brought along the culinary spaces – the restaurants – where such norms were to be practiced and reinforced. At the same time, “colonized cultures have often adhered to their own food practices as one important symbolic way to resist colonial incursion. Land, labor and resources may be in the possession of the colonizer, but if they are able to prepare familiar foods...then people still control their own cultural life...food represents one important way to sustain that life” (Heldke, 2003, p. 11).

Traditional foods and foodways coexisted with culinary rituals imported from France but also from other European countries which correspond with the diversity of the settler communities of *pieds noirs*. These multiple traditions of cooking and eating have shaped the cultures of the colonized but also those of the colonizers. Furthermore, other processes of culinary “destruction” were taking place in the *métropole*, where products from the colonies came with recipes and knowledge about cooking and integration to French dishes. The colonial exhibitions were also participating to this changing culinary climate, defining boundaries between the foods of the “other” and those of the French. This network of intersections resulted in instances of influence and exchange within the cultures of all parties involved in colonialism. While it is important to look at colonialism as a significant factor of change in the colonized communities, it also contributed to the transformation of French cuisine.

I argue that the cuisine which combines French elements with local practices and products, while connected to colonial histories and contacts, represents a new culinary experience and creates its own practices, dishes and forms of presentation. The meals served at Le Zyriab reconstruct classical dishes into new visual and taste vocabularies, placing together ingredients inherited from pre-colonial times, vegetables, fruits and meats made popular during colonialism and techniques and products which are generated by larger economic and political trends such as globalization and cosmopolitanism. Even if Lebanon was under a relatively loose French rule, being able to keep its independent status, for a short period of time, its proximity to the Maghreb exposed the country to colonial products. Furthermore, commercial networks existed between many countries of the Mediterranean basin long before French colonialism. And, after colonialism, Lebanon and all the other previously colonized nations continue to change their culinary practices as they encounter new forms of cooking and eating, from fast

food to *nouvelle cuisine*. The menu offered by Le Zyriab and the visual vocabulary and stories constructed about the various dishes speak to the diversity of the encounters which generate this fusion cuisine brand of gastronomic experience.

While the encounter with the French introduced culinary innovations to the Lebanese cuisine, many of the ingredients brought to the Middle East through European colonialism originated in other areas. Therefore, France was often only an intermediary of culinary exchanges. Furthermore, previous encounters with the Ottoman Empire and with various Persian dynasties established the foundations of the Lebanese cuisine. Many of these dishes which resulted from ancient and new culinary contacts are part of the Le Zyriab menu. For example, Moussaka, “aubergines au four cuisinées à la sauce tomate et accommodées de pois chiches” (baked eggplant with tomato sauce and chick peas) combines three very popular vegetables of the Mediterranean cuisine, eggplants, tomatoes and chickpeas. None of these ingredients has its origins in Lebanon but all three foods are staples of contemporary Lebanese cooking. The eggplant originated in Asia, in India and Pakistan and reached the Middle East via Turkey, being a favorite of Turkish sultans of the sixteenth century (Mardam-Bey, 1998, p. 11-12). Farouk Mardam-Bey (1998) compiled a list with the most popular eggplant dishes. Moutabbal, also present on the Noura menu, was one of them and was described as “purée d’aubergines frites que l’on mélange avec du yaourt salé et aillé, de la *tahina* (crème de sésame) et du persil hache très fin” (p. 13). The tomato, with its origins in South America, was introduced in the Middle East by British colonizers in the nineteenth century. One of the favourite ingredients of the Lebanese cuisine, the tomato, chopped, diced, sautéed or pureed, is a main component of multiple dishes on the Le Zyriab menu, such as Tabboulé, “salade de persil, blé concassé, tomate, menthe, oignons, jus de citron et huile d’olive” (salad with parsley, bulgur, tomatoes,

mint, onions, lemon juice and olive oil), Warak enab, “feuilles de vigne farcies de riz, tomate et persil cuisinées à l’huile d’olive” (grape leaves stuffed with rice, tomatoes and parsley cooked in olive oil) or Labie bel zeit, “haricots verts et tomates fraîches cuisinés à l’huile d’olive” (green beans and fresh tomatoes cooked in olive oil) (“Le Zyriab carte”). As for chickpeas, it represents one of the earliest cultivated vegetables in the Middle East, which explains its overall presence in many traditional dishes, from hommos to couscous. From the Middle East, chickpeas travelled along with the Roman and Greek Empires, then to Europe, where it was used, at times of coffee scarcity, as a substitute for the caffeinated drink. At Le Zyriab, chickpeas is served in various dishes on the Entrees menu, but also as a side dish to the main *plats* such as Chawarma mixte sur lit de hommos, described as “émincée de bœuf mariné et rôti, sur lit de purée de pois chiches” (marinated and roasted ground beef with chick peas puree) (“Le Zyriab carte”).

What can a plate full of culinary encounters communicate? And, most importantly, what is the significance of this plate in the context of a cultural institution about the “other”? The presence of restaurants in museums could be attributed to the intensification of consumerism in North America and Western Europe, which transforms the citizens into consumers and commodifies many aspects of everyday life. However, this argument could not explain the history of intersections between food and colonialism in the process of introducing the colonized cultures to the populations of home. The culinary spaces in cultural institutions about the “other” communicate something that the main spaces of the museum cannot: a history of change and influence that altered immensely the culinary cultures of both France and the colonies. Even during colonial exhibitions, the *exotisme* and othering of colonial dishes created a fascination with the exotic, which is now contested, mainly by food adventurers; nostalgically re-enacted, by owners and cooks in various Middle Eastern and North African restaurants; or carefully and

sparsely processed in ethnic-*nouvelle cuisine* restaurants. While food was used as an ideological dividing tool during colonialism, the silent and unintended resistance embedded in the practices of cooking and eating produced unexpected encounters which generated undesired influences but also new cuisines. All these stories embedded in the cooking and display of dishes by El Zyriab chefs and cooks co-exist with the other narratives about *le monde arabe* present in the exhibitionary and educational spaces at the IMA.

I argue that the culinary suggests the complexity of encounters which took place during colonialism. Instances of violence, adaptation, assimilation, resistance, influence and co-existence are explained through the language of food. The stories that cannot be told by the main exhibitionary spaces at the IMA come to life in culinary narratives. Consuming a Lebanese or Algerian wine brings back the violent memories of land expropriation and razzias ordered by the French military and governance in order to modernize the lands of the colonies. At the same time, Algerian wine, explained Kathleen M. Guy (2010), became a competition for local French wines, as its demand and popularity increased in France. Further, changes to the natural environment in a colony are incorporated, in time, in the national geography and consciousness. For example, today, decades after colonization, wine is still the third most popular Algerian export. Not only are couscous and bulgur two main components of the French diet but these two products have lost their exoticism because of their long presence within the French supermarkets and restaurants. The popularity of couscous is an outcome of the long colonial contacts between France and North Africa. The resistance of North African and Lebanese traditional and pre-colonial dishes and culinary practices attests to the potential of silent resistance embedded in the repetitiveness of certain quotidian practices such as eating and cooking. Therefore, a plate full of bulgur and chickpeas, accompanied by a glass of Algerian wine is as powerful a memory of

historical encounters. Culinary spaces complete, contradict and complement the other spaces within the IMA.

Conclusions: Colonial encounters in post-colonial dishes

This chapter, which concludes the analytical section of the dissertation, focused on the types of encounters which can be observed within Le Zyriab, the gastronomic restaurant at the Institut du Monde Arabe. Generally, I argue that every space within a cultural institution, such as the restaurant, contributes to the overall image of the institution but can deviate from the main narratives constructed in other more traditional spaces for display of education. While the introduction of restaurants and other spaces for consumption within cultural institution is part of a larger re-invention of museums within a consumerist globalized world, this chapter looks beyond the consumerist thesis and looks at restaurants and their menus as relevant social and cultural spaces. In the case of the IMA, the restaurant is a space which reveals historical encounters between France and Lebanon going back to colonial times. At the same time, the merging between different cuisines and culinary traditions has produced a new type of culinary experience, which affirms the power of everyday cultural practices within a multi-cultural and post-colonial society such as France.

CONCLUSIONS

Becoming post-colonial

This dissertation told the story of post-colonial France through the example of a well known cultural institution in Paris, the Institut du Monde Arabe. Developed over the presidency of two French leaders – Valéry Giscard D’Estaing and François Mitterrand – and inaugurated as a socialist *grand projet* in November 1987, the IMA had the mission to enhance communication between France and the Arab world. Imagined by its leaders as a bridge between cultures and as a solution to the diplomatic crisis in the 1970s, the IMA was disconnected from colonial history, despite its main subject, *le monde arabe*. This rather paradoxical relation between the renditions of history – void of colonial stories – and the socio-political context in post-colonial France – full of colonial references – is a characteristic of most post-colonial French cultural institutions. This reluctance to address colonialism critically and publicly is part of the broader culture of memory in France, which often includes instances of forgetting. I showed that, despite this memory crisis embedded in most political and institutional contexts in France, colonial history, even if incomplete and fragmented, is present in post-colonial cultural institutions. Its presence might not be obvious, as it is excluded from the main spaces of display, but the memory of colonialism is a component of the larger narrative of these institutions.

Communicating history: Cultural institutions as inter-cultural bridges

In this dissertation, I argued that cultural institutions represent, through their content and missions, communicative spaces situated in-between official stories and critical approaches to national history. The communicative function of cultural institutions results from the multitude of spaces which compose it, each space developed through a series of specific practices. The

conversations that exist between these spaces and the communities of curators, scholars and administrators which provide them with meaning create a complex and “messy” system of communication. At the same time, the IMA is engaged in external processes of communication with other cultural institutions in France, with different audiences and with governmental bodies involved in the production of official stories about France’s colonial past. In light of these assumptions, I analyzed the communicative practices at the IMA as an entryway into broader social tensions and memory crises in contemporary France. This dissertation explored the IMA in relation to the constant battles over colonial memory in post-colonial France. Memory making is a significant component of contemporary cultural institutions, especially when they engage with cultures and histories which have connections with colonialism.

Cultural institutions are ideal communicators for two other reasons: They can claim distance from the political sphere and they represent solutions to the communicative impasse and obsession of our times, as explained by John Durham Peters (1999) in *Speaking into the Air*. Since its inauguration, the various presidents of the Institut du Monde Arabe have communicated clearly that the institute is not a political but a cultural space. The emphasis on culture and not politics is an outcome of the rather politicized beginning of the IMA, born from the diplomatic collaborations between France and the League of Arab States. To a certain extent, the IMA has not escaped, even today, the legacy of its diplomatic beginnings. At the same time, the luxury to claim a total divorce from politics, which cultural institutions often have, comes in handy especially in sensitive historical contexts, such as post-colonialism, and in relation to controversial public debates, such as the absence of colonial memories from the national repertoire.

The Institut du Monde Arabe is an example of another contemporary trend, identified by Peters as an obsession with making connections and communicating. Peters (1999) observed that “communication in much contemporary discourse exists as a sort of ill formed, undifferentiated conceptual germ plasm. Rarely has any idea been so infested with platitudes” (p. 6). In this context, communication, loosely defined, becomes the solution to multiple problems which cannot be resolved through other means. However, in post-colonial France, the inability of the French government to communicate with the immigrant communities and communicate about France’s colonial past is at the roots of the lack of communication which the IMA seeks to solve. The insertion of an impressive building made from glass and steel and designed by one of the world’s most renowned architects, accentuates, paradoxically, the silences around colonial history in France. The fact that a cultural institution dedicated to Arab culture, an ideal space for the critical discussion of colonialism, refuses to integrate colonialism to its overarching discourse is yet another instance of denial of a significant aspect of France’s history to emerge publicly.

The grand paradoxes at the Institut du Monde Arabe: Comparing multiple spaces

The exclusion of explicit references to colonial history from many spaces at the IMA is challenged by the presence of fragmented stories about colonialism throughout the fabric of the institution. This dissertation used “the encounter” as a conceptual and interpretative framework to make sense of the IMA through the analysis of three different spaces: exhibitionary (the main museum, the Qantara project and a series of *grandes expositions*), educational (the *Qantara* magazine) and consumerist (Le Zyriab restaurant). Each space was analyzed in terms of its relation to colonial history.

About the exhibitionary spaces, I concluded that, despite a unifying unwillingness to discuss colonial histories, each space communicates different stories about the Arab world. The

permanent collection stays the closest to the official mission of the IMA, acting as a “majority museum” (James Clifford, 1991). The Qantara virtual museum follows loosely the format of a “dialogic museum,” which is organized according to themes and allows the visitors to create their own journeys through the exhibitionary space. The *grandes expositions*, due to their temporary nature, fluctuate between traditional and dialogic politics of display depending on the thematic focus. Some exhibitions reflect the official version of history constructed within the permanent collection while others take on directly subjects related to colonialism.

Upon the examination of multiple issues of the *Qantara* magazine, I concluded that the presence of colonial stories is reduced and does not result in a coherent and critical investigation of French colonialism. Further, the accounts of colonialism, colonial memory and post-colonial realities are sporadic and fragmented. The first few issues of the magazine are singular in their critical rendition of colonial history, especially in relation to Algeria and the Algerian War of Independence. After the 4th issue of *Qantara*, stories about the violence of the colonial system and the contemporary *crise de mémoire* are rare and lack the critical perspective of these articles. The diversity of voices in the magazine, some critical of colonialism and other celebratory of some of its aspects, such as Orientalism, result in major contradictions. Just like many other social and cultural spaces in France, *Qantara* is marked by indecision vis-à-vis the memory of French colonialism.

It is the restaurant, I concluded, which promises to reveal the complexity of colonial encounters and the possibility of such encounters to result in instances of resistance and influence. In the case of the IMA, the restaurant is a space which reveals historical encounters between France and Lebanon going back to colonial times. At the same time, the merging between different cuisines and culinary traditions has produced a new type of culinary

experience, which affirms the power of everyday cultural practices within a multi-cultural and post-colonial society such as France.

Communicating colonialism: Post-colonial challenges

Generally, all nations chose to forget certain aspects of their histories. For France, the greatest historical taboo is colonialism. The resistance to colonial narratives and the lack of critical investigations of historical events related to colonialism represent symptoms of most societies with a colonial past. In France, the rupture with overseas colonies was abrupt and in some instances extremely violent. For example, the Algerian War of Independence, which ended in 1964, and related events, such as the 1961 October massacre in Paris, have been silenced through a lack of legal investigations and public commemorations. Compared to other historical moments such as the Occupation, which produced an avalanche of investigations, trials, public apologies and commemorative places, colonialism has been void of a proper place in France's history. Such a fact seems ironic considering the immigrant communities and the large number of French citizens of African or Asian origins living in France and changing the fabric of the nation through the merging of their cultural practices to the traditions of the French.

The contemporary realities of post-colonial communities in France have generated an academic literature unable to observe harmonious and positive encounters between France and its immigrants, many of them French citizens. Through a discussion of everyday culture as a space for resistance and influence during colonialism, I argued that the colonial encounter produced major changes in the structure of French culture, many of them visible today. In my dissertation, I incorporated some thoughts on theorizations of colonialism and post-colonialism more generally. The long presence of France in North Africa, especially in Algeria, was filled with violent and oppressive instances and many scholars, writers and victims of colonialism have

unearthed and explained in detail the repressive works of the French colonial government. However, I claim that colonialism also meant the co-existence of cultures and communities which inevitably produced other types of encounters, less violent, “messier” and thus harder to quantify and analyze. The exclusive focus of colonial histories on political and economic aspects in the detriment of culture subscribes the colonial encounter to a pattern of relations of power that favor the colonizer. In the last twenty years, a “cultural turn” took place in the study of colonial history that allows for cultural spaces of negotiation, resistance and influence to be observed in the relation between the colonized and the colonizer. This more nuanced reading of the colonial encounter can translate into interpretations of present post-colonial contacts between different communities which co-exist in France.

The future of the Institut du Monde Arabe

Since April 2010, the museum of the Institut du Monde Arabe closed its doors temporarily to the public as the museum is going through a series of renovations. The museum is scheduled to reopen late in 2011. The real reason for this “re-invention” of the IMA’s museum is the opening of a new wing of Arab art at the Louvre. Many of the objects on display in the IMA’s museum are on loan from the Louvre but the artifacts have been recalled to their original location. In this situation, the museum’s directors and curators have decided to re-organize the museum so that it would include a significant section of contemporary Arab art. The IMA has a rich collection of contemporary Arab art, which is not currently on display. When the museum was first opened in 1987, an entire floor (the first) was allotted for contemporary art but this project was closed in the early 1990s. During the closure of the museum, some of the objects previously displayed in the main collection are on view in the galleries dedicated to temporary exhibitions, together with works from the contemporary art collection. Is the current set-up of

the temporary museum, organized thematically and with emphasis on contemporary works, a glimpse of the future museum? This is difficult to assess at the moment, as there is very little information about the future museum.

According to the IMA website, the current temporary museum,

privilégie une approche de la civilisation arabo-musulmane, avec ce que des peuples ont partagé dans le temps – de l’aube de l’islam à aujourd’hui – et dans l’espace – de l’Andalousie aux confins de l’Asie. La diversité des ethnies, des langues, des traditions, des confessions n’a pas empêché des expressions communes, particulièrement manifestés dans les arts et l’artisanat qui d’emblée les font qualifier “d’islamiques” (“Au seuil d’un musée”, n.d., para. 1).

This description of the temporary museum suggests a renewed interest in cultural encounters conceived as the engine of grand civilizations. In the case of the Arab civilization, these contacts, between ethnicities, languages, traditions and religions, cover a vast geographical area, from Spain (Andalusia) to Asia. The website further explains that the exhibition is organized thematically, which reminds of the structure of the Qantara exhibition and its virtual museum. Therefore, “le parcours s’organise autour de thèmes dont certains font écho à la fascination exercée par l’Orient sur les voyageurs et artistes européens à compter du XVIIIe siècle: un cadre et un art de vivre, la calligraphie, les métiers et un répertoire décoratif” (“Au seuil d’un musée”, n.d., para. 1). The fascination with a generic Orient seems to be a recurring theme in the new display of Arab culture and the focus once again rests on unique and beautiful objects, such as manuscripts and “objets de grand luxe,” (“Au seuil d’un musée”, n.d., para. 1). The areas of Arab knowledge presented in the exhibition are art, architecture and urbanism, and sciences (mathematics, chemistry and astronomy). While it is too early now to draw conclusions about the future museum of the IMA, the little available information points out not to a re-imagined museum but to a space which relies heavily on past narratives and strategies for display.

Reading into cultural institutions

My investigations into the spaces of the Institut du Monde Arabe generated a series of conclusions about the communicative role of institutions in a post-colonial context and the restructuring of contemporary institutions to serve more inclusive publics. At the same time, this project also produced a series of questions and new research avenues. The IMA, and any other cultural institution can be analyzed through the framework developed in this dissertation, which places communication and encounters at the foundation of any cultural project. Art or science museums, but also musical and art centers more generally, can be understood as shifting and communicative network of encounters between spaces and communities.

Further, this dissertation emphasized the importance of spaces for consumption – shops, restaurants, cafes – in cultural institutions not as indicators of the hyper-commercialization of cultural institutions but as a signs of their mobility and adaptability to cultural changes. In a global environment fascinated and obsessed with food, for example, museums assimilate culinary trends specific to their urban and local context but combine these trends with the institution's overall image. At the IMA, visitors and diners can taste *nouvelle* Lebanese cuisine; at the Museum of Modern Art, they can dine at the Modern and experience a French-American modern cuisine; and at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, guests are invited to a classical French bistro upon their exit from the Impressionist collection. The integration of food spaces to cultural institutions is not random but is a reflection of taste cultures, urban specificities and historical contexts.

My dissertation also paves the way for future investigations into the museological landscape in post-colonial nations in and outside of the West. France is one of the most discussed cases in the literature on post-colonial institutions due to the explosion of museums

about the “other” in the last twenty years and the public controversies regarding their collections and their representation of colonial history. Great Britain, Australia and Canada are also discussed in relation to the practices of remembering and forgetting specific colonial memories. The West is the privileged location for investigation of post-colonial culture. More recently, South Africa generated some interest for North American scholars working on museums and memory. However, extensive work remains to be done on post-colonial commemorative practices in former colonies. Are countries such as Algeria or Morocco remembering their colonial past in museums, monuments and memorials? If not, what practices of remembering are popular in these formerly colonized nations? Such questions remain still unanswered.

Lastly, there is room for further investigations into the Institut du Monde Arabe itself. My dissertation proposed one specific reading of some of the spaces in relation to colonial memory and colonial encounters. However, I was unable to address a series of other significant spaces, such as the cultural events – seminars, conferences, poetry readings or debates; the entertainment and leisure activities such as movie screenings, theatre performances or dance shows; or smaller and less mediated exhibitions, usually displayed in the three eating spaces at the Institut. Interviews with presidents, curators and other members of the administrative and artistic communities could also shed more light on the ideologies and goals of the Institut. Also, participant observation and interviews with members of the IMA’s audience could show the diversity of communities who find the institution useful. For example, while I was doing research in the IMA’s Library, I noticed the high number of Arab students from the nearby Jussieu campus who used the space for study groups or to consult the daily press. I also noticed certain “regulars” who spend a few hours daily in the Library readings newspapers and

magazines. Some of them were very enthusiastic about my research and gave me “inside” information about the IMA.

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APPENDIX 1

Translations of French quotes

Introduction

The Institut du Monde Arabe and post-colonial France: Telling stories through encounters

“justifiant l’acte colonial, une idéologie fondée sur la certitude de la supériorité de la ‘race blanche’ et de l’avance culturelle et scientifique des civilisations occidentales s’impose à la fin du XIXe siècle”

an ideology based on the superiority of the white race and the cultural and scientific advances of Western civilizations justifies the colonial enterprise and became popular at the end of the 19th century

“l’extension, dans les quartiers, de la comparaison entre les situations de relégation et la situation coloniale; la législation sur la bonne manière de construire et transmettre le ‘bilan globalement positif’ de la colonisation; ...la montée du ‘sentiment d’insécurité’ face aux immigrations postcoloniales...; les dénonciations médiatiques d’un ‘racisme antiblanc’...; les phobies anti-islam”

the obvious similarities, in the context of the French suburbs, between instances of marginalization and colonial policies; the legislation which aims to emphasize the positive aspects of colonization; ...the increase of a feeling of insecurity vis-à-vis the post-colonial immigrants...; the mediatized denunciations of an anti-white racism...; the anti-Islam phobias

“silences coloniales”

instances of silence about the colonial past

“histoire inaudible”

inaudible history

“dont l’action a touché la légitimité de leur comportement – au regard de normes morales, éthiques, culturelles”

which have challenged their moral, ethical and cultural legitimacy through previous actions

“ont des difficultés avec l’écriture de leur histoire”

are struggling with their official history

“autocensure des citoyens” and “censure des autorités”

self-censorship of citizens and official censorship

“la République a trahi ses valeurs”

the Republic betrayed its own values

“est-il concevable que la transformation de trois nouveaux musées nationaux puisse amener la République à se confronter à la différence mythique entre un ‘nous’ et un ‘eux’ qui semble peser sur la solidarité nationale en France?”

can the transformation of three national museums result in the re-evaluation of the mythical difference between “us” and “them”, which is a burden on French solidarity

“c’est en adulte qu’il aborde son avenir. Il le fait avec un sens accru de ses responsabilités, en sachant que ça ne sera jamais facile parce que deux civilisations ne se rencontrent jamais sans se heurter. Mais il y a dans ce heurt même une infinie richesse. Ce magazine en sera l’expression”

It looks to the future as a mature institution. The IMA is aware of the responsibility to connect two cultures, an endeavour which will result in conflict; but from this conflict an infinite richness emerges. And this publication will be its expression.

Chapter 1

Institut du Monde Arabe: The history of a post-colonial cultural institution

“Le but de cette Fondation est de développer la connaissance du monde arabe, d’animer une recherche en profondeur sur sa langue, ses valeurs culturelles et spirituelles, ainsi que de favoriser les échanges et la coopération, en particulier dans les domaines des sciences et des techniques, entre la France et le monde arabe, contribuant par là au développement des relations entre celui-ci et l’Europe”

the goal of this Foundation is to increase knowledge about the Arab world, to inspire in-depth research on its language, its spiritual and cultural values, but also to encourage exchanges and cooperation, especially in the fields of science and technology. The cooperation between France and the Arab world would further contribute to the development of stronger relations between Arab countries and Europe.

“institut du droit français”

institution run under French law

“monopole de la France dans un lieu où la collaboration de deux mondes est le mot d’ordre”

French monopoly on a space dedicated to the collaboration between two worlds

“les états arabes veulent qu’il devienne une institution internationale ce à quoi le gouvernement français s’oppose”

the Arab states would like for the IMA to become an international institution, a desire which is opposed by the French government.

“l’IMA est pratiquement paralysé faute de moyens. Les états arabes s’abstiennent en effet de verser leur quote-part au budget de fonctionnement en attendant que soit résolu le problème de la répartition des pouvoirs entre la France et ses partenaires arabes”

the IMA is financially paralyzed. The Arab states refuse to contribute their share to the operating budget until the problem of the distribution of powers between France and its Arab partners is resolved.

“asphyxié par le manque d’argent, paralysé par les pressions politiques, l’IMA a connu deux premières années pénibles”

suffocated by the lack of funds, paralyzed by political pressures, the first two years of the IMA were painful.

“un bateau à la dérive”

drifting ship

“certains pays confondaient d’ailleurs allègrement culture et relations publiques: comme l’Arabie Saoudite, organisatrice de l’exposition ‘Lieux saints’, ou l’Irak, qui exigea qu’on retire une caricature syrienne pouvant faire penser à Saddam Hussein”

some countries confused public relations with culture: for example, Saudi Arabia, organizer of the exhibition ‘Lieux saints’ or Iraq, which demanded the removal of a Syrian cartoon which was claimed to remind people of Saddam Hussein.

“une synthèse allégorique entre conceptions architecturales d’Orient et d’Occident”

an allegorical synthesis between Western and Eastern architectural elements

“un projet trop marqué par l’aspect arabe ne peut être accepté. Il faut arriver par une concentration entre architectes français et arabes à une symbiose, alliant l’art à l’esthétique et qui puisse être compatible avec le site. Il faut aussi que dès l’entrée, on sache qu’il s’agit d’un bâtiment consacré à la culture et la civilisation arabe”

a project which is too much influenced by Arab architecture will not be accepted. The desired project will combine Arab and French architectural elements and will be compatible with the location. It is also required that, right from the entrance, this building will resonate with Arab culture and civilization

“au-delà de l’apparence résolument moderniste de la construction de verre et d’aluminium, le visiteur découvre que toute une série d’éléments architecturaux issus de la tradition orientale font

l'objet d'une réinterprétation: moucharabiehs de la façade, ryad (cour intérieure), ziggourat de la tour des livres"

underneath the overall modern aspect of the glass and aluminum building, the visitor will discover a series of elements which reinterpret classical Arab motifs: the moucharabiehs which decorate the facade, the interior courtyard and the tower of books

"le musée des musées arabes"

the best among Arab museums

"un parcours chronologique, que le visiteur aborde comme un voyage à travers le temps et dans l'espace"

a chronological journey through space and time

"brassages et échanges entre les peuples"

mixing and exchanges between peoples

"le musée tente d'en approcher la diversité et les influences mêlées, grâce a des objets appartenant non seulement au monde arabe, mais aussi à l'Iran, l'Inde ou l'Asie centrale"

the museum attempts to incorporate diversity and cultural exchange through objects originating not only in the Arab world but also in Iran, India or Central Asia

"s'inscrit ainsi dans l'un des objectifs que s'est fixé l'IMA: développer et approfondir en France l'étude, la connaissance et la compréhension du monde arabe, de sa langue, de sa civilisation et de son effort de développement"

is aligned with one of the main objectives of the IMA: to develop and encourage the study and the knowledge and the understanding in France of the Arab world, its language, its civilization and its development efforts

"en répondant à une forte demande du public français désireux de mieux connaître la culture et la langue arabes"

in response to the strong demand from the French public wanting to study the Arab language and civilization

"penser le post-colonial"

thinking about post-colonial studies

"constitue une invitation au voyage, une incitation à découvrir les pays arabes à travers des dossiers, des reportages, des critiques de livres et de films. Elle est aussi le reflet des activités de l'IMA"

extends an invitation to travel and an encouragement to discover the Arab countries through various articles and stories. The magazine also presents the activities of the IMA

“il s’agit pour nous de promouvoir cette culture qui est assez mal connue dans les plus grandes couches de la population...cette culture et cette civilisation qui ont beaucoup apporté...à l’Occident”

at the IMA, we want to promote a culture which is poorly known throughout France; this culture has contributed to the Western culture and civilization

“Nous sommes un lieu d’échange interculturel,” Pisani (1988) tells his interviewer, “donc, deux dimensions: culture et interculture. Les arabes sont ce qu’ils sont. Nous sommes ce que nous sommes. Et nous sommes ensemble en train de construire un system d’échanges dans un intérêt mutuel”

the IMA is a space of intercultural exchanges,” Pisani (1988) tells his interviewer, “therefore, there are two dimensions to the IMA: culture and interculture. The Arabs have their culture and we have ours. But together we are in the process of building a system of exchanges and common interests

“le contenu culturel franco-arabe”

the Franco-Arab cultural content

“les diplomates jouaient un rôle majeur, et non les gens de culture”

the diplomats, and not the intellectuals, used to play a significant role

“Cabana s’inscrit dans une logique de réduction des conts. Après les frasques de son prédécesseur (Edgard Pisani), on sent qu’il est là pour mettre de l’ordre dans la maison. Pas de folies du type exposition pharaonique... Cela étant, le départ de Pisani a enlevé beaucoup de génie et d’esprit créateur à l’IMA”

Cabana initiated a policy to help cut costs in various department of the IMA. After the financial ‘disaster’ created by Pisani, his predecessor, Cabana would restore order at the IMA. This meant fewer spectacular exhibitions, which were highly regarded by the French public. The fact remains that Pisani’s departure removed much genius and creativity from the IMA.

“nous exposons de plus en plus d’artistes contemporains, nous songeons même à un festival de la création actuelle...Déjà, avec le café littéraire et les Jeudis de l’IMA, nous avons créé le Club de l’IMA, à périodicité mensuelle, où des sujets ‘chauds’ sont abordés: le plan Sharon, l’Irak après un an de guerre, le retour de la Libye dans la communauté internationale”

we want to feature more contemporary artists and even organize a festival of contemporary art...through le café littéraire and les Jeudis de l'IMA, we have created a series of monthly gatherings where 'hot' topics are debated: the Sharon plan, the War in Iraq or Libya's return to the international community

“les pays arabes doivent mieux communiquer...[and] les pays arabes souffre d'un deficit de communication”

Arab countries must communicate better” and “Arab countries suffer from a communication deficit

“on peut dire avec certitude que l'IMA est sauvé. Pour la première fois depuis son ouverture, il y a vingt ans, l'IMA terminera l'année avec un budget en équilibre. Donc pas de déficit, après vingt années de déficit, et même un résultat légèrement positif”

it is safe to say that the IMA is saved. For the first time since its opening twenty years ago, the IMA ends the fiscal year with a balanced budget. So no more deficit for the IMA after twenty years of deficits, and even a slightly positive result.

“d'emblée je me suis senti libre de toute pression car l'IMA n'est pas le porte-parole de tel ou tel État, pas plus d'ailleurs le procureur des régimes arabes, juste un lieu de liberté, d'échanges et de débats bannissant la pensée unique”

I feel free from political pressures as the IMA is no longer a mouth-piece for individual states and not a proxy for Arabs regimes, but a place for freedom, cultural exchanges and pure knowledge

“constituer un facteur de cohésion nationale, eu égard aux nombreux citoyens français issus de l'immigration, plus particulièrement du Maghreb”

represent an element for national cohesion, with consideration towards the many French citizens of immigrant origins, especially the North African communities

“qui, s'autorisant de sa compétence propre en matière de création/culture, sort de son rôle initial pour s'investir dans les débats publics...il n'y a pas, dans notre pays, d'intellectuel sans engagement”

who will use his individual authority in matters of creation and culture to engage in debates with a public scope...there is no intellectual in France who is not engaged in such debates

“l'IMA a été conçu comme vitrine du monde arabe en France...on n'a pas tenu compte du fait que les Arabes vivants en France seraient un élément essentiel de notre public. Or, nous le constatons maintenant”

the IMA was created as a window on the Arab world in France...at that time, we did not take account of the fact that the Arabs living in France would be an essential part of our public. Now, we do

“deux groupes sociaux et professionnels ne sont donc pas au cœur de ses préoccupations...d’une part, *les travailleurs immigrés* – divers organismes ont été créés pour eux [...]. D’autre part, l’Institut ne s’adresse pas *aux spécialistes* qui étudient le monde arabe et ont, par définition, une sympathie pour lui”

two groups are not primarily targeted by the IMA...on one hand, the immigrant workers – other organizations have been created for them; also, the IMA is not intended for the specialists in Arab culture, who are already sympathetic to the Arab world

“le but de cette fondation est de développer la connaissance du monde arabe...ainsi que de favoriser les échanges et la coopération...entre la France et le monde arabe”

the aim of this foundation are to increase knowledge about the Arab world...and to improve exchanges and cooperation between France and the Arab world

“À mes yeux, l’Institut a deux missions: être une scène culturelle dévolue au monde arabe, un lieu de dialogue des civilisations; constituer un facteur de cohésion nationale, eu égard aux nombreux citoyens français issus de l’immigration, plus particulièrement du Maghreb. Avec le temps, le deuxième point est devenu crucial: reconnaître la diversité, et la valoriser, aide les jeunes à se construire comme citoyens pleinement français. L’IMA reçoit chaque année 1 million de visiteurs, mais nous accueillons aussi 50 000 élèves, dont 25 000 proviennent du département de la Seine-Saint-Denis”

in my opinion, the IMA has two missions: to be a cultural space dedicated to the Arab world, a space for dialogue between civilizations; to be a factor of national cohesion, given the numerous French citizens with immigrant origins, especially North African communities. In time, the second mission has become crucial: to recognize and value diversity will help the youth to perceive themselves as fully French. The IMA receives about one million visitors every year, including fifty thousands. Twenty-five thousand students come from the suburbs of Seine-Saint-Denis

“car l’IMA ne peut plus se contenter d’être une vitrine officielle du monde arabe au moment où les questions identitaires se posent dans toute l’Europe et où des projets analogues sont lancés à Madrid et Amsterdam”

the IMA cannot remain simply an official window of the Arab world at a time when questions about identity are being raised throughout Europe and similar cultural projects are being launched in Madrid and Amsterdam

“c’était en 1974 et Valéry Giscard d’Estaing entré à l’Elysée. Le choc pétrolier de 1973 avait transformé les Etats arabes en milliardaires... si impopulaires qu’on parlait déjà de confrontation

entre monde arabe et Occident. Giscard, qui pense à leur proposer une vitrine de prestige à Paris, contacte Hassan II du Maroc et Fayçal d'Arabie Saoudite”

in 1974, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing occupied the Elysee; the oil crisis in 1973 has transformed the Arab nations into unpopular billionaires. People were talking about a conflict between the Arab world and the West. In this political context, Giscard contacts King Hassan II of Morocco and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and offers them the IMA

“est né du choc pétrolier de 1973. Fraîchement élu à l'Élysée, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing revendiquera la paternité de cette idée auprès des rois du Maroc et d'Arabie Saoudite: accueillir en France une vitrine du monde arabe, financée par les pays arabes eux-mêmes afin de restaurer leur image, ternie par la crise économique dont l'opinion occidentale les rendait responsables”

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing offers the kings of Morocco and Saudi Arabia an institute for the Arab world, financed by Arab countries in order to improve their image, which has been affected by the oil crisis, for which the West holds them responsible

Chapter 2

Communicative encounters in post-colonial France

“étant de mieux faire connaître le Monde Arabe contemporain et la civilisation arabo-musulmane”

to increase awareness of the contemporary Arab world and the Arab-Muslim civilization

“l'Institut a sans doute le plus de chances de transformer progressivement l'image du monde arabe en France et d'atteindre son objectif qui n'est autre, en définitive, que d'être un des instruments essentiels du dialogue des cultures arabes et français”

the institute has the greatest chances of gradually changing the image of the Arab world in France and of achieving the goal of providing a forum for Franco-Arab dialogue

“l'Institut du monde arabe lui [au public] offre, non pas une belle vitrine mais, plus que toute autre institution culturelle à l'étranger, un espace de rencontre, de débat et de convivialité”

the IMA offers the public more than just a showcase of the Arab world; more than any other cultural institutions abroad, it provides a space for encounters, debate and conviviality

“Qantara veut construire ou plutôt consolider le pont entre le nord et le sud, entre l'est et l'ouest de la Méditerranée”

Qantara's aim is to build a bridge between North and South, between the East and West of the Mediterranean Basin

“L’Institut du Monde Arabe constitue un instrument privilégié de dialogue et de coopération entre la France et les pays arabes”

the IMA is a privileged instrument for dialogue and cooperation between France and the Arab states

“Voilà, en tout cas, une réalisation qui prouve la volonté de la France d’être en mesure de servir la relation entre nos cultures, entre ce vaste monde qui est le vôtre, et nous-mêmes reliés que nous avons été à travers l’histoire par la géographie, par la mer Méditerranée, après tant de confrontations et de luttes”

let’s celebrate a project which shows France’s desire to unite two cultures, your vast world and our nation. Our cultures share history, geography and conflicts

“un établissement d’utilité publique”

public establishment

“favoriser les échanges culturels, la *communication* et la coopération entre France et le monde arabe”

increasing cultural exchanges, *communication* and cooperation between France and the Arab world

“les Français, en effet, connaissaient toujours mal la culture et la civilisation arabes; ils s’en formaient des images incomplètes, fausses, parfois même pejoratives”

the French had limited knowledge about Arab culture and civilization; their impressions were incomplete, wrong and often negative

“mauvaise connaissance”

poor knowledge

“il a donc paru nécessaire d’améliorer l’exactitude de ces images et de montrer aux Français la longue tradition spirituelle et intellectuelle d’où le monde arabe est issu, de leur apprendre qu’il est l’héritier d’une civilisation prestigieuse, brillante”

it thus appeared necessary to correct these impressions and to show the French the long spiritual and intellectual traditions of the Arab world, which is the heir of a prestigious and brilliant civilization

“est singulièrement vivace puisque des écrivains, des philosophes, des scientifiques, des artistes témoignent sous nos yeux de sa fécondité”

lives through the work of contemporary writers, philosophers, scientists and artists who can attest to its richness

“de développer et d’approfondir en France l’étude, la connaissance et la compréhension du monde arabe, de sa langue, de sa civilisation, de ses valeurs culturelles et spirituelles, et de son effort de développement”

to develop and encourage the study, the knowledge and the understanding in France of the Arab world, its language, its civilization, its cultural and spiritual values and its development effort

“que le théorème postcolonial touche au point le plus sensible de la conscience française – l’idéal de la nation républicaine héritière des Lumières”

the fact that the post-colonial theory touches on sensitive issues in France – the ideals of the republican nation and its Enlightenment heritage

“le postcolonial [représente] un risque pour la cohésion cohesion”

the postcolonial is a danger to national solidarity

“colonisation et décolonisation se situent ensemble, non dissociables, au sein même de la conscience moderne actuelle”

colonization and decolonization are part, together, of modern consciousness”

“donne accès à une totalité dynamique où toutes les composantes sont en interaction, en état de continuel réajustement des relations selon les variations des modes de la domination et de la dépendence”

Gives access to a series of dynamic relations composed of interacting elements which shift as the modes of domination and dependence change

“l’homme colonisateur en pion, en adjutant, en garde-chiourme, en chicote et l’homme indigène en instrument de production”

the colonizer into a puppet and warden and the colonized into an instrument of production

“l’intimidation, la pression, la police, l’impôt, le vol, le viol, les cultures obligatoires”

intimidation, pressure, police, taxes, theft, rape, compulsory crops

Chapter 3

Creative encounters: Collective memories in cultural institutions

“un concept [qui] voudrait à la fois signifier la tension et les effets de la post-colonialité: il recouvre des réalités multiples et des situations hétérogènes, dans la mesure où ces réalités et ces situations peuvent être éclairées...par des processus de longue durée, reliés à la situation colonial”

a concept which combines both the tensions and effects generated by post-colonialism: the concept re-claims multiple realities and mixed situations and analyzes them in connection with the colonial situation

“l’histoire commence à faire sa propre histoire”

history starts to make its own history

“le lieu a reçu l’empreinte du groupe, et réciproquement. Alors, toutes les démarches du groupe peuvent se traduire en termes spatiaux”

a space is marked by the community and a community is marked by its space. Thus, all the actions of the group translate in spatial tropes

“sans vigilance commémorative, l’histoire les balaierait vite”

without commemorations, history would quickly sweep them away

“les lieux de mémoire naissent et vivent du sentiment qu’il n’y a pas de mémoire spontanée, qu’il faut créer des archives, qu’il faut maintenir des anniversaires, organiser des célébrations, prononcer des éloges funèbres”

the sites of memory result from the feeling that spontaneous memory is obsolete and from the imperative to create archives, to maintain national holidays, to organize festivals and give eulogies

“l’état...est le garant du ‘récit’ national. Il est donc tenté, par l’intermédiaire de la loi, de l’orientation des manuels scolaires ou de la politique patrimoniale et muséale, d’infléchir et d’interpréter l’histoire en la convertissant en ‘mémoire’ ou en ‘récit national’”

the state is the keeper of a national discourse. It is tempted, through law, textbooks and cultural policy, to interpret history and transform it into memory and national discourse

“en l’absence d’un véritable débat scientifique, ces projets restent opaques...il est très difficile de déterminer quelles en sont les ambitions respectives comme les lignes directrices”

in the absence of academic debate, such projects remain opaque...it is difficult to assess what are the ambitions and the guidelines of these initiatives

“un musée de la colonisation et du colonialisme est-il possible”

can a museum of colonization and colonialism exist?”

“après plusieurs décennies au cours desquelles le colonialisme a été dans une large mesure mis au ban des musées, il a aujourd’hui réintégré progressivement, et de manière multiple, le paysage muséologique de la France contemporaine, mais peine encore à trouver une expression autonome” (p. 95-96)

after several decades of silence, colonialism enters gradually the discourse of museums without finding an autonomous voice

“sans doute, le fait même qu’il soient là, avec d’autres nouveaux musées, rendra encore plus évidente l’absence, en France, d’une véritable prise de conscience officielle de l’histoire colonial”

the very existence of post-colonial museums makes more visible the absence of an official critical interrogation of colonial history in France

Chapter 4

Inevitable encounters: From colonial exhibitions to post-colonial institutions

“ce droit d’‘exhiber’ des ‘exotiques’ dans des zoos, des cirques ou des villages...Oui, le ‘sauvage’ existe! Je l’ai vu...Il convient maintenant de l’‘apprivoiser’ avant de le ‘civiliser’”

the right to display ‘exotic subjects’ in zoos, circuses and villages...Yes, the primitive individual exists! I saw him...now he must be domesticated before being civilized

“le tour du monde en un jour”

a trip around the world in a day

“la construction d’un imaginaire social sur l’Autre, la théorisation scientifique de la ‘hiérarchie des races’...et enfin l’édification d’un empire colonial alors en pleine expansion”

the development of a social imaginary about the Other, the scientific theories about the hierarchy of races and the building of an expanding colonial empire

“au musée du Quai Branly, ‘illusion’ et ‘œuvre d’art’ coexistent malaisément avec le réalisme de l’ethnographie et de l’histoire...depuis la naissance du projet sous le signe des ‘arts premiers,’ la question du bon équilibre entre esthétique et anthropologie a soulevé un vif débat”

at Quai Branly, illusion and work of art coexist with ethnography and history...because the birth of this museum is connected with the display of ‘primitive arts’, the debate about a balanced merging of aesthetics and anthropology has spread across the country

“tout s’y réfracte: la politique culturelle des musées français; un profond malaise, plus que mémoriel, face à l’actualité du passé colonial et le refus d’admettre que la République n’a pas su agir à la hauteur de ses principes”

reflects multiple issues: the cultural politics of French museums; the anxiety vis-a-vis the return of colonial memories; the refusal to acknowledge the past mistakes of the French Republic

“l’ethnographie s’identifiant ainsi à l’étude des sociétés ‘primitives’ et populaires”

ethnography was defined as the study of primitive and traditional societies

“chaque groupe humain est installé, raconté, conservé dans cet univers réduit et toujours plus complet”

each group is displayed, narrated and preserved in this simplified and more and more complete universe

“les visiteurs parcourent la rue du Caire, bordée de vingt-trois maisons de styles architecturaux divers abritant artisans, commerçants et tenanciers de cafés maures”

the visitors who walk along the Cairo Street admired twenty-eight houses of various architectural styles, where lived artisans, vendors and coffeeshop owners

“vaste quartier exotique”

vast exotic neighborhood

“et ses coréographies dérisoires: danses du narguilé, du sabre et, bien évidemment, du ventre”

and its pathetic coreography: hookah shops, sword performances and belly dances

“[est] destiné à symboliser les termes de l’échange inhérent au pacte colonial [ayant]...la mission d’être un panthéon, sans transfert de cendres, de la France coloniale”

symbolizes the exchanges which characterize the colonial past and acts as the pantheon of colonial France

“son but essentiel est de donner aux Français conscience de leur empire. [...] Il faut que chacun de nous se sente citoyen de la grande France, celle des cinq parties du monde”

its main goal is to remind the French of their empire...each of us should be proud to be citizens of *la grande France*, which dominates the four corners of the world

“les arts indigènes, l’action sociale, l’outillage économique, les produits, le tourisme et la marine marchande”

primitive arts, social action, economic tools, products, tourism and maritime commerce

“la France figure au centre de la composition, au-dessus de la porte d’entrée, sous les traits d’une allégorie de l’Abondance vers qui tout converge”

France is placed at the center of the composition above the main entrance and is depicted as an allegory of Abundance towards which all the other elements of the composition converge

“le présent des colonies”

the present situation in the colonies

“le musée dévient l’un des tout premiers à présenter les objets d’Afrique et d’Océanie en tant qu’objets d’art et non plus sous l’angle du colonial ou de l’ethnographie”

the museum becomes one of the first institutions to display objects from Africa and Oceania as works of art and not as ethnographic trophies

“l’esprit de son organisation à ce niveau rappelle celui de l’Institut du Monde Arabe, mais la différence se situe dans le nom même de cet institut qui se veut porteur d’une identité culturelle et non pas ethnique ou religieuse”

the spirit of the organization at this level resembles that of the IMA, but the difference is in the very name of the institute, which wants to reflect a cultural not an ethnic or religious identity

“jamais d’autre part, l’idée coloniale ne semble avoir suscité dans l’opinion plus d’intérêt, plus d’enthousiasme, plus de ferveur...ces années correspondent...à un très sensible élargissement de ce qu’on peut appeler la conscience colonial”

like never before, the colonial idea generated public interest, enthusiasm and fervour... during these years France witnessed the rise of its colonial awareness

“tous en France profitent [du colonialisme]”

everyone in France benefits from colonialism

“déjà la France extérieure est le plus gros client de la France d’Europe et le premier de ses fournisseurs”

already, the overseas French colonies are the largest client of European France and also its main supplier

“un progrès moral et matériel: plus de civilisation et plus de richesses pour un plus grand nombre d’hommes”

moral and material progress: more progress and civility for more and more people

“qui dotera notre pays d’un musée digne de notre empire d’Outre-mer, digne de son passé illustre et de ses richesses innombrables”

which will offer our country a museum to measure up to the greatness of the overseas empire, its history and its richness

“montrant comment nos territoires extérieurs ont été conquis, pacifiés, administrés...comment des pays désolés, le plus souvent, où les autochtones mouraient de faim ou succombaient sous les maladies...sont devenus, au contact de la civilisation française, des centres prospères”

and shows how France’s overseas territories have been conquered, pacified and administered...how poor countries and their hungry or ill inhabitants became, in contact with the French civilization, prosperous communities

“l’apport des colonies à la France”

the colonies’ contributions to France

“à droite, l’Asie; à gauche l’Afrique; et en retour l’Océanie; au centre la figure symbolique de l’abondance conduisant la Paix et la Liberté”

to the right, Asia; to the left, Africa; and in the background, Oceania; at the center, the symbol of Abundance leading Peace and Liberty

“les muscles des Africains, des Indochinois et des Malgaches ne sont pas des muscles d’esclaves construisant des nécropoles ou des temples, mais des muscles de gens bien nourris qui demandent à la terre, sous notre égide de paix, les richesses qu’elle prodigue en surface”

the bodies of Africans, Indochinese and Malagasies are not bodies of slaves but bodies of well-fed people who work the land to reveal its richness, under the tutelage of peace

“les grands fauves et les indigènes se détachent en larges surfaces planes qui forment, avec les reliefs qui avoisinent, les fruits, les fleurs, des effets de lumière et d’ombre d’un caractère exquis”

the large beasts and the natives are sculpted in broad surfaces and, together with bas-reliefs of fruits and flowers, compose exquisite contrasts between shadow and light

“ivoires, bois, fruits, tous les produits, toutes les colonies avec les voiliers, les cargos, les transatlantiques, sont tour à tour rappelés en un symbole saisissant de netteté et de plastique”

ivory, wood, fruits, other products, the colonies and their sailboats, cargo ships and ocean liners, are depicted with clarity and artistry

“il est important de s’interroger sur les modalités du passage d’une propagande essentiellement d’information destinée à un petit nombre, à une propagande visant à faire agir chaque Français”

it is important to question the transition from a modest propaganda initiative which targets a small number of individuals to a campaign designed to speak to all French citizens

“la chose coloniale...dans le quotidien du plus grand nombre de Français”

the colonial discourse in the everyday lives of most French people

“vous êtes ici en dehors de la curiosité, parce que vous avez senti qu’aujourd’hui cette grande collectivité humaine qu’est la France a des horizons plus larges que ceux que vous avez été accoutumés à voir sur une carte de l’Europe”

you are here beyond curiosity because you understand and feel that this large community which is France has extended its borders beyond the limited map of Europe with which you are all familiar

“c’est enfin *L’Illustration*, qui se trouve alors à l’apogée de son succès dans la bourgeoisie française dont elle semble refléter assez fidèlement les goûts et les aspirations et dont il n’est guère de numéro, autour des années 1930, qui n’évoque pas les paysages, les hommes ou les événements de l’outre mer”

in the 1930s, *Illustration*, a very successful publication among the French bourgeoisie, dedicates sections in every issue to landscapes, people and events from the French colonies

“sa force réelle réside alors dans la constitution véritable d’une culture impériale sans que les Français en soient pleinement conscients”

its strength residing mainly in the forging of an authentic imperial culture, without the French being aware of this action

“propose au lectorat français des romans, des reportages, des récits de voyage soulignant la nécessité et vantant les mérites de l’intervention française, tout en prolongeant ce que Jean-Marc Moura appelle ‘l’exotisme conquérant’”

provides the French public with novels, news reports, travelogues which emphasize the necessity and merits of the French colonial empire; these themes recall of Jean-Marc Moura’s phrase, “conquering exoticism”

“le divertissement exotique cède à l’instruction souvent polémique, pas encore anti-coloniale, mais jetant quand même les bases d’une critique réelle du système”

the outcome of exotic entertainment is often a form of early anti-colonialism and the beginnings of criticism of France’s colonial system

“ce ralliement est accompagné d’un élargissement des thèmes: au registre guerrier et patriotique s’ajoute une veine exotique, qui prend une place grandissante”

popular discourse is characterized by several themes: an increasing preference for the exotic accompanies French patriotism

“tout un appel des sens dont l’exotisme devait excuser jusqu’au moindre frisson libidinale”

an appeal of the sense and whose exoticism was to excuse the slightest libidinal impulse

“un Orient imaginaire et multiforme, peu soucieux de réalité et qui privilégie l’enchantement, le rêve et l’aventure”

and imaginary and multifaceted Orient, with little concern about reality and emphasis on dream, adventure and overall magic

“meublés de divans et de nattes, où ‘six domestiques arabes au teint basané, vêtus de robes noires brodées d’or, coiffés de turbans de fine laine damassée, chaussés de babouches, proposent gratuitement café et narguilé”

inside the cafe which is decorated with divans and mats, six Arab women with olive skin, dressed in golden and black robes, silky turbans and slippers serve free coffee and hookahs

“tout est là: le minaret, la musique, les souks, les danseuses, *le café*, la prière, le narguilé... Une certaine typification de l’Afrique du Nord et de ses populations se fixe, semblable à celle proposée par la littérature ou les cartes postales, qui fabriquent en métropole une myriade de stéréotypes promis”

all the elements are there: the minarets, the music, the souks, the dancers, *the coffeehouse*, the prayers, the hookahs...this is the typical image popularized in France about North Africa; a similar image can be found in literature and postcards, promising a myriad of stereotypes

“des grands jardins méditerranéens [qui] offrent quantité de fleurs, de feuilles, de parfums frais et ravissants”

large Mediterranean gardens with a richness of flowers, leaves, fresh and ravishing scents

“avec ses musiques, ses chanteurs, ses danseurs, et le restaurant indigène qui achèvent de donner la note gaie et la couleur locale”

full of music, singers, dancers and indigenous foods, which provide color and merriment

“je crois inutile d’insister sur la visite des souks et du café maure...On n’y joue pas a manille, mais c’est là que les hommes se réunissent, oisifs ou fatigués, pour déguster le thé national à la menthe, le café et ces sucreries de Moulay Idriss précieuses aux palais délicats”

a visit to the souks and the cafe maure is mandatory...here, there are no card games, but idle or tired men get together for a mint tea, a coffee and Moulay Idriss candy, a pleasure for the delicate palates

“de l’autre côté, sur la place El-Barka, un café maure est installé où l’on sert aux visiteurs des boissons indigènes, café arabe, thé à la menthe, sirops de violettes ou de roses”

on the other side, in the El-Barka plaza, the café maure invites the guests to indigenous drinks, Arabic coffee, mint tea, rose or violet syrup

“les fonctions essentielles du café dans le monde arabe...D’abord, il était extrêmement important pendant les fêtes du Ramdam... au café, laisser traîner l’oreille pour capter l’humeur du moment ou écouter les voyageurs racontant leur périple...lorsque les journaux sont apparus, on allait au café pour les lire”

the main functions of the coffeehouse around the world...First, it was very important during the months of the Ramadan...at the coffeehouse, guests can catch upon the latest news and travel stories...after the invention of the newspaper, people went to coffeehouses to read

“les Occidentaux n’ont pas compris qu’on pouvait être oisif, y flâner ou rêvasser”

Westerners did not understand that one went to a coffeehouse to hand out, do nothing, dardream

“le livre, associé au café dès le XVIe siècle, l’est toujours aujourd’hui...C’est ce que l’on constate dans le milieu des bouquinistes qui a su développer une sociabilité particulière où boisson, amour des vieux livres et plaisir d’être ensemble sont en parfaite harmonie”

books and coffeehouses have a strong connection...the second-hand booksellers socialized by drinking coffee, reading old books and enjoying each other’s company: all these forms of socialization are in complete harmony

“le marche de la graine de couscous en Europe”

the journeys of the couscous grain in Europe

“le roulage à la main de la semoule”

the rolling of semolina by hand

“au même titre que les pâtes ou le riz constituent des aliments de base pour les Italiens ou les Chinois, le couscous représente pour les populations du Maghreb un aliment de base et un pilier identitaire”

just as pasta and rice are basic ingredients of the Italian and Chinese diets, couscous represents for North Africans a staple food and a national symbol

“n’a pas été reçue comme novatrice et digne d’intérêt, parce qu’elle venait des Berbères, toujours déconsidérés par les Arabes”

was not received as innovative and worthy of interest because it originated among the Berbers, who have a poor reputation among the Arabs

“une des plus fines de l’Islam”

one of the finest in Islamic culture

“[qui] y donne la stabilité qui lui manquait, indispensable à l’esprit de cohésion et de perseverance”

which provided Morocco with the stability it lacked, indispensable for a spirit of cohesion and perseverance

“à l’extrémité des deux lignes de souks, l’ensemble indigène est terminé par deux éléments indispensables à son évocation complète”

at the end of the lines of two souks, visitors find two spaces indispensable to the complete North African experience

“tout cet ensemble forme la partie attractive, pittoresque, exotique, mais aussi celle qui révèle l’âme profonde et charmante et si variée du Maroc”

all these spaces show two sides of Morocco: the attractive and picturesque; and the charming and diverse

“thé à la menthe, aliment indispensable au riche comme au pauvre et savourer la boisson douce, parfumé, que n’oublie aucun de ceux qui y ont trempé les lèvres”

mint tea, the beverage of poor and rich people alike, sweet, flavourful; no one who tastes it can forget it

“le restaurant offre de son côté, la série inoubliable des plats maghrébins; la pastille aux amandes, les couscous multiples, les méchouis, les tadjijn aux olives, aux raisins et la multitude des hors-d’œuvre, desserts à la fois douçâtres et relevés, poivrons, tomates, piments”

the restaurant offers several unforgettable North African dishes: almond *pastilla*, different couscous dishes, *méchoui*, raisin and olives tajine and many appetizers, desserts and peppers, tomatoes, chilies

Chapter 5

Political encounters: French cultural policy and the post-colonial condition

“vous aussi, chers amis du monde arabe, vous connaissez la culture de la France, son apport original, ses racines profondes, dans le terreau européen et au-delà, Europe ouverte aux influences, aux idées et aux modes d’expression venus de vous et venus de plus loin, par vous, au point qu’il serait difficile que vous vous sentiez *étrangers* chez nous”

dear friends from the Arab world, you are familiar with French culture, with its origins and its contributions to European culture; you also know that Europe has been opened to your influences, ideas and cultural heritage, which makes it impossible for you to feel like strangers among us

“le cas français illustrerait une “assimilation forcée” des immigrés...les facteurs essentiels expliquent que les communautés étrangères n’aient jamais pu maintenir leur “identité” au-delà de la première generation”

the French case involves a forced assimilation of immigrants, which explains why many foreign communities were unable to preserve their identities past the first generation

“Il y a encore chez nous l’habitude d’avoir des sujets, de coexister avec des individus de statut inférieur, de faire travailler à notre profit des hommes n’ayant pas tous les droits de l’homme et encore moins ceux de citoyens... d’une certain façon, il manque à la France une prise de conscience sur les crimes commis en son nom durant la période coloniale et durant la décolonisation”

there still exists the bad habit in France of ‘owning’ subjects, of co-existing with individuals of an inferior status, of hiring individuals with no rights or citizenship...France has to learn to deal with the crimes it committed during colonial times

“le lieu où campe la population ouvrière, chassée du centre, ou les refoulés”

a space for the working classes which have been pushed away from the city

“le gouvernement de Léon Blum est le premier, dans l’histoire de la IIIe République , à avoir cherché à accompagner les transformations de la vie ouvrière par une nourriture culturelle accessible à tous”

the Leon Blum government is the first since the birth of the Third Republic to develop popular cultural policies which reflect the transformation of the working class realities

“plaisirs sans pretentions”

pleasures without pretensions

“l’apprentissage d’une discipline de l’esprit ou de la main”

the learning of activities good for the body and soul

“il faut cesser de regarder l’art comme un domaine réservé aux classes les plus aisées, aux spécialistes et aux snobs qui le déshonorent. L’art doit se rapprocher du peuple...en particulier de ces millions de travailleurs qui ont ou vont avoir plus de loisirs”

art should not be the privileged domain of the well to do classes, specialists and snobs.
Art is for the people, especially the millions of workers who need more leisure activities

“c’est bien Malraux, avec sa légende, son verbe, son talent pour les coups de théâtre, qui a fait violence aux vieilles pudeurs républicaines et a fait entrer dans les mœurs les Affaires culturelles”

Malraux, his legendary presence, his language, his talent for dramatic gestures challenged old republican mores and laid the foundations of Cultural Affairs

“un myth consolateur”

a consoling myth

“que la culture française cesse d’être l’apanage des gens qui ont la chance d’habiter Paris ou d’être riches”

to liberate French culture from those who were lucky to be rich and live in Paris

“Il faut que, par ces maisons de la culture qui dans chaque département français, diffuseront ce que nous essayons de faire à Paris, n’importe quel enfant de seize ans, si pauvre soit-il, puisse avoir un véritable contact avec son patrimoine national et avec la gloire de l’esprit de l’humanité”

these Houses of Culture, built in several French regions, are intended to extend the cultural mission developed in Paris. Every child, despite his social condition, must have access to the national patrimony and the glories of the human mind

“machines à reconstruire le social”

mechanisms for social reconstruction

“l’universalité des expériences de l’humanité”

the universality of the human experience

“une émigration ordonnée”

an orderly emigration

“la perte du contrôle”

the loss of control

“par lui-même, par son implantation, par son architecture, par la disposition interne de son espace, le foyer se trahit comme une résidence particulière, ayant une fonction particulière qui n’est pas seulement de loger, et destiné à des résidents particuliers”

the location, architecture and internal structure of these buildings of these buildings indicate its specific function and the specific origin of its tenants

“les années 1960 ont constitué pour ce système de valeurs une période tourbillonnaire qui a commencé à le placer en porte à faux par rapport à une société en pleine mutation”

the 1960s troubled the existing cultural system as the French society changed constantly

“la vie culturelle primaire,” which includes “architecture, design, l’environnement naturel, les mass media, la publicité

the basics of culture, which include architecture, design, the natural environment, mass media and advertising

“pour la première fois dans l’histoire de la République le chef de l’Etat se déclare un connaisseur, un amateur et un collectionneur d’art contemporain”

for the first time in France, the President proclaims himself as a connoisseur, lover and collector of contemporary art

“une ‘colonie’ algérienne en France”

an Algerian ‘colony’ in France

“petites sociétés autonomes”

small and autonomous societies

“l’enfant acquiert ses premiers apprentissages au sein de son milieu d’origine...les immigrants de la première génération repliés sur ‘l’entre soi’ communautaire... se heurtent aux normes dominantes du pays d’accueil”

the children grow up sheltered within their culture of origins. The first generation immigrants form a closed community which is in conflict with mainstream norms

“l’héroïsation du récit migratoire” and “la mythologie des origines familiales”

glorification of the migration myth and the mythology of the family’s origins

“l’usage consacré dans les années 1960 et 1970, c’est bien plutôt l’association entre banlieue et ennui, et même déprime. Une idée reçue de l’époque est bien celle du grand ensemble qui rend fou”

in the 1960s and 1970s, the suburbs were associated with boredom and depression. Another idea inherited from these decades is that the grand ensemble incited madness

“boy-scoutisme charmeur, saturé de convictions; look d’éternel Chevalier à la rose – irrite autant qu’il séduit”

charming boy-scoutism full of sincerity; a sentimental Maurice Chevalier look which is both irritating and seductive

“lorsqu’il revient de Mexico, où il a pour une énième fois condamné l’impérialisme culturel américain, Jack Lang rapporte cette fois dans ses bagages un signe d’égalité entre économie et culture...il ne s’agit plus seulement de condamner la contamination de la culture par l’économie, mais seulement sa monopolisation par une seule nation”

after his return from Mexico, Jack Lang shows some understanding for the merging of economy and culture...he does not condemn the integration of economic value in the cultural sector but criticises America’s monopoly over the culture industries

“bâtir, c’est répondre à une utilité, proposer un contenant pour qu’il y ait un contenu. C’est créer, c’est composer un nouveau paysage pour la ville, un corps familier pour les millions d’hommes qui vivent là”

the projects to rebuild Paris respond to a need to create and to alter the urban landscape in order to provide culture for the millions who reside in the French capital

“modeler le regard, la mémoire, l’imagination des générations et des générations...Ce n’est pas une ambition pour moi, mais pour la France”

mould the memory and imaginations of several generations...this dream is not a personal ambition but a dream for France

“une querelle des anciens et modernes”

a quarrel between the old and the new

Chapter 6

Spaces of display: Silencing colonialism

“en faisant du musée d’Art Arabo-islamique, l’un des pôles de l’Institut du Monde Arabe, ses fondateurs ont voulu marquer deux aspects essentiels pour un dialogue des cultures, la connaissance historique et la sensibilisation esthétique et intellectuelle”

the founders of the IMA transformed the Museum of Arab-Islamic Art into a focal point of the Institute in order to emphasize two essential aspects of cultural dialogue, historical knowledge and aesthetic and intellectual awareness.

“faire connaître au grand public, français et européen, l’apport arabo-musulman aux arts, à la science et aux autres domaines du savoir, tel est l’objectif de ce nouveau musée qui s’inscrit dans la mission de l’Institut”

the objectives of the new museum, similar to those of the Institute are to make known to the French and European publics the contributions of the Arab-Islamic culture to the fields of art, science and knowledge in general

“l’Institut est né d’une volonté de partenariat entre la France et les pays arabes. De par sa conception, il favorise une dialectique interdisciplinaire, qui rend au musée sa fonction de lieu d’échange et de réflexion”

the institute is the product of the partnership between France and the Arab countries. By its very conception, the museum welcomes interdisciplinarity, which transforms the museum into a space for exchanges and reflection.

“il devient aussi la pierre angulaire de la culture arabe dans le tissu urbain parisien

it also becomes the cornerstone of Arab culture in the urban Parisian context

“une équipe franco-arabe, dont la dualité a permis de porter sur cette culture le double regard intérieur-extérieur”

a Franco-Arab team whose dual cultural background was reflected in the representation of Arab culture

“la formation de l’art islamique, les sciences et les expositions-dossiers,”

The development of Islamic art and sciences and the thematic exhibitions

“l’épanouissement de l’art arabo-musulman”

the apogee of the Islamic-Arabic art

“une présentation de pièces archéologiques [qui] trace les jalons de l’histoire ancienne du monde arabe”

a display of archaeological artefacts representative of the history of the ancient Arab world

“meuble par excellence de la tente comme du palais”

furniture which can be found in both tents and palaces

“grâce à un déploiement judicieux de ses collections, le musée a pour ambition de donner à ses visiteurs un aperçu de la civilisation arabo-musulmane et de son art, en montrant ses sources, sa formation puis son épanouissement”

the careful display of the museum’s collection offers the visitors a view of the Arab-Islamic civilization and art, including its origins and development.

“vecteur d’une compréhension du monde arabe et de la civilisation arabo-islamique, le musée de l’Institut a pour objectif, de donner à voir des œuvres et de donner à comprendre une civilisation”

the museum of the Institute acts as a venue for access to Arab culture and civilization through the display of objects crucial for the comprehension of this civilization

“les Français, en effet, connaissaient toujours mal la culture et la civilisation arabes; ils s’en formaient des images incomplètes, fausses, parfois même péjoratives”

the French knew very little about Arab culture and civilization; often, their knowledge was based on incomplete, erroneous and negative images

“la beauté en islam, un voile fragile et périssable dont les motifs étrangers – hors de ce monde évoquent une présence invisible et une splendeur qui n’est pas d’ici-bas”

the beauty in Islamic culture is like a fragile and ephemeral veil – its foreign and out of this world motifs suggest an invisible presence and exotic splendour

“la simplicité bédouine”

the simplicity of Bedouin culture

“n’est pas une simple transmission de la pensée, mais ça démontre originalité et innovation”

is not a mere transmission of ideas but an original and innovative translation

“les princes, en encourageant les recherches dans des domaines aussi divers que les mathématiques, l’astronomie, la médecine ou la physique ont conduit les savants arabes à traduire et enrichir les savoirs hérités de l’Antiquité, ensuite largement diffusés en Occident”

the princes encouraged research in various fields such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine and physics, efforts which resulted in numerous translations and interpretations of the bodies of knowledge inherited from Antiquity and popular in the Occident

“toutes les pièces présentées ici témoignent de la perfection technique atteinte par les artisans musulmans dans tous les domaines de l’art: céramique, bois, métal, verre”

the artefacts displayed in the museum are examples of the exquisite artistry of Muslim artists working with various materials: ceramics, wood, metal, glass

“le tapis dans le monde musulman”

the carpet in Islamic culture

“espace sacralisé pour la prière...[et] un petit monde”

sacred space for prayer...[and] a small micro-universe

“[qui] veut construire ou plutôt consolider le pont entre le nord et le sud, entre l’est et l’ouest de la Méditerranée”

which hopes to construct and consolidate the bridge between the North and South, between the East and West of the Mediterranean

“ce projet permet d’apprécier la circulation des objets, des arts et des idées, de prendre la mesure de leurs origines souvent mêlées”

this project focuses on the circulation of objects, arts and ideas and their often mixed origins

“une Méditerranée fière et heureuse de sa diversité, adossée à l’Europe, à l’Afrique et au Proche-Orient, et apte à se placer au premier rang des nouvelles entités mondiales”

a region proud of its diversity adjoining Europe, Africa and the Middle East and considered capable of being in the forefront of the new world entities

“souvent déchirée dans son histoire, la Méditerranée n’a jamais été une frontière mais un trait d’union dans le temps et l’espace de multiples civilisations et cultures: elle reste le creuset de notre unité autour de valeurs bien plus importantes que les apparentes dissensions”

throughout its long history, the Mediterranean has never been a frontier but a shared space by many civilizations and cultures; today, it represents a symbol of our unity around common values which are much more important than apparent disagreements

“de la fin de l’Antiquité tardive et l’avènement de l’islam au XIX^e siècle, fin de l’Empire ottoman”

from the end of late Antiquity and the rise of Islam to the end of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century

“l’espace méditerranéen, pour unificateur qu’il soit par sa position centrale, par sa propension naturelle à exalter l’harmonie et la lumière, à délivrer la leçon des formes, est un espace également soumis à des revirements”

the Mediterranean space unites cultures through its central position, its natural quality of fostering harmony and spreading enlightenment; while at the same time it can be a place of rapid changes

“qui n’a rien d’uniforme ni de systématique. Jusqu’à la fin du XV^e siècle, alors même que les draps de Flandres envahissent les marchés du Caire, la verrerie émaillée des Mamluks, leurs métaux incrustés d’or et d’argent...sont importés en Europe et continuent d’exercer leur influence”

with little uniformity and conformity. Up until the end of the 15th century, the stained glass crafted by Mamluks with precious metals were imported into Europe, where they influenced local crafts

“bien que les tenants de ces trois religions se soient beaucoup massacrés au Moyen Age (conquêtes, saccages, procès, expulsions), ils partagent des traits psychologiques communs. Tous considèrent Abraham comme le premier témoin de la foi monothéiste. Tous considèrent l’exil, la fuite au désert, comme une épreuve spirituelle”

even if the members of these three religions fought intensely during the Middle Ages, they nonetheless share common psychological traits. All of them consider Abraham to be the first symbol of a monotheist faith. All believe that exile, such as the flight into the desert, represents a spiritual test

“chacun à sa manière, les trois monothéismes ont entrepris de recomposer les anciennes religions du salut afin de fixer un rapport au ciel et au monde à prétention universelle. Il est en résulte une conception du Bonheur terrestre qui a marqué de son empreinte la civilisation dite occidentale”

each in its own way, the three monotheist religions undertook to rework the old religions in order to establish a universal relation between heaven and the earth. The result of these beliefs is the notion of earthly happiness has marked the entire Western civilization

“il faut encore rappeler que si Sainte-Sophie a servi de source d’inspiration aux bâtisseurs ottomans, c’est le cas de l’architecture byzantine en général. De plus, d’autres églises byzantines ont peut-être aussi été utilisées comme modèles, comme par exemple Saints-Serge-et-Bacchus à Constantinople” (p. 197)

Saint Sophia, of Byzantine origins, inspired many ottoman architects and builders. Other Byzantine churches such as Saint-Serge-et Bacchus in Constantinople may have also served as models for Ottoman constructions

“durant la période *coloniale*, la mosquée est transformée en cathédrale, fonction facilitée par son plan proche des constructions chrétiennes...Après *l’Indépendance*, le monument retrouve sa fonction originelle”

during the colonial period, the mosque was transformed into a cathedral due to its layout similar to other Christian buildings...after the Independence, the monument was invested with its original function

“meublier et objets religieux”

religious furniture and objects

“la coiffe de Théodore Métochite”

Theodore Metochite’s headpiece

“une coiffe au sommet pyramidal qui donne de l’ombre, portée a cette époque par l’empereur et les membres de la cour”

a type of pyramidal-shaped headgear which provides shade, worn at this time by the emperor and certain members of the court

“les mascarons et surtout la nature de l’œuvre, destinée au culte chrétien, indiquent qu’il s’agit d’artistes mozarabes, dont les sources d’inspiration sont au croisement des cultures arabe et chrétienne”

the mascarons [characters with grotesque faces] and the fact that the object is intended for Christian ceremonies suggest that the Mozarabic artists found inspiration in both Christian and Arab cultures

“la descente de la croix”

the descent from the cross

“par sa technique et son style, le tesson se situe donc dans la lignée de l’art syro-égyptien du XII^e siècle, avec des références iconographiques à l’art byzantin développé à partir de 1164, et

surtout dans les années 1180 - 1200. Toutefois, cette pièce date sans doute de la fin du XIII^e ou du début du XIV^e siècle, étant donné ses nombreuses allusions à l'art il-khanide”

the ceramic fragment has origins in the Syrian-Egyptian art from the 12th century but it also borrows from Byzantine iconography from the 11th century. The object itself is dated towards the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th century, which corresponds to the il-khanide artistic style

“bien que différente, on retrouve la pratique de l'aumône légale dans la religion juive, *zedaka* en hébreu, qui vient du terme biblique *zedek* qui...fait référence à un acte obligatoire... On retrouve également chez les chrétiens cette idée d'aumône, mais qui se double d'un second sens, absent dans le judaïsme et l'islam, celui de la charité”

the practice of charity donations, *zedaka* in Hebrew, a term borrowed from the biblical terminology, is important in the Jewish religion. This idea of charity is also popular, in a slightly different context, in the Christian religion

“la guerre fut un des moyens utilisés, à vrai dire quasiment seul jusqu'à une période récente, par les Etats méditerranéens pour imposer leur influence respective. Depuis la civilisation mythique de Troie jusqu'à la guerre du Liban...les conflits n'ont cessé de jalonner l'espace méditerranéen”

war has been one of the main tools utilized by Mediterranean states in order to impose their influence. Such conflicts have marked the Mediterranean space since the mythical times of Troy until the recent war in Lebanon

“la guerre en Méditerranée a été le plus souvent l'affirmation de la domination momentanée d'une civilisation, conçue comme l'expression d'un mode politique, économique, culturel tout autant que religieux. Cet ajustement violent entre intérêts antagonistes a souvent occasionné d'importants déplacements de populations”

war in the Mediterranean was most often a symbol of temporary domination of a certain civilization. This domination was expressed at the political, economic, cultural and religious levels. The violent exchanges between different antagonistic interests have often resulted in large migratory movements

“des opérations de sécurité et de maintien de l'ordre”

security operations intended to maintain order

“un moment clé des rencontres entre l'Orient et l'Occident, au cours desquelles les échanges artistiques, commerciaux et scientifiques se sont intensifiés en Méditerranée”

a crucial moment of contact between the Orient and the Occident which intensified the cultural, commercial and scientific exchanges in the Mediterranean space

“il peut s’agir pour le nouveau régime de s’implanter dans les zones pionnières de *colonisation*: les califes omeyyades multiplient ainsi au cœur de la steppe syrienne la construction de fortins connus sous le nom de ‘châteaux du désert’”

often powerful empires would colonize new lands: the Omeyyade caliphs conquered the Syrian steppe through the constructions of forts known as ‘desert castles’

“ainsi, la *furûsiyya* est-elle le fruit d’une synthèse de diverses influences. Elle est portée, surtout en Orient, au niveau d’un art élaboré très particulier à la civilisation arabo-musulmane et qui n’a rien à envier à la chevalerie de l’Europe occidentale”

the *furûsiyya* was the result of various influences. In the Orient, it is raised to a high art specific to the Arab-Islamic civilization and which is comparable to the chivalry of Western Europe

“mer des miracles et des migrations, de toutes les migrations – des hommes, des plantes, des plats, des mots, des parfums, des modes. Ces modes qui, à toutes les époques, dans tous les pays riverains et dans les îles, expérimentent si merveilleusement l’art de vivre à travers les hasards de la vie, les humeurs d’une société, le goût du plaisir”

sea of miracles and migrations of people, plants, dishes, words, aromas, ways of life. These ways of life are represented in all Mediterranean countries by daily occurrences, social mores and pleasurable moments

“en Andalousie, au Maghreb, au Proche-Orient, un festin doit s’accompagner de musique et de danse. Dans les riches demeures, le jardin intérieur remplace la cour. A ceux qui sont loin de la mer, une pièce d’eau centrale, où s’entrecroisent les canaux, offre l’image du *Paradis*”

in Andalousia, in the Maghreb and in the Middle East a feast is always accompanied by music and dance. In the rich households, the court is replaced with a garden. For those who are far away from the sea, a centrally placed fountain is a reminder of Paradise

“comme l’huile d’olive et l’huile d’arganier, la coriandre, le cumin, le curcuma”
such as olive oil, Argan oil, coriander, cumin, turmeric

“le mot ‘jardin’ pour les Musulmans, les Chrétiens et les Juifs est associé à celui de ‘paradis’...Le paradis est à l’origine un jardin, un lieu de délices où l’homme est débarrassé du Mal et de son corps. L’homme terrestre qui crée un jardin, cherche à créer un paradis, le Paradis”

for Muslims, Christians and Jews, the word garden signifies paradise...The paradise is in fact a garden and a space where the human is purified and offered various delights. The human who creates a garden is in search of Paradise

“le motif de la coquille”

the shell pattern

“une sélection de 27 chefs-d’œuvre d’art égyptien de tous les temps: pharaonique, copte et islamique exposés pour la première fois à Paris. Un “musée imaginaire” audiovisuel présente au public les mille facettes de l’Égypte éternelle”

for the first time in Paris, the IMA displays a collection of 27 works of Egyptian art from different time periods: Pharaonic, Coptic and Islamic. An “imaginary museum” presents through audio-visual technology many aspects of the eternal Egypt

“il a favorisé l’admission de l’Égypte dans l’Institut (boycottée à cause des accords de Camp-David), concrétisée par l’exposition “Égypte-Egypte” en 1989 qui a installé l’IMA sur la scène culturelle parisienne”

he supported the membership of Egypt, previously boycotted due to the Camp David Accords, in the IMA. This new collaboration was celebrated through the exhibition 1989 “Egypte-Egypte” which made the IMA visible on the Parisian cultural scene

“tout au long de l’histoire, l’Égypte a créé des chefs-d’œuvre qui ont enrichi la civilisation universelle...Ce qui compte, c’est ce peuple qui donne naissance à des génies...ce peuple qui, par ses œuvres, semble avoir vaincu le temps”

throughout history, Egypt produced works of art significant for human civilization...This country and its people gave birth to inspired artists...this people which, by its art, seems to have conquered time

“depuis des millénaires, cette vallée plus accueillante à l’homme qu’aucune autre au Carrefour des mondes, étroite ligne de vie au cœur des déserts, aimant voyageurs, conquérants et nomads”

this valley, a narrow line in the heart of the desert, has been for centuries more welcoming than any other to travellers, conquerors and nomads

“la coexistence ouverte sur des perspectives d’égalité est l’espoir, le vœu, le moyen et la fin de l’actuel combat de l’homme. Face aux ennemis de cette égalité, le besoin s’impose d’une trame fraternelle dont le tissu est l’œuvre des plus grands penseurs de notre époque”

open and equal co-existence is the hope, the wish, the means and the end of the man’s combat. When this equality is threatened, fraternity must be re-established through exposure to the greatest works of our times

“dans cette exposition archéologique et les activités culturelles annexes, nous sommes à la recherche de ce duo: l’utile et l’agréable, sachant que c’est le savoir qui, au bout du compte, nous libérera”

this archaeological and cultural exhibition is a search for the utility-pleasure duo, knowledge which is ultimately liberating for humanity

“devrait presque faire jeu égal avec l'exposition sur l'Egypte qui avait attiré 400 000 curieux en 1989”

was as successful as the Egypt exhibition which, in 1989, brought 400,000 visitors to the IMA

“pas seulement un voyage dans un espace d'une bouleversante beauté, c'est aussi une plongée dans le temps, dans un passé qui affleure à chaque instant du périple”

is not solely a journey to a place of extreme beauty but into time, into a past surfaces at every point

“trouvera heureusement dans cette exposition bien d'autres sujets d'étonnement et un parcours historique assez clair. Ce qui est très bien mis en relief, par exemple, ce sont les relations que ces peuples coincés au bout de la péninsule Arabique ont su entretenir, depuis la plus haute Antiquité, avec le reste du monde connu”

will find in this exhibition a clear chronology marked by fascinating topics. This exhibition is very successful in depicting the relations cultivated by the peoples in the Arabic Peninsula during High Antiquity with the rest of the known world

“contrairement aux pays du Proche-Orient, qui très tôt dévoilèrent la richesse et la grandeur de leurs anciennes civilisations, le Yémen a gardé jalousement les mystères de ses origines...L'exposition présentée à l'IMA, une première, invite le public à un voyage dans les temps anciens”

Yemen is different from other countries of the Near East which have made the richness and grandeur of their ancient civilizations well known. The origins of Yemen are surrounded in mystery. For the first time, the IMA exhibition invites its visitors to a voyage in time.

“la France et le Liban se retrouvent donc à l'Institut du monde arabe (IMA) autour d'une exposition ambitieuse et problématique: Liban, l'autre Rive. C'est le point fort d'une série de manifestations, diplomatiquement dosées. Elles dureront tout l'automne, et chacune des communautés du pays pourra s'y retrouver, sans risquer de tomber sur les sujets qui divisent”

France and Lebanon are reunited at the IMA through an ambitious and problematic exhibition: Liban, l'autre Rive. The exhibition is the central event of a series of diplomatically chosen displays. This series will be shown over the fall and each community should feel comfortable to participate without the risk of divisive subjects

“cette diversité est souvent présentée aujourd'hui comme une faiblesse congénitale du pays, alors qu'elle constitue...sa principale raison d'être. Mosaïque de communautés, le Liban? Sans doute”

this diversity is depicted today as a weakness of the country. However, Lebanon is founded on diversity. Is Lebanon a mosaic of different communities? Yes, no doubt

“une cascade de sensations profondes, des saveurs, des parfums, des images qui défilent, confuses, violentes, tendres...dans ce pays, le temps lui-même s’est oublié”

a cascade of strong sensations, tastes, aromas, confusing, tender and violent images...in this country, the sense of time is lost

“Delacroix ne fut pas de ceux qui usèrent de la terre d’Islam comme d’un support à leurs fantasmes. Le Maroc de Delacroix est un pays vrai”

Delacroix is not one of those artists who used the Islamic world as a means to express their fantasies. Delacroix’s Morocco is real.

“un malentendu, un mirage, une promesse qui apaise un imaginaire surexcité”

a misunderstanding, a mirage, a promise which quenches an overexcited imaginary

“pas comme un souvenir, mais comme univers”

as a real universe and not just as a memory

“par-delà la découverte d’un pays et d’un peuple, c’est la révélation de la lumière et de ses multiples incidences sur les formes et les couleurs qui constitue la clé de l’aventure initiatique de Delacroix”

the key to Delacroix’s adventure is the revelation of the effects of light on various forms and colors

“le Maroc de Delacroix ne sera pas celui de Matisse...[...]. ‘Le Maroc de Matisse’ est une source inépuisable de couleurs méditerranéennes où domine un bleu subtil, gracieux, extrême et changeant”

Delacroix’s Morocco is different from that depicted by Matisse...the Morocco revealed in Matisse’s paintings is full of Mediterranean colors, dominated by different shades of blue: subtle, gracious, extreme and changing

“il [Matisse] ne se préoccupe pas d’imiter un des styles ou un des techniques de l’Islam; plutôt, il recueille une proposition globale de rapport aux formes artistiques...est d’autant plus féconde qu’elle ne se définit pas en tant qu’influence mais en tant que dialogue”

Matisse is not interested in imitations of Islamic techniques; he understands Islamic art globally with a focus on forms...more than a mere influence, Matisse’s relation with Islamic art is one of dialogue

“de par sa proximité géographique, historique et humaine avec la France, aucun pays plus que l’Algérie ne pouvait prétendre à ce que son patrimoine fût présenté, dans toute sa splendeur et sa diversité, à l’Institut du Monde Arabe”

the geographical, historical and human proximity with France make Algeria, more than any other country, a perfect candidate for an exhibition at the IMA. Its patrimony was highly celebrated at the Institute

“trois grands moments: la préhistoire, l’Antiquité and l’époque musulmane”

three important moments: prehistory, antiquity and the Islamic period

“débarquement français a Sidi Ferruch”

the French landing at Sidi Ferruch

“l’augmentation de la population européenne fut à l’origine de nouveaux quartiers qui se distinguent par leur architecture différente; une ville nouvelle voyait le jour”

the increase of the European population was at the origin of the new neighbourhoods characterized by a very different architectural style; a new city was born

“la chute d’Alger en juillet 1830”.

the fall of Algiers in July 1830

“le souhait de l’exposition, outre l’échange entre l’Algérie et la France, est aussi de maintenir le lien entre immigrés de toute génération avec la culture de leur pays”

this exhibition has two main goals: to value the cultural exchange between Algeria and France and to help strengthen the relation between immigrants of various generations and their country of origins

“au moment où l’Algérie et la France se rapprochent à nouveau pour examiner ensemble une page de leur histoire commune, l’exposition de l’Institut du monde arabe entend contribuer à ce dialogue, non sans rappeler que ces tableaux et photographies orientalistes ne se réduisent pas nécessairement à la logique coloniale sans laquelle, paradoxalement, ils n’auraient pu être conçus”

the exhibition at the IMA contributes to the new dialogue between France and Algeria about their common history. This exhibition points out that Orientalist photographs and paintings cannot be reduced the colonial logic; at the same time, Orientalism could not have existed outside a colonial context

“à en croire cependant tout un pas de l’historiographie récente, prompte à réduire toute forme d’orientalisme à une entreprise impérialiste de dépréciation univoque, voir et représenter l’Algérie moderne à travers ‘cet imaginaire d’un passé continu’ serait un déni d’identité”

it would be wrong to represent Algeria through the prism of contemporary historiography which subscribes all forms of Orientalism to the logic of imperialism

Chapter 7

Spaces for education: Writing fragments of colonial history

“jeune encore, l’Institut a mué. C’est en adulte qu’il aborde son avenir. Il le fait avec un sens accru de ses responsabilités, en sachant que sa tâche ne sera jamais facile parce que deux civilisations ne se rencontrent jamais sans se heurter. Mais il y a dans ce heurt même une infinie richesse. Ce magazine en sera l’expression”

still young, the institute has changed. It goes into the future as a mature entity. The IMA is aware of the responsibility to connect two cultures, an endeavour which will result in conflict; but from this conflict a new richness emerges. And this publication will be its expression

“*Qantara* signifie en arabe le pont, l’arche, la passerelle”

Qantara means bridge, arch, passage in Arabic

“*Qantara* a reçu le meilleur accueil des deux côtés de la Méditerranée, car il répondait à une attente, à un *besoin* de se connaître, toujours renouvelé, toujours à réinventer”

Qantara was very well received on both sides of the Mediterranean because it met the need for knowledge and change

“véritable axe du numéro, pour faire chaque fois le point sur une question majeure”

veritable axis of each issue which discusses one major story

“un nombre de pages plus important, afin de donner à lire pour tout un semestre”

more pages which would keep the readers busy during one semester

“de nouvelles rubriques: *Intérieurs*, *Le Temps des Saveurs*, pour dévoiler la culture au quotidien et déguster des aromes insoupçonnés” and “un dossier [spécial] plus fouillé”

new rubrics: *Intérieurs*, *Le Temps des Saveurs*, which address aspects of everyday culture and invite readers to try some new recipes and a much larger *dossier spécial*

“après deux ans d’existence, *Qantara* connaît un nouveau développement”

after two years, *Qantara*’s content is again restructured

“une entrée dans la fiction avec ‘De la coupe aux lèvres’” and “une ouverture vers le monde juridique avec ‘Le temps du droit’” and “plus d’information venant directement du monde arabe, plus de livres et de photos, un meilleur équilibre texte/image, des portraits d’artistes, une invitation au voyage plus prolongée”

“‘De la coupe aux lèvres’, a section featuring fictional writing and “Le temps du droit”, a section which discusses legal issues and more information directly from the Arab world, more book recommendations and photographs, a better balance between images and text, artists’ biographies, a more significant invitation to travel

“qui donne à chaque numéro toute sa portée”

which solidifies each issue

“souvent objet de célébration, rarement question de mémoire, la France coloniale n’était pas jusqu’ici le sujet d’une histoire. Le livre majeur qui vient de paraître chez Armand Colin est l’occasion d’un premier bilan sur cette période controversée”

colonial France has rarely been the subject of history. The significant volume just published by Armand Colin represents one of the first inquiries into France’s controversial colonial past.

“face à cette propension bien française à occulter les événements traumatiques de son histoire, dont le régime de Vichy et la guerre d’Algérie sont les principaux nœuds, ce livre a l’immense mérite de faire réapparaître tout un continent enseveli”

this volume is significant for unearthing a silenced aspect of history in the context of a France which is used to hiding traumatic historical events such as the Vichy regime and the Algerian War

“sans nostalgie et avec une grande rigueur d’analyse, les auteurs multiplient les approches et *croisent* les angles des lecture”

the authors provide nuanced and multiple interpretations of history without nostalgic feelings and with great analytical rigour

“fait l’objet d’un travail en profondeur, à la fois dans l’analyse du jeu des partis, par l’étude de l’évolution des mentalités et des opinions et dans le rôle des forces économiques”

is the object of a rigorous study, which looks at the discourses of political parties, at the evolution of popular perceptions and at the role of the economic forces

“une conscience impériale tardive”

a late awareness of the empire

“aucun combat anticolonial ne lui sera étranger notamment ceux du Maghreb. Mais il sera aussi de tous les combats pour les droits de l’homme”

the book talks about anticolonial movements, especially those from the Maghreb and about the battle for equal human rights

“harcèlements des détachements isolés, attaques nocturnes, savante alternance de férocité guerrière et de libération des prisonniers”

attacks on isolated communities, nocturnal assaults and the alternation between war brutality and freedom for certain prisoners

“[ont été] utilisés avec succès par les Algériens, les Vietnamiens et les Afghans dans leur lutte de libération nationale”

have been used successfully by Algerians, Vietnamese and Afghans in their fights for national liberation

“réunissait ainsi la tradition et la modernité”

merged tradition and modernity

“les nations civilisées! Elles viennent civiliser avec des aviateurs...Elles tuent des êtres sans défense et elles les tuent dans l’impunité”

those so-called civilized nations! They civilize with their armies...they kill innocent civilians with impunity

“trente ans, c’est le temps d’une génération, le temps d’une proximité toujours douloureuse, le temps d’une distance peut-être possible. Le temps de s’arrêter, sans se figer, sur le passé. Le temps de questionner la mémoire, de mettre en mouvement ces constellations d’oublis qui portent tant de drames insoupçonnés, d’espoirs inavoués, des perspectives inexplorées”

thirty years expands over an entire generation but it is not enough time to forget the painful past. It is now the time to stop and look at the past. It is time to reflect on collective memories, to bring to life forgotten histories and to approach the past through yet unexplored methods and perspectives

“ce dossier est une invitation à créer de nouveaux lieux de mémoire, une occasion de s’interroger sur cette histoire commune, à partir d’un double regard: français et algérien. Là encore, il nous appartient de créer un *pont*”

this *dossier* is an invitation to participate to the creation of a realm of memory and a great occasion to reflect on the common history of Algeria and France. A bridge remains to be built between these two nations.

“le projet destructeur”; “le rôle oublié des femmes”

the destructive project; the forgotten role of women

“la guerre d’Algérie en effet reste un abcès de fixation, un événement traumatique qui pèse toujours sur les sociétés française et algérienne”

the Algerian War is a French taboo and a traumatic event with large implications for the French and Algerian society

“discours si souvent utilisé par le passé et qui, encore aujourd’hui, permet de justifier la possession de territoires en dehors de tout droit”

a popular discourse in the past which continues to justify even today the possessions of foreign territories

“[qui] l’avaient pacifiée, rendue fertile. Ils l’avaient couverte de monuments ...Leurs travaux pour l’irrigation des terres font encore l’administration de nos ingénieurs”

Who had domesticated the land. They had built monuments and their irrigation systems are still admitted by contemporary engineers.

“les hordes des Arabes envahisseurs sont venues. Ces barbares ont tout détruit, tout brûlé, tout tué, tout rendu à la mort”

the masses of invading Arabs came. These barbarians destroyed and burnt the lands and its peoples

“nous [les Français] en avons le devoir parce que, de même que noblesse oblige, toute supériorité crée un devoir”

we the French have a duty to this land out of the obligation of being a superior civilization

“les dispositions hostiles du reste de la Régence envers les Français sont excitées soit par le fanatisme puisque l’on profane les mosquées, les tombeaux des marabouts et même la sépulture des morts, soit aussi par les mauvais procédés exercés par des administrateurs français à Alger”

the hostility of the inhabitants of colonized Algeria towards the French is a result of the destructive acts of the French administration: the destruction of mosques, religious monuments and even graves and also the poor administrative procedures of the French in Algiers

“le gouvernement français ne pourra profiter des avantages de la Régence sans vider ses trésors et exposer son honneur, en faisant la guerre à ce peuple opposé à ses vues”

the French government antagonized the Algerians by stealing from them and dishonouring them making war on this people opposed to its views

“la mémoire collective d’un événement n’est constituée qu’à la fin de ce deuil. Autrement dit, la guerre d’Algérie n’est ni oubliée, ni occultée dans la France de 1992: elle est en transit de mémoire”

the collective memory of an event can only arise after the mourning period. In other words, the Algerian War has neither been forgotten nor silenced in France until 1992: it is in the process of becoming a memory

“il n’y a jamais eu depuis les accords d’Evian, de mémoire nationale française du conflit”

after the Evian Accords, France refused to remember this conflict

“l’incapacité française à insérer cette guerre dans la chaîne du temps long et des événements marqueurs qui soude une mémoire nationale”

the inability of the French to include this war within the stories which solidify a collective and national memory

“le souvenir de la guerre d’Algérie s’est privatisé et nous vivons depuis trente ans dans l’éclat des mémoires éparses et concurrentes”

the memory of the Algerian War was fragmented which resulted in an explosion of conflicting and scattered stories

“il y a quelque chance désormais de voir se constituer une mémoire historique de la guerre d’Algérie”

there is hope for the construction of a memory about the history of the Algerian War

“seul à présider aux destinées du pays, le FLN a confondu son histoire et celle d’Algérie et forgé une tradition historiographique qui prétend montrer que tout changement vient de lui”

in official discourse, the FLN has juxtaposed its own history with that of Algeria, suggesting that all changes which follow the Algerian War are outcomes of its actions

“l’unité du FLN, comme celle de ses adversaires algériens ou français, sont des mythes [...] et le mythe de l’unanimité des Algériens est facilement démenti”

the unity of the FLN and of its adversaries, both French and Algerian, is a myth...this myth is easily denied in light of recent events

“déchiré en profondeur, le tissu social résulte en partie des prédispositions de la sensibilité collective longtemps refoulée, (on savait mais on se taisait)”

has further fragmented the social fabric which was already weakened by collective sensibilities and the tradition of occulting known facts

“dès les tout premiers mois de la guerre, des Algériennes s’engagent et investissent des secteurs jusqu’alors réservés exclusivement aux hommes: la politique et la guerre”

from the beginning of the War, Algerian women joined certain activities and causes usually reserved only for men: politics and war

“l’impossibilité de se mettre d’accord sur une commémoration de fin de guerre”

an impossibility to agree on the right way to commemorate the end of the War

“met l’accent sur la cruauté des hommes, dans les deux camps, sur les désirs inconscients des personnages, sur des actes de barbarie insoutenables”

focuses on the cruelty of humans on both sides, on the subconscious desires of the characters and on the indefensible acts of barbarity

“mais la vengeance perpétuelle peut-elle constituer la seule explication possible à ce conflit? [...] Comment sortir des faux documentaires, à mi-chemin entre pamphlet de dénonciation abstraite et sensualisme exotique”

is constant vengeance the only explanation for this conflict? What is the way out of a false history, half way between abstract denunciation and exotic sensualism?

“cinquante ans après, les images sur les écrans n’arrivent toujours pas à rassembler les mémoires blessées”

fifty years after the War, the images on the screen still cannot bring the wounded memories together

“le Protectorat a rompu avec les faiblesses les plus graves de la société ancienne. Il a ainsi mis en place les infrastructures, consolidé l’expansion démographique et créé une administration efficace qui allait par la suite constituer la base de l’État moderne”

the French Protectorate eliminated what it considered to be weaknesses of Moroccan society. It implemented changes to the infrastructure, consolidated demographic expansion and created an efficient administration which would constitute the foundation of the modern state

“il y a un silence assourdissant autour de la période du Protectorat...L’avènement de l’indépendance devient alors la renaissance tant attendue qui va remettre tout sur pied”

the French Protectorate is absent from most accounts of French history...independence becomes the longed for renaissance needed to re-build the country

“un pied dans la modernité”

one step further towards modernity

“le Maroc séduit...plusieurs générations de voyageurs, de spécialistes, d’administrateurs, d’entrepreneurs ...posèrent leur valise pour un temps plus ou moins long sur ce sol”

Morocco has seduced many generations of travellers, specialists, administrators and entrepreneurs

“les amours littéraires occidentales s’y vivent donc volontiers comme des redécouvertes de soi, retrouvailles affairées avec le meilleur de l’archaïque intime”

the Western love stories with Morocco represent self-investigations in the midst of fascination with the intimate and archaic qualities of the land

“Lyautey a contribué à imposer au sein de l’opinion française l’idée que le Maroc était un très vieil état musulman habité par un peuple guerrier, mais chevaleresque...un pays qui...ne devait pas être traité comme une colonie, mais comme un état protégé par la République”

Lyautey promoted to the French the idea that Morocco is a very old Muslim country with a warlike but chivalrous people. This country should not be treated as a colony but instead protected by the Republic

“entre politique et banlieue, entre leaders ‘bourgeois’ et rap agressif, ou sont les beurs?”

where should the beurs be situated: between politics and banlieue, between peaceful leaders and aggressive artists?

“il a fallu attendre la Marche des ‘beurs’ en 1983 pour que s’affirme consciemment l’idée d’une installation définitive en France de la communauté maghrébine”

the realization that the Maghrebin community was in France permanently was solidified by the 1983 Marche des beurs

“soupçonnés d’utiliser la ‘cause’ comme tremplin à leur promotion politique”

suspected of using the ‘cause’ as a means for self-promotion

“comment se réinventer une culture quand on est assis à califourchon entre la France et...Algérie (ou Maroc)...? Par la langue, éternel vecteur d’une identité incertaine, fluctuante et protéiforme”

is it possible to reinvent a culture when France and Algeria have been divided for so long? Yes, through language, a popular vehicle for uncertain, fluctuating and diverse identities

“toujours nous avons été brutalisés sur les choses de la langue...Aussi on avait la terreur de n’être que des Français de deuxième ou de troisième catégorie”

we have always been brutalized because of language...and this made us think of ourselves as inferior to the French

“contrairement à ce qu’on pourrait croire, Mabrouk air-lik n’est pas le nom d’une compagnie de lignes aériennes, mais l’écriture en français de l’expression arabe ‘Félicitations a toi’”

contrary to common misconceptions, Mabrouk air-lik is not the name of an airline but the French translation of the Arab expression for Congratulations

“à un moment, des enfants se sont rebellés. De même en France. Je fais partie de ces enfants qui, un jour, ont dit stop. Effectivement, j’ai pu faire du cinéma, non sans d’énormes difficultés. Pas seulement qu’en tant qu’enfant d’immigré maghrébin dans la société française mais aussi avec ma” famille

suddenly, the children rebelled. I am part of the generation which, one day, said Stop. I was able to translate this through cinema but with great difficulties, as a second generation immigrant in France but also in relation with my family

“pourquoi nos parents n’ont-ils pas parlé? Parce que l’histoire de l’immigration maghrébine est honteuse...Nos parents sont venus en France parce qu’ils étaient poussés par le besoin. C’est humiliant de quitter son pays parce qu’on a faim et de venir travailler chez l’ancien colonisateur, l’ennemi”

why were our parents silent? Because the history of North African immigration was tragic and humiliating...Our parents came to France out of need. It was humiliating to leave your country because of hunger and go to work for the former colonizer

“avec ce film, la parole se libère enfin. Car pour cette population-là, un film est plus fort qu’un livre...elles [les mères] ne savent ni lire ni écrire, mais elles ont une mémoire incroyable et aujourd’hui, après quarante ans d’interdits, elles racontent”

I wanted to break the silence through this film. For this population, a film is more powerful than a book...the immigrant mothers do not know how to read or write but their memory is incredible and, after fifty years, they want to share their stories

“il devenait de plus en plus nécessaire (et urgent) de replacer les thèmes de discussion dans une réflexion plus large sur l’évolution de la société, sur le rapport entre l’individu et la communauté, sur la citoyenneté, la République, la Nation”

it was necessary and urgent to reflect more generally on the evolution of society, the relation between the individual and the community, citizenship, Republic, nation

“pour désigner la symbiose qui est à l’œuvre dans *les cités*, au point de contact entre populations immigrées et Français de souche”

to show the mixing which happens in the cities during the contacts between immigrants and French

“ici à Lens, le sport est devenu un moyen d’expression privilégié”

here in Lens, sport is a favourite means of expression

“devient ainsi une sorte d’objet de laboratoire pour qui veut observer une société construite sur des ‘piliers’ concurrents”

becomes an object of investigation for those interested in observing a society built on competing values

“nature profonde de la nouvelle immigration”

the profound nature of the new wave of immigration

“les grandes institutions républicaines qui avaient si bien assuré l’assimilation dans le corps de la Nation des différentes vagues d’immigrés, depuis la fin du XIXe siècle, paraissaient bien malades”

since the end of the 19th century, even the great republican institutions which successfully integrated communities of immigrants, failed to work

“on ne manqua de renvoyer cet échec à la nature profonde de la nouvelle immigration”

they blamed this failure on the specificities of this new wave of immigration

“alignaient au contraire des différences insurmontables, voire un capital d’hostilités irréductibles héritées de l’époque coloniale”

brought along insurmountable differences and a series of hostilities inherited from colonial times

“l’école est en crise maintenant...mais un phénomène de convivialité et d’affinité instinctive se produit entre les populations”

the education system is in crisis...however, certain feelings of conviviality exist among the populations

“capable de poser de questions en dehors de la religion”

capable of asking questions external to religious themes

“le processus français d’intégration suppose la laïcisation mais ne signifie pas l’abandon de la foi”

the French system of integration implies secularism but does not mean that belief systems are abandoned

“la laïcité n’est pas la négation de toute religion...l’anticléricalisme ou l’antireligion; elle consiste à dire qu’il existe une sphère de pensée privée dans laquelle aucune autorité publique n’a de légitimité”

secularism is not the denial of religion...it implies that the public authorities do not have access to the private sphere

“cette inadéquation et déstructuration des communautés d’origine favorise certes l’individualisation des choix religieux, pour le meilleur et pour le pire”

the discouragement of strong religious communities results in the individualization of the religious belief which might or might not have negative consequences

“un islam confessant et séculier”
a confessing and secular Islam

“dans le vieil argot du français populaire, les différentes langues de l’immigration et les créations originales du verlan contemporain”

in the old jargon of popular French, different languages of immigration and the creations of contemporary verlan

“en analysant les différentes formes de confrontations, on observe qu’elles sont beaucoup moins désordonnées et ‘sauvages’ (“Le retour des enfants loups,” titrait le journal *Marianne* dernièrement) qu’elles n’y paraissent, et qu’elles s’établissent même selon des modalités bien définies”

a detailed analysis of different forms of confrontation reveals that their structure is neither random nor ‘savage’ (which was argued by ‘The return of the wolf-children’ in the magazine *Marianne*) and that confrontations happen according to well defined patterns

“le français, la langue véhiculaire, et l’immense variété de vernaculaires qui compose la mosaïque linguistique des cités et quartiers”

French, the common language and the incredible variety of jargonic speech which forms the linguistic mosaic of the suburbs

“les mots sortent des cités. Leur propagation s’effectue grâce aux contacts que jeunes et moins jeunes appartenant à des groupes sociaux divers ont entre eux. Les media – essentiellement radiophoniques et télévisuels – participent eux aussi à la diffusion”

the words spread outside the borders of the banlieue due to the contacts between members of diverse social groups. The media – especially radio and television – also participates in the spread of jargon

“ils sont particulièrement représentatives du ‘melting-France’ le plus actuel, et acteurs d’un tohu-bohu culturel” (p. 244)

they are representative of the contemporary ‘melting-France’ and of the cultural ‘commotion’

“parle français, libanais ou anglais...donc non content de se nourrir de sa culture d’origine et de celle du ‘pays d’accueil’ il va au-delà, comme emporté par l’élán du mélange”

is in French, Lebanese and English...he borrowed from his culture of origins, from his country of immigration but also from other cultures

“l’attachement territorial...il ne s’agit pas de l’amour de la patrie française, mais d’un très fort sentiment d’appartenance à un quartier, une ville, un département”

territorial attachment...is not about French patriotism but signifies the need to belong to a neighbourhood, a city or a region

“la douleur et les brûlures de la nostalgie”

the pain and burn of nostalgia

“l’interrogation sur la légitimité de la notion d’orientalisme [qui] sert souvent de prétexte ou de prélude à une interrogation d’un autre ordre: à quoi bon ces études?”

questions on the legitimacy of Orientalism which are often a prelude for a larger question: what is the use of these studies?

“Said est le brillant porte-parole d’un courant de pensée qui a été très vivace. Cependant, qu’une catégorie d’orientalistes ait servi l’entreprise coloniale ne justifie en rien une condamnation de la science occidentale; ni le fait que nous soyons extérieurs à ces cultures”

Said is a brilliant spokesman for a very popular way of thinking about Orientalism. While it is true that some Orientalists did work for the colonial regime, this should not be an excuse to condemn Orientalism as a whole nor should the fact that we are outside these cultures

“est devenu, à la suite de son voyage au Maroc, l’exact antidote de ces peintres exotiques. Il a fait l’expérience de l’Autre et son regard s’est profondément transformé”

became, after his voyage to Morocco, the opposite of exotic painters. He embraced the Other and his view was changed

“c’est justement pour tenter de faire de ‘l’Orient’ un sujet de réflexion ou d’action libre que *Qantara* se propose, avec ce dossier spécial, de créer les conditions d’un dialogue et d’une tentative de dépassement de ce débat”

through this *dossier spécial*, Qantara opens up discussions on the ‘Orient’ in order to encourage dialogue and go beyond the debate generated by the usage of the concept

“l’orientalisme a ses registres, ses rituels, ses parfums, un bestiaire peuplé de fauves, de lévriers et d’alezans, une palette où le rouge domine. Il aime l’or et les brillances, les personnages enturbannés, les esclaves, les sultanes, les almées, les favorites qui, la nuit, murmurent mille récits dans les harems et le palais”

Orientalism has its own style, rituals, aromas, beasts, a universe dominated by the color red. It loves golden shades, characters with turbans, slaves, sultans, dancing girls, storytellers who tell thousands of stories at night in the harem and the palace

“le voyage au Maroc se mue dès lors en voyage initiatique... Venu chercher ‘l’Orient’, Delacroix croise, dans une terre qui va hanter son esprit jusqu’au dernier jour, l’Antiquité vivante. Il y découvre ‘le sublime’, une lumière subtile”

the voyage to Morocco is initiatory... In search of the ‘Orient’, Delacroix finds instead Antiquity, which delivers to him the ‘sublime’ found especially in the subtle Moroccan light

“une nouvelle catégorie d’orientalistes reprocha à la première son manque d’objectivité et sa tendance à ne trouver en Orient que ce qui confirmait ses désirs et allait dans le sens de son imagination”

a new category of Orientalists are critical of their lack of objectivity and of their tendency to use the Orient as a reflection of his inner desires and imagination

“alla jusqu’à prendre fait et cause pour l’Orient, défendit sa civilisation et les valeurs de sa spiritualité en Occident”

defended the Orient, its civilization and the values of its spirituality in the West

“risque culturel et religieux” and the infiltration of “idées, souvent erronées”

cultural and religious risk and the infiltration of often wrong ideas

“on ne peut nier l’apport des orientalistes en matière de découvertes archéologiques, de recherche et de sauvegarde d’anciens manuscrits... Sans oublier l’emploi de méthodes *scientifiques* et le souci d’exactitude”

we cannot deny the contributions made by Orientalists to archaeology, research and manuscripts...let’s not forget their scientific methods and their obsession with accuracy

“assurer une réelle et féconde rencontre des civilisations”

assure a productive series of encounters between civilizations

“une maligne intention”

a malicious intent

“Papa, qu’est-ce qu’un orientaliste?” disait devant moi une petite fille à son père, un écrivain arabe vivant aux Etats-Unis. La réponse fut en substance: ‘C’est un méchant homme qui dit du mal des Arabes”

“Father, what is an Orientalist? A little girl asked her father, who is an Arab writer living in the United States. The answer was: he is a bad man who says bad things about Arabs.

“les études sur l’Orient, plus précisément sur les pays et les peuples qu’on avait coutume (et qu’on a encore coutume dans beaucoup de cas) de qualifier d’orientaux”

the studies of the Orient, more specifically of the people and countries which were called and are still called Oriental

“les nuisances monstrueuses et proprement mythologiques”

the monstrous lies of mythological proportions

“c’est donc un Arabe dont la pureté de l’attachement à l’arabisme est a priori suspecte aux yeux de maints Arabes”

he is an Arab whose attachment to Arabisme is suspect in the eyes of many Arabs

“il [Said] éprouve un vif sentiment de culpabilité et décide de le surmonter par un engagement [idéologique] intense. S’il s’agit d’un intellectuel, cela se traduira par des publications aux formulations souvent excessive”

Said feels extreme guilt and decided to express it through a strong ideologiocal stance. In his case, his guilt translated into radical publications

“est conditionné par leur société, avec ses intérêts, ses passions, ses entraînements idéologiques”

is conditioned by their society, interests, passions and ideological background

“comment pourrait-il en être autrement? C’est un regard de l’extérieur comme l’était celui des musulmans sur la Chine et l’Inde, sur l’Europe même”

how else could scholars have depicted the Orient? Ours was an external view just like Muslims might apply to China, India or even Europe

“par orientalisme, j’entends les études faites par des savants et chercheurs occidentaux sur l’évolution des sociétés musulmanes à partir du christianisme ou d’un athéisme déclaré...Islam représente pour l’orientaliste un simple domaine d’investigation qu’il aborde de l’extérieur de son champ social et historique propre”

Orientalism is the study of Muslim societies since the beginning of Christianity done by Western scholars and researchers. For the Orientalist, Islam is nothing more than a space of investigation observed from the outside of its social and historical context

“signification du monde présenté. C’était comme s’il avait contemplé des momies pharaoniques: d’abord ébloui par leur survivance ‘extérieure’, puis déçu par leur absence d’âme”

power of the world under investigation. It was like studying Egyptian mummies and being first dazzled by their outer survival, and then disappointed by the lack of a soul

“éloigné de la dimension spirituelle et socio-historique”

far from the spiritual and socio-historical dimension

“en 1979, la révolution iranienne surprend les dirigeants occidentaux comme l’avait fait en 1961 la révolution algérienne”

in 1979, the Iranian revolution takes Western leaders by surprise as had the Algerian War in 1961

“la matière étudiée, du fait même qu’ils ne sont pas issus de cette matière elle-même”

with the subject of study, purely because the study is done from outside of the culture

“entre 1750 et 1870, c’est pour le lointain Orient que l’Européen part en voyage. En voyage, vraiment? Plutôt en quête de son passé, à la recherche d’un paradis illusoire, image mythique d’un Occident d’avant la chute...”

between 1750 and 1870, the European travels primarily to the faraway Orient. Was this really a voyage? More than a simple voyage, a trip to the Orient was a quest for history, for an illusory Paradise, a mythical Occident

“l’empreint d’une apathie maléfique, voire ressenti comme une négativité de l’Occident”

marked by an evil apathy, even felt as a negation of the West

“le lieu visité était vu, ou plutôt imaginé, beaucoup plus souvent dans un espace et un temps antérieurs”

the visited land was imagined in a former time and space

“un espace et un temps antérieurs”

an immemorial time and space

“traversé par les caravanes, abritant d’immémoriales villes ocre et blanches, cette région du Yémen est le lieu même des échanges entre Arabie et Asie, entre sable et océan, entre passé et présent”

this region of Yemen which is crossed by caravans and holds immemorial cities colored in brown and white is the space for exchanges between Arabia and Asia, between sand and ocean, between past and present

“Royaume de l’argile, du soleil et de la chaux, l’Hadramaout apparaît comme un événement accidentel millénaire...indifférent aux événements explosifs qui secouent le monde”

Hadramaout, a land of clay, sun and white sands, seemed almost an accident of millennial proportions and indifferent to events taking place in the world

“en ces temps de tumulte, partir dans l’Hadramaout c’est retrouver un peu de sérénité perdue, au voisinage de la beauté”

during these tumultuous times, a trip to Hadramaout brings back lost peace, serenity and beauty

“des couleurs – l’ocre et le rouge de la terre, le tender vert des oliviers, des amandiers et des terrasses d’orge et de luzerne, l’azur immaculé du ciel”

colors – the brown and red of the earth, the light green of the olive trees, almond trees and barley fields, the immaculate blue of the skies

“personne ne résistera à la tentation d’aller, au levant ou au couchant, fouler le sable des dunes du ksar Tingheras ou de Merzouga pour se baigner dans un flamboiement de lumière”

no one can resist the temptation to walk through the sand dunes of ksar Tingheras or Merzouga and bathe in the blazes of light

“aux confins du désert, au confins du désir”

at the edges of the desert, at the edges of desire

“soudain, le désert trébuche, oublie l’erg, la dune et le sable qui s’est trop répété. Commence le règne absolu de la steppe, immense cadavre du saurien, ocre, brunâtre, teint de mélancolie, à peine rythmé par de minuscules touffes de thym, d’armoise et d’alfa, qui donnent si peu de prise au vent du Sud”

all of a sudden, the desert with its repetitive dunes and sands disappears to leave room for the reign of the steppe, the land of burnt browns and melancholy, with accents of thyme, mugwort and esparto grass, hardly moved by the Southern winds

“nimbée de neige la cité des Nabatéens perd ses contrastes solaires, faits de rouges et d’ocres, et devient un étrange cocon pour voyageurs solitaires”

enshrouded by snow, the contrasts between reds and browns dissolve and transform the city of the Nabateens into a hiding place for solitary travellers

“tutoyer l’ailleurs, apprivoiser l’inconnu, se laisser porter par le fleuve de l’inattendu, se laisser surprendre par le mystère, soudain accessible, à portée de main, à toucher des yeux”

the meeting with the unknown, the taming of the new, the mystery of the unexpected and the surrender to the unfamiliar which becomes accessible to the eyes and body

“le voyage est une quête, un désir du monde, un apprentissage de l’être à la rencontre de l’Autre. Le voyage est un plaisir, une échappée belle, l’occasion trop rare de renouer avec la ‘vraie vie’”

the voyage is a quest, a desire for the world, a process of self-discovery. The voyage is pleasure, an escape and encounter with the real life

“il suffit que notre curiosité pousse la porte du monde, et voilà que la terre défile en contrées et océans, se rapproche en imperceptibles rumeurs, s’arrondit et roule dans la paume de nos mains. Nous savons alors qu’il n’y a point de géographie qui tienne devant l’impératif du mouvement. Il n’y a pas d’immobilité qui résiste au désir de voyager”

our curiosity is enough to open the gates of the world and the world welcomes us, with its lands and oceans. There is no geography which can oppose our movement and there is no boundary to the desire for travel.

“entrons donc sans plus tarder dans le temps du voyage, là où se relève la beauté du monde”

let’s not delay our entry into the realm of travel and let’s uncover the beauty of the world

“grâce à la magie des lieux, le voyage dans le passé de Carthage, par-delà la poésie de l’imaginaire, invite à une méditation sur les bienfaits de la paix”

the magical voyage through the history of Carthage invites to reflection on the benefits of peace

“un paysage placide, enrobé dans la lumière ocrée de l’automne: une grande plaine couverte de peupliers frissonnant dans le vent, les villages jaunes et gris où pointe ici et là l’index des minarets, des troupeaux de moutons dispersés dans les champs”

a peaceful landscape wrapped up in ocher autumnal light: a large field of poplars dancing in the wind, yellow and grey villages scattered in the distance, the silhouette of minarets and flocks of sheep

“nous ne sommes pas ici au commencement du monde mais dans un paysage usé dont la vieillesse est esiblement mpilement inapparente comme celle des glaciers”

we are not at the beginning of the world but in a warm landscape whose age is concealed like that of the glaciers

“Rimbaud, que le ‘dérèglement des sens’ n’aura pas empêché de partir en chasse de la créature inconnue, cette éponge mystérieuse de la mer infinie”

even Rimbaud, despite his troubled senses, ventured into these lands in search of the unknown and mysterious creature of the endless sea

“de décorer le lieu de la vie, le lieu symbolique où se rejoignent le haut, le ciel, l’homme, et le bas, la terre, la femme”

to decorate the living space, the symbolic union between the sky – or the man, and the earth – or the woman

“si l’on définit la place publique comme lieu masculin, la maison et la fontaine sont considérées comme des lieux féminins par excellence”

if the public space is masculine, the house and the fountain are feminine spaces par excellence

“à l’écart des bruits du dehors, la cour est cet espace retiré où s’affairent les femmes, l’espace du souvenir”

isolated from the external commotion, the courtyard is the hidden space where women go about their tasks and the space for many memories

“[est] un espace intime qu’aucun bruit de l’extérieur ne venait troubler, séchaient des poivrons, des tomates, des lambeaux de viande copieusement salés...Douce ou épicées, les odeurs de la cuisine flottaient au milieu des braseros, des poêles à frire, des bassines”

is an intimate space isolated from external noises, where women dry peppers, tomatoes and salted meats...the sweet and spicy kitchen smells surround this universe of braziers, pots and bowls

“un réceptacle de fragments de vie, un lieu de magie et de mystère”

a container of life fragments, a place of magic and mystery

“galet fossilisé, fragment de mue de serpent, grain de sel anormalement structuré, provenant des lacs salés”

fossilized pebbles, fragments of snake skin, strangely-shaped grains of salt from a lake

“le complice de leurs espoirs les plus fous”

the accomplice of their wildest hopes

“les petites dunes de fleurs d’oranger”

the small dunes of orange blossoms

“les vêtements, la chaux des murs, les boiseries”

the clothing, the whiteness of the walls, the panels

“le temps ne se mesure plus, il perd toute dimension”

time cannot be measured and it loses its meaning

“bijoux et parures”

gold jewels and sets with diamonds

“au-delà du corps, le bijou attire et protège. Forêt de symboles, il parle le langage de la dame qui s’offre au regard et s’y dérobe”

beyond the body, the jewel attracts and protects. The jewel and its myriad of symbols speak the language of the woman who offers herself to the gaze and then escapes it

“plus que témoins, ils tissent dans le secret de nos chambres d’indéfinissables liens. Imprégnés d’une part de notre histoire, si étroitement mêlé à notre intimité, ils s’éclairent de l’aura de nos souvenirs et ravivent nos fantômes”

the jewelries which are hidden in our mysterious rooms are reminders of our history, are connected to our most intimate moments and share our memories and ghosts

Chapter 8

Spaces of consumption: Encountering the “other” through food

“meublés de divans et de nattes, où ‘six domestiques arabes au teint basané, vêtus de robes noires brodées d’or, coiffés de turbans de fine laine damassée, chaussés de babouches, proposent gratuitement café et narguilé”

inside the cafe which is decorated with divans and mats, six Arab women with olive skin, dressed in golden and black robes, silky turbans and slippers serve free coffee and hookahs

“tout est là: le minaret, la musique, les souks, les danseuses, *le café*, la prière, le narguilé... Une certaine typification de l’Afrique du Nord et de ses populations se fixe, semblable à celle proposée par la littérature ou les cartes postales, qui fabriquent en métropole une myriade de stéréotypes promis”

all the elements are there: the minarets, the music, the souks, the dancers, *the coffeehouse*, the prayers, the hookahs...this is the typical image popularized in France about North Africa; a similar image can be found in literature and postcards, promising a myriad of stereotypes

“aux portes de l’Orient”

at the gates of the Orient

“passez les portes de l’Orient et installez-vous sous les arcades en bois de cèdre... Vous voilà déjà très loin, dégustant au rythme de l’Orient TAGINES, COUSCOUS et PATISSERIES dans le respect de la tradition”

enter the gates of the Orient and make yourself comfortable under the cedar arcades... You are far away, surrounded by the tastes of the Orient found in tagine, couscous and pastries, all dishes made with respect for tradition

“délices de corps et de l’esprit”

delights for the body and soul

“vous emporterez contre vous un petit bout de l’Orient, souvenir de ce voyage où le temps s’est arrêté pour un instant”

you can take with you a little piece of the Orient as a memory of this voyage where time stood still

“médiocre en dépit de sa vue exceptionnelle”

mediocre despite its exceptional view

“ne casse pas trois pattes à un canard”

are mediocre and nothing out of the ordinary

“ce restaurant, régulièrement cisailé par des changements de mains, traverse ainsi son temps, chute et se redresse, se méprend et se reprend, déçoit et promet”

this restaurant has been under different managerial teams which explains its on and off character: it both disappoints and promises a great meal

“sa symbolique et sa modernité sont fondées sur une interprétation actuelle de l’histoire des civilisations arabe et occidentale...cette géométrie ‘technologique’ est aussi la transposition actuelle des ouvertures et des motifs les plus nobles de la grande architecture arabe”

its symbolism and modernity are based on a contemporary interpretation of Arab and Western history and civilization...the merging of geometry and technology is a re-interpretation of the most famous elements of the great Arab architecture

“ce qui caractérise la grande architecture arabe, c’est l’utilisation de la lumière comme matériau de cette architecture”

one of the main traits of Arab architecture is the use of light as a building material

“espace aux volumes harmonieux , lignes pures, une lumière apaisante, filtrée par les vastes baies vitrées [et] une vue époustouflante sur les toits de Paris”

harmonious spaces, simple lines, soothing light, filtered through the large open windows and an extraordinary panoramic view of Paris

“elle est partout...et les peuples de l’ancienne Perse et de l’Empire ottoman, de la Serbie a Turquie, de la Grèce à la Bulgarie...en ont fait l’un de leurs gâteaux nationaux”

it is omnipresent...the people of Ancient Persia and of the Ottoman Empire, from Serbia to Turkey, from Greece to Bulgaria have claimed the baklava as their national dessert

“purée d’aubergines frites que l’on mélange avec du yaourt salé et aillé, de la *tahina* (crème de sésame) et du persil hache très fin”

mashed fried eggplant which is mixed with salted yogurt and garlic, cream of sesame and finely chopped parsley

Conclusions

Becoming post-colonial

“privilégie une approche de la civilisation arabo-musulmane, avec ce que des peuples ont partagé dans le temps – de l’aube de l’islam à aujourd’hui – et dans l’espace – de l’Andalousie aux

confins de l'Asie. La diversité des ethnies, des langues, des traditions, des confessions n'a pas empêché des expressions communes, particulièrement manifestés dans les arts et l'artisanat qui d'emblée les font qualifier "d'islamiques"

displays the Arab-Muslim civilization chronologically, starting with the birth of Islam, and spatially, from Andalusia to Asia. The diversity of ethnicities, languages, traditions and religions produced a common culture, especially in the field of arts and crafts, which can be qualified as "Islamic"

"le parcours s'organise autour de thèmes dont certains font écho à la fascination exercée par l'Orient sur les voyageurs et artistes européens à compter du XVIIIe siècle: un cadre et un art de vivre, la calligraphie, les métiers et un répertoire décoratif"

the exhibition is organized thematically and some of these themes such as the art of living, calligraphy, crafts and decorative art, are inspired by the travels to the Orient of many European artists and scholars since the 18th century

APPENDIX 2

List of Gallicisms

Action culturelle = cultural action (cultural policy initiated by André Malraux)

L'animateur culturel = youth leader

Les arts noirs = the black (African) arts

Les arts premiers = primitive arts

La banlieue = the suburbs

La banlieue chaude = colloquial expression which refers to some suburbs considered dangerous and often sites of riot

Les bidonvilles or maisons de bidon = poor neighbourhoods built at the margins of the big industrial cities

Le café maure = Moorish coffeehouse

La carte = the menu

Les cités satellites industrialisées = industrial communities in proximity of large cities

La civilisation arabe = the Arab civilization

La crise de mémoire coloniale = the colonial memory crisis

La culture coloniale = colonial culture

La culture populaire = popular culture

Les cultures urbaines = urban cultures

Délinquant or racaille = delinquent

Le développement culturel = cultural development (cultural policy initiated by Jacques Duhamel)

Le dossier spécial = a special section in a magazine

Les évolués = French term used during colonial times to refer to local Africans and Asians who have been educated and assimilated and have accepted the European civil values

Le foyer = family hostel

La France libérée = free France

La France une et indivisible = France one and indivisible

La génération beur = colloquial term to designate French-born people whose parents are immigrants from North Africa

Le grand projet/les grands travaux = a series of major architectural developments built under the leadership of François Mitterrand and his Minister of Culture, Jack Lang; these projects are associated with the reign of the Socialist Party in France in the 1980s.

Les grandes expositions = blockbuster exhibitions

Habitations à loyer modéré (HLM) = low-rent housing

La haute culture = high culture

L'homme politique = politician

Indésirables = undesirable

Le jardin public = public park

Les jeunes de cité = youth from the suburbs

Les jeunes issus de l'immigration = youth of immigrant origins who have acquired French citizenship

Laïcité = secularism

Les lieux de mémoire = realms of memory (Pierre Nora)

Maghreb = a term which refers to a region in North Africa including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania

La maison de la culture = cultural center

La mère patrie = the motherland

La métropole = colonial term designating the urban center located in Paris from where France was governing its colonies

La mission civilisatrice = the civilizing mission

Le monde arabe = the Arab world

La nouvelle cuisine = an approach to cooking and food presentation which emerged in the 1970s in France and is characterized by lighter dishes and emphasis on a simple and elegant dish design

La plus grande France = greater France

La question coloniale = the colonial issue

Le repère = point of reference

Le regroupement familial = laws passed in France in the 1970s which allowed immigrant workers to bring their families to France

Le restaurant exotique = exotic restaurant

La société d'accueil = the host country

Terroir = French term which used in reference to wine which denoted the special traits that geography, geology and climate bestow upon a particular variety

Le tout-culturel = broad culture (cultural policy initiated by Jack Lang)

Transmission culturelle = cultural transmission (cultural politics ideology of the Popular Front)

Les trente glorieuses = expression coined by French demographer Jean Fourastier which refers to the period of 1945-1975. These three decades, after WWII, were characterized by economic prosperity, high productivity and high wages.

APPENDIX 3
Illustrations

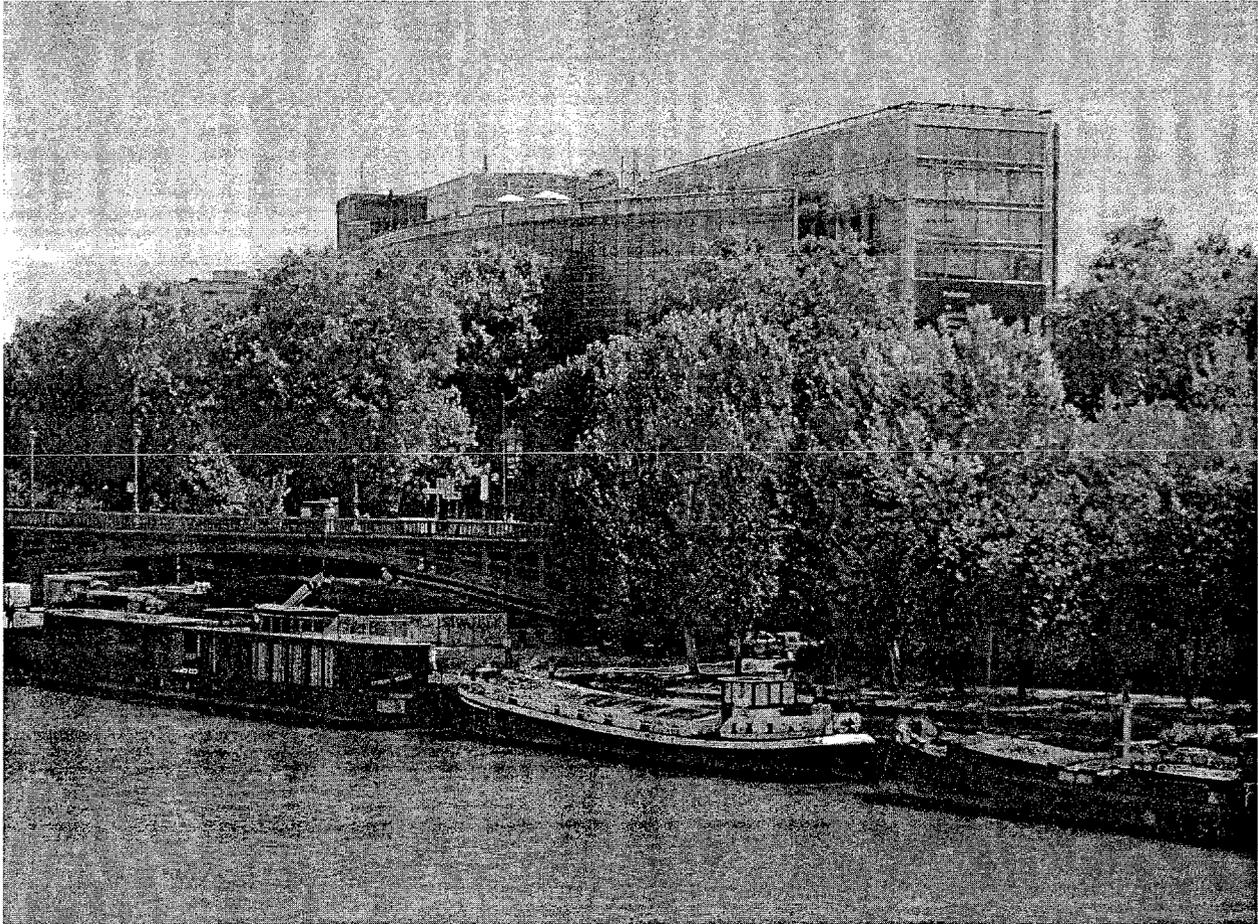


Fig. 1 – Institut du Monde Arabe, view from Pont Marie

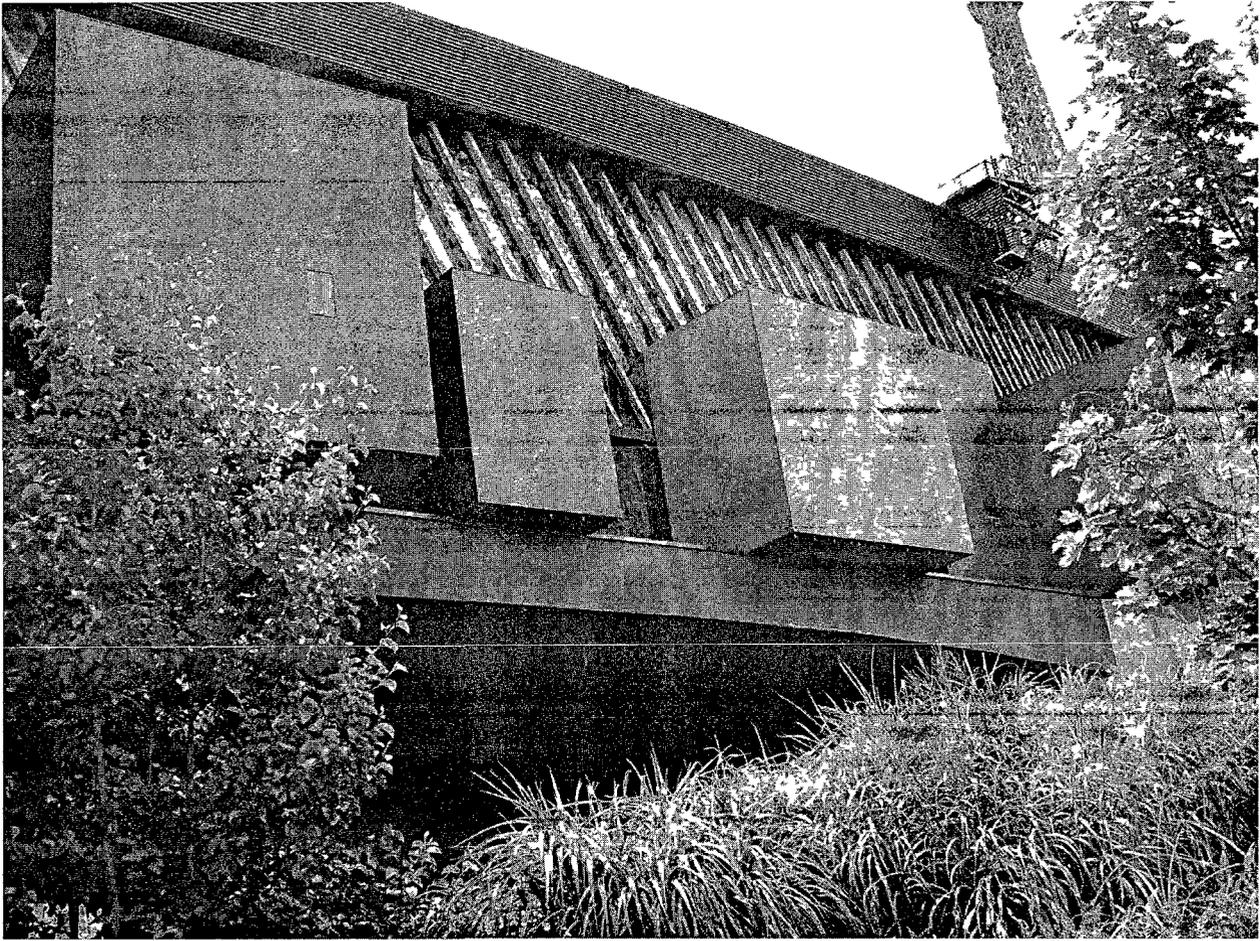


Fig. 2 – Musée du Quai Branly, façade detail



Fig 3 – Institut du Monde Arabe, view from Quai Saint-Bernard, book tower

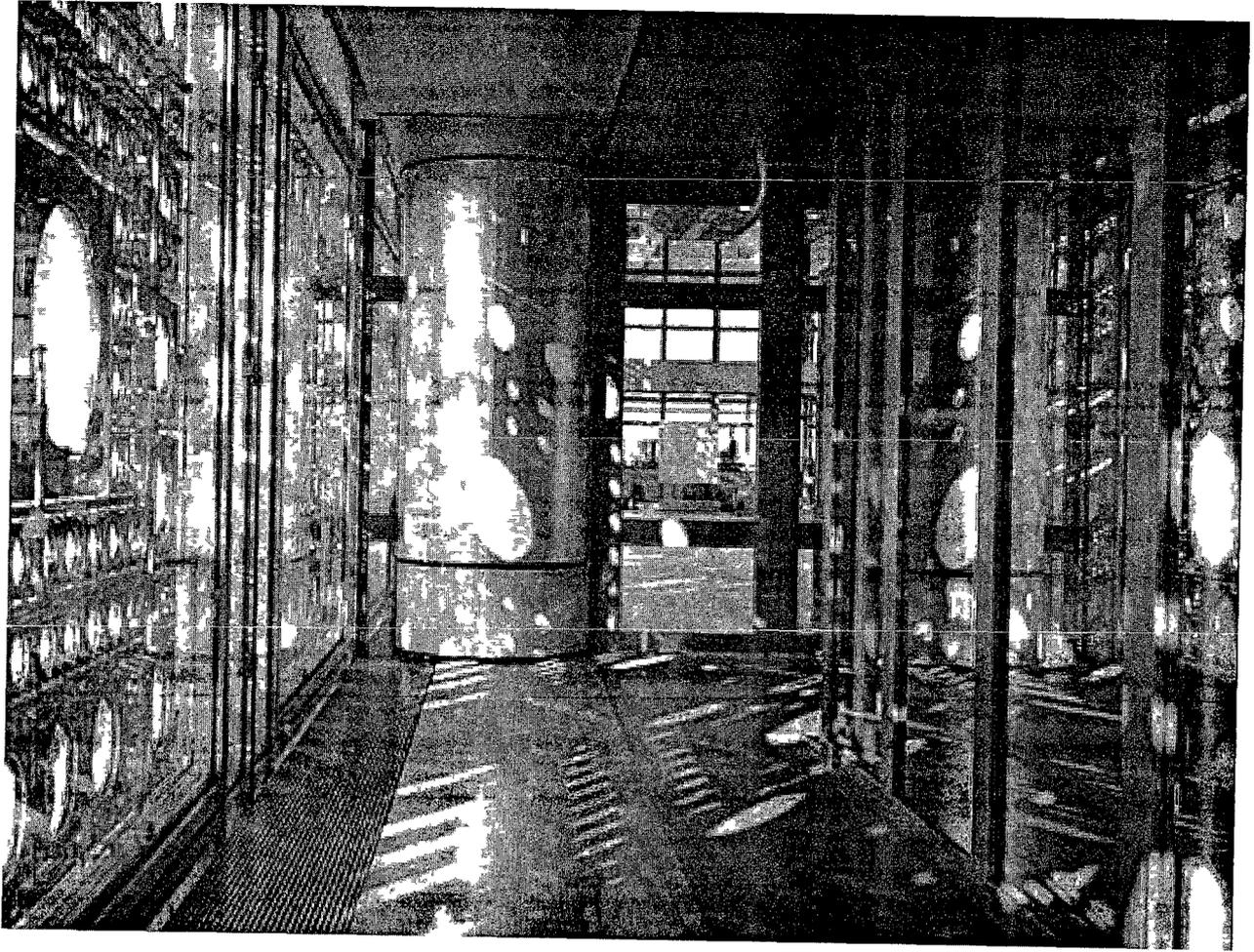


Fig. 4 – Institut du Monde Arabe, hallway

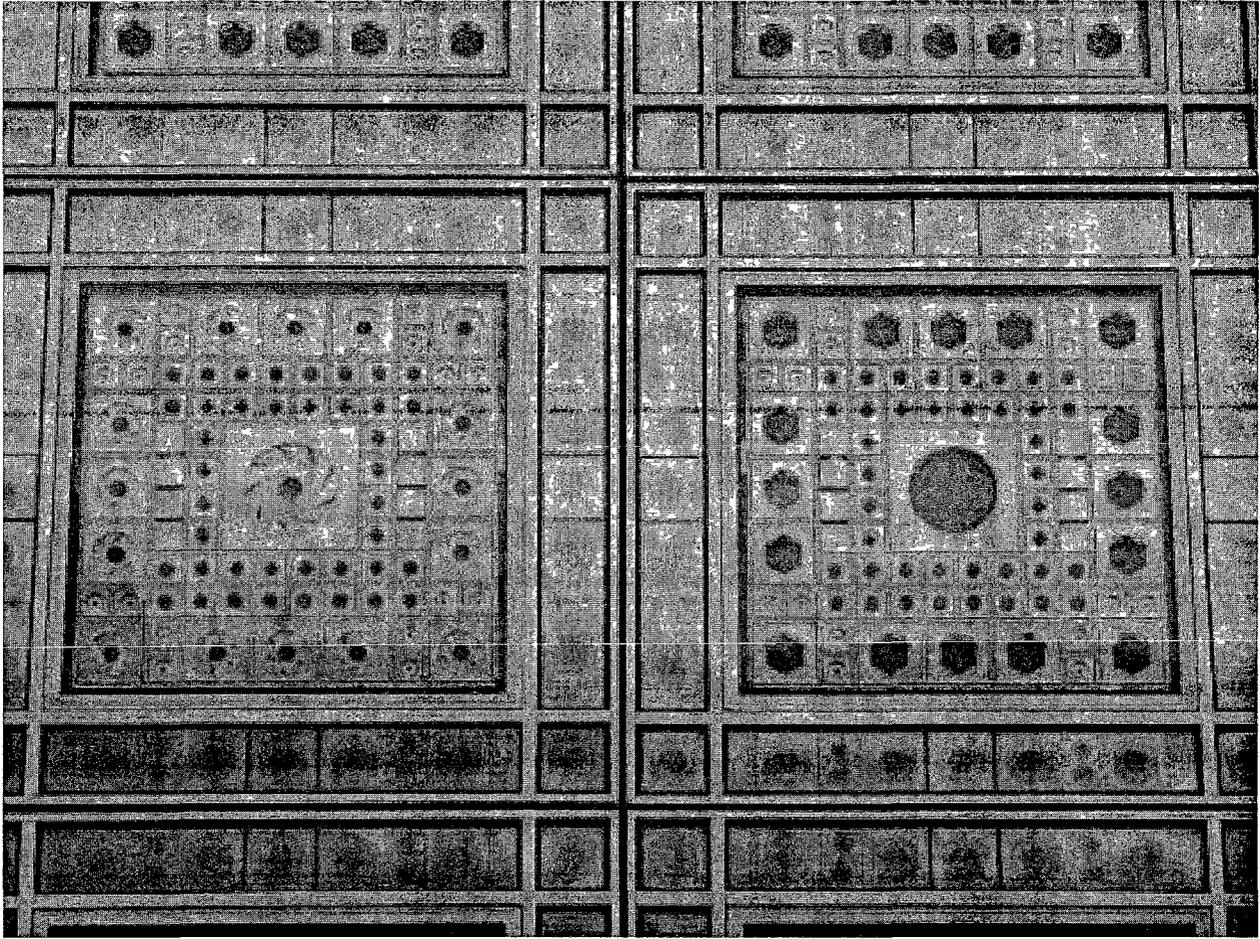


Fig. 5 – Institut du Monde Arabe, detail of moucharabieh

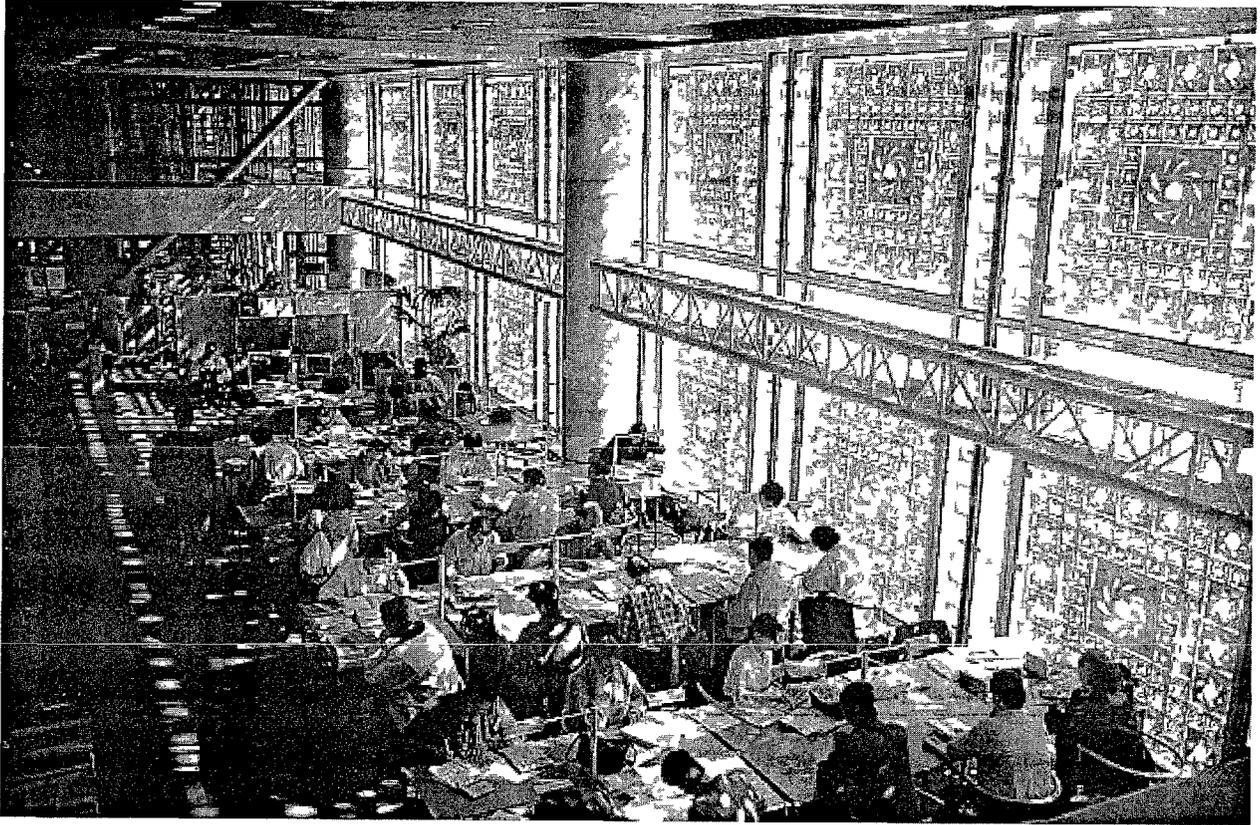


Fig 6 – Institut du Monde Arabe, the library



Fig 7 – Exposition coloniale internationale 1931, Bois de Vincennes, aerial view

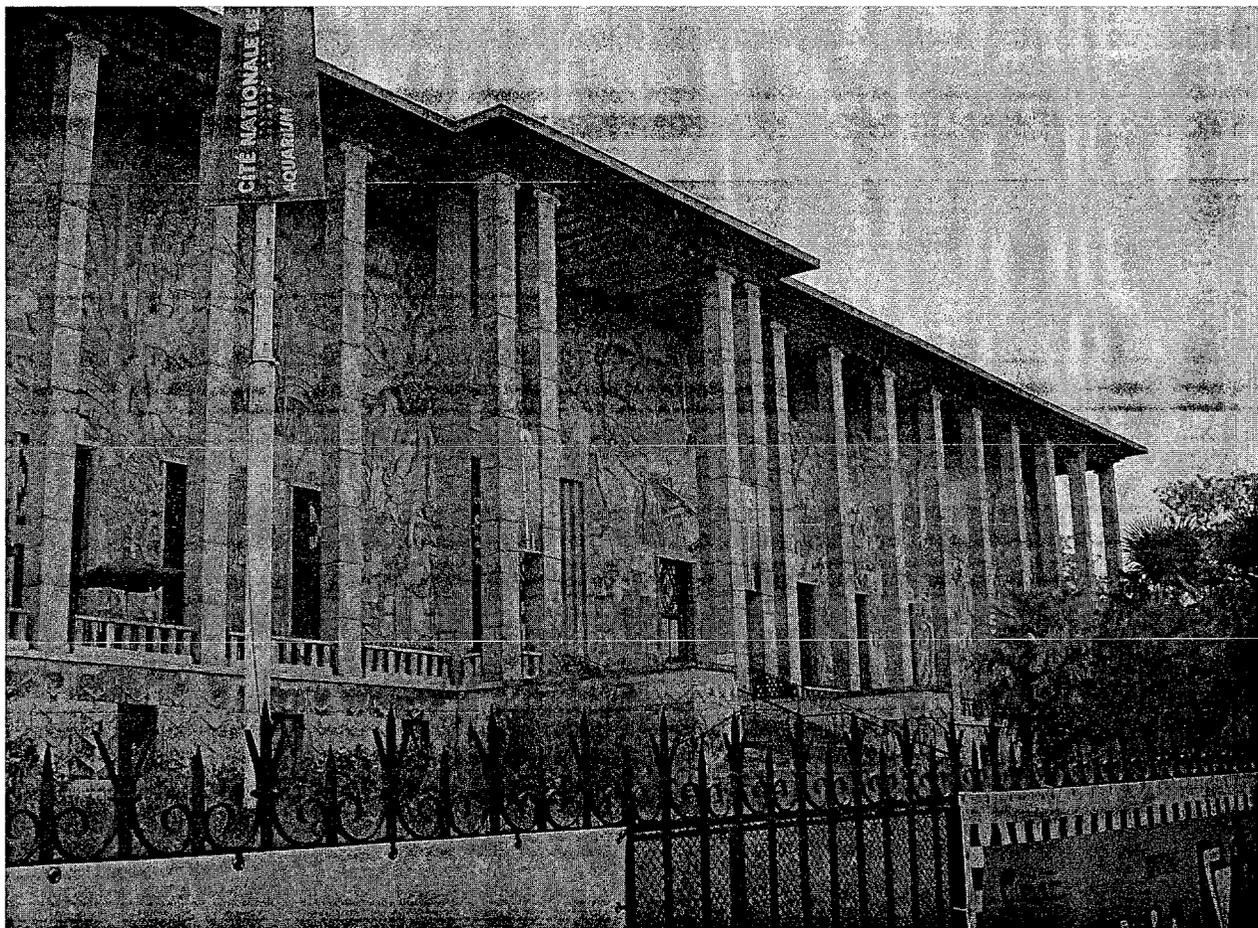


Fig. 8 – Le Palais de la Porte Dorée, Paris

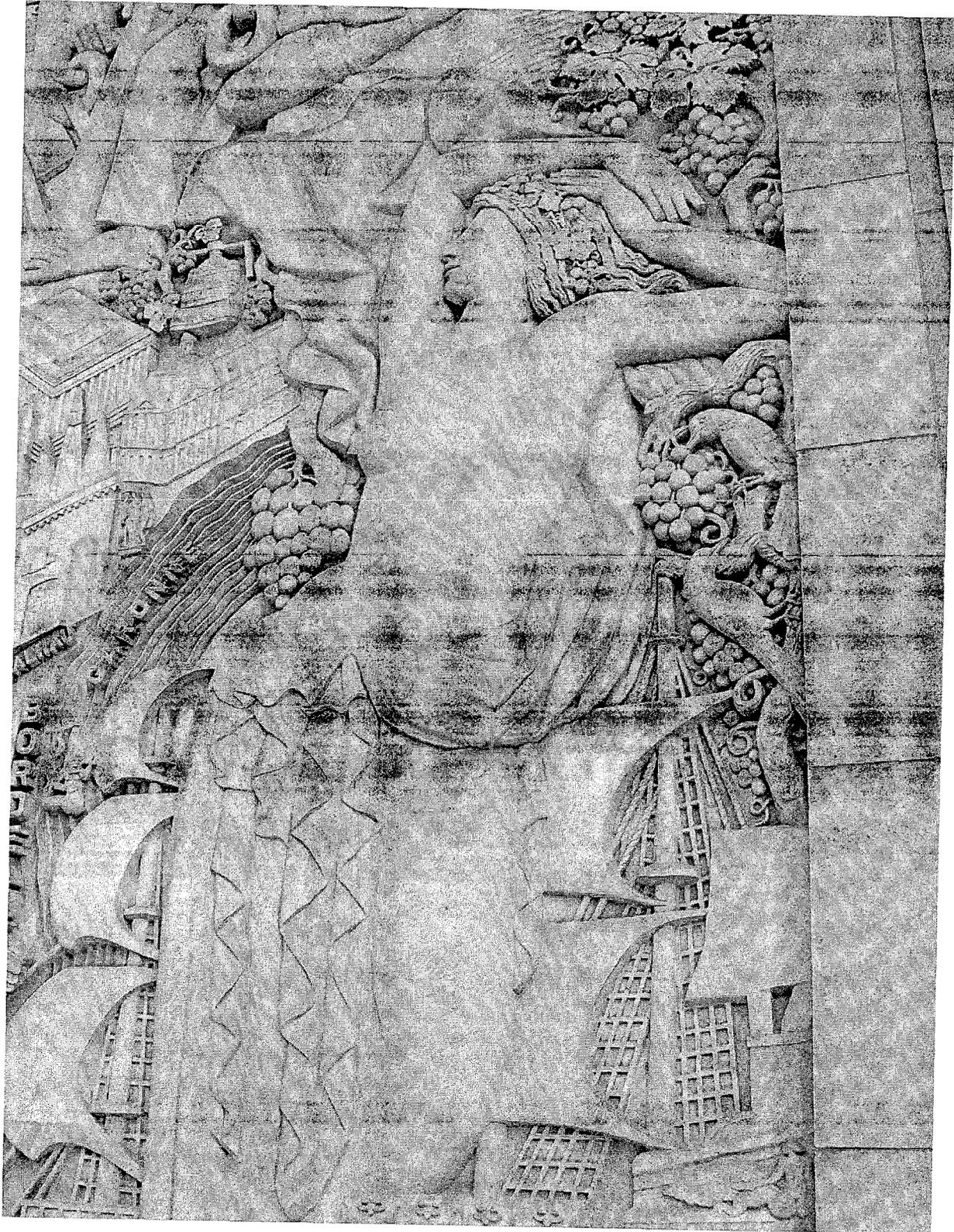


Fig. 9 – Le Palais de la Porte Dorée, detail

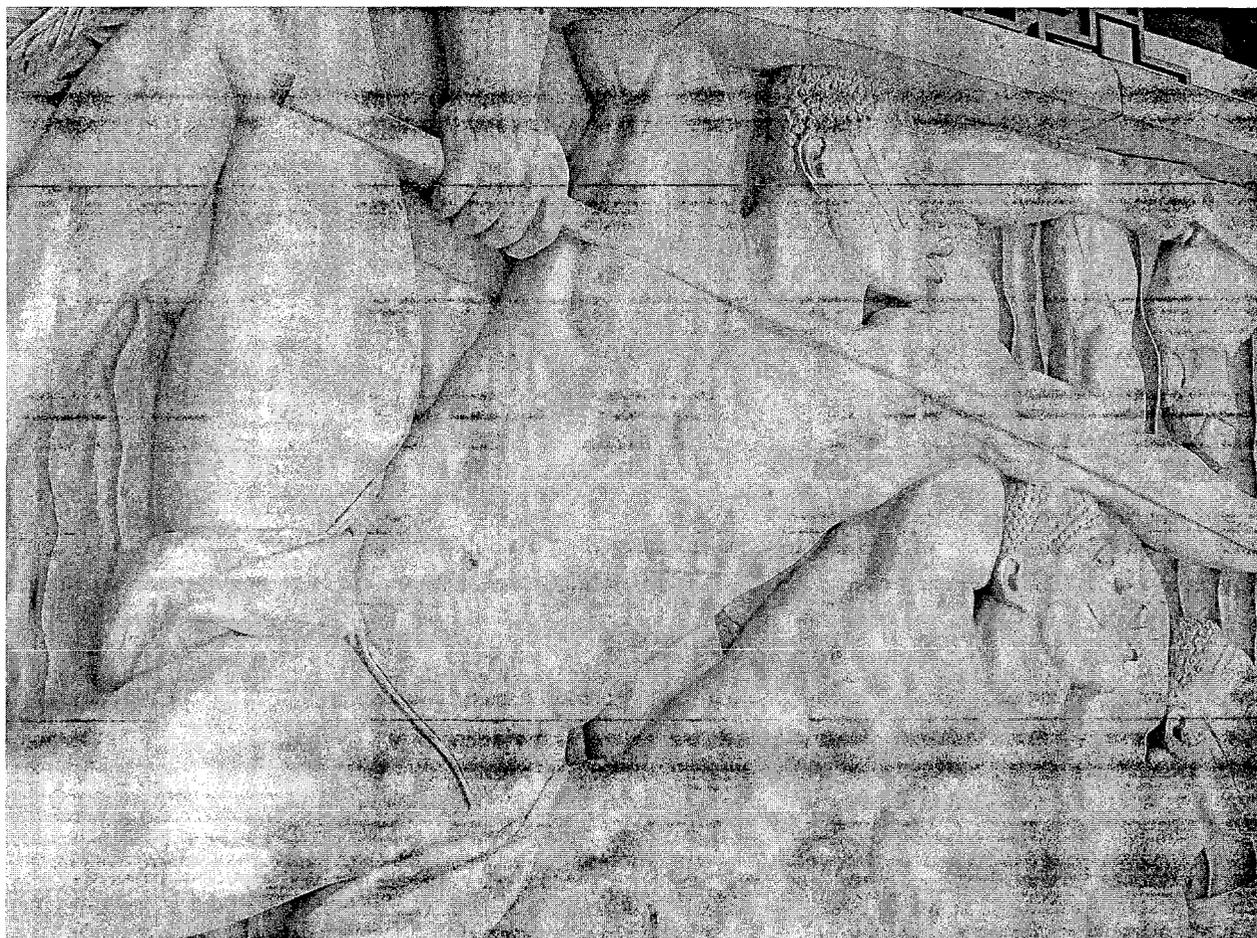


Fig. 10 – Le Palais de la Porte Dorée, detail

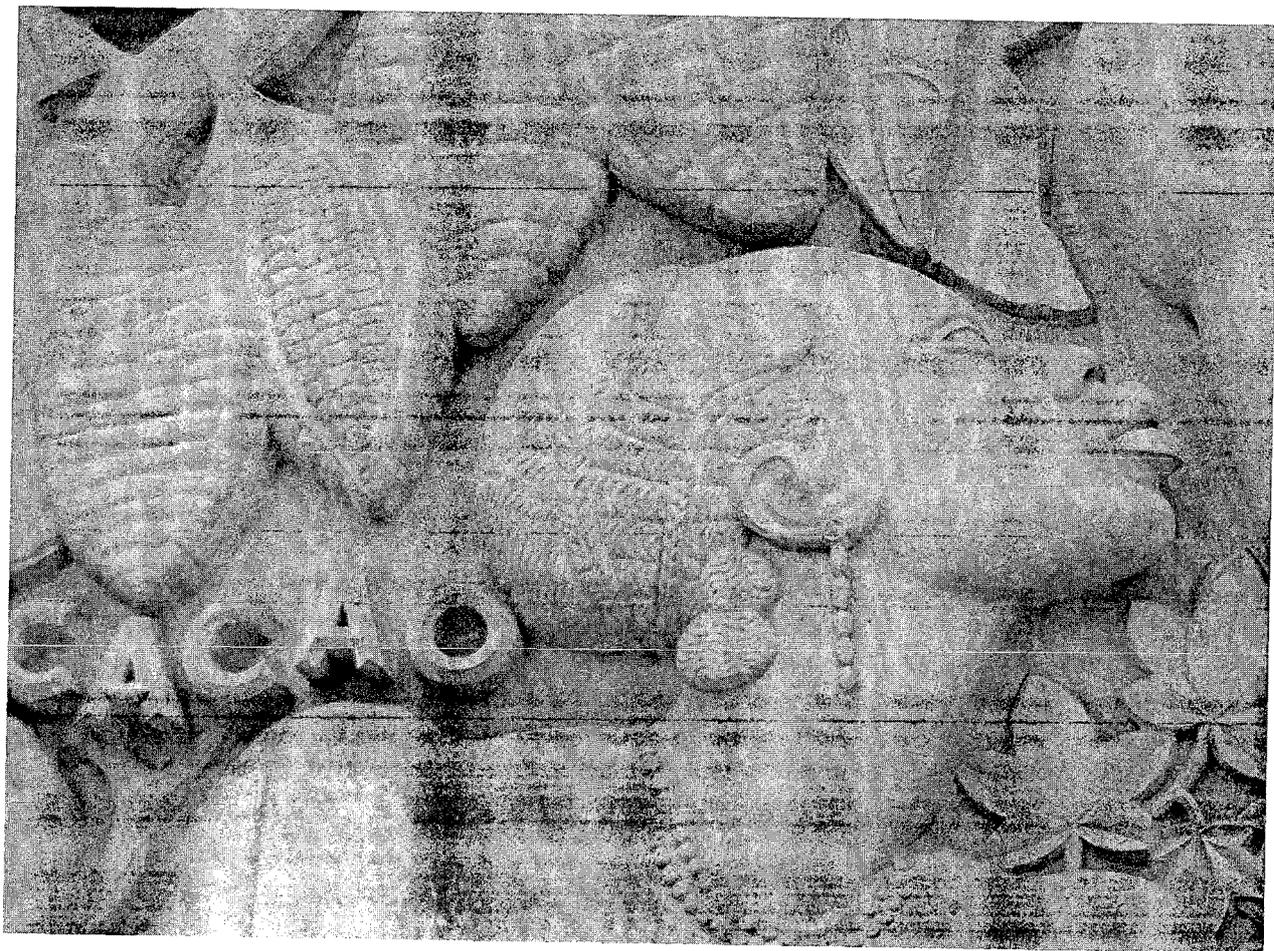


Fig. 11 – Le Palais de la Porte Dorée, detail

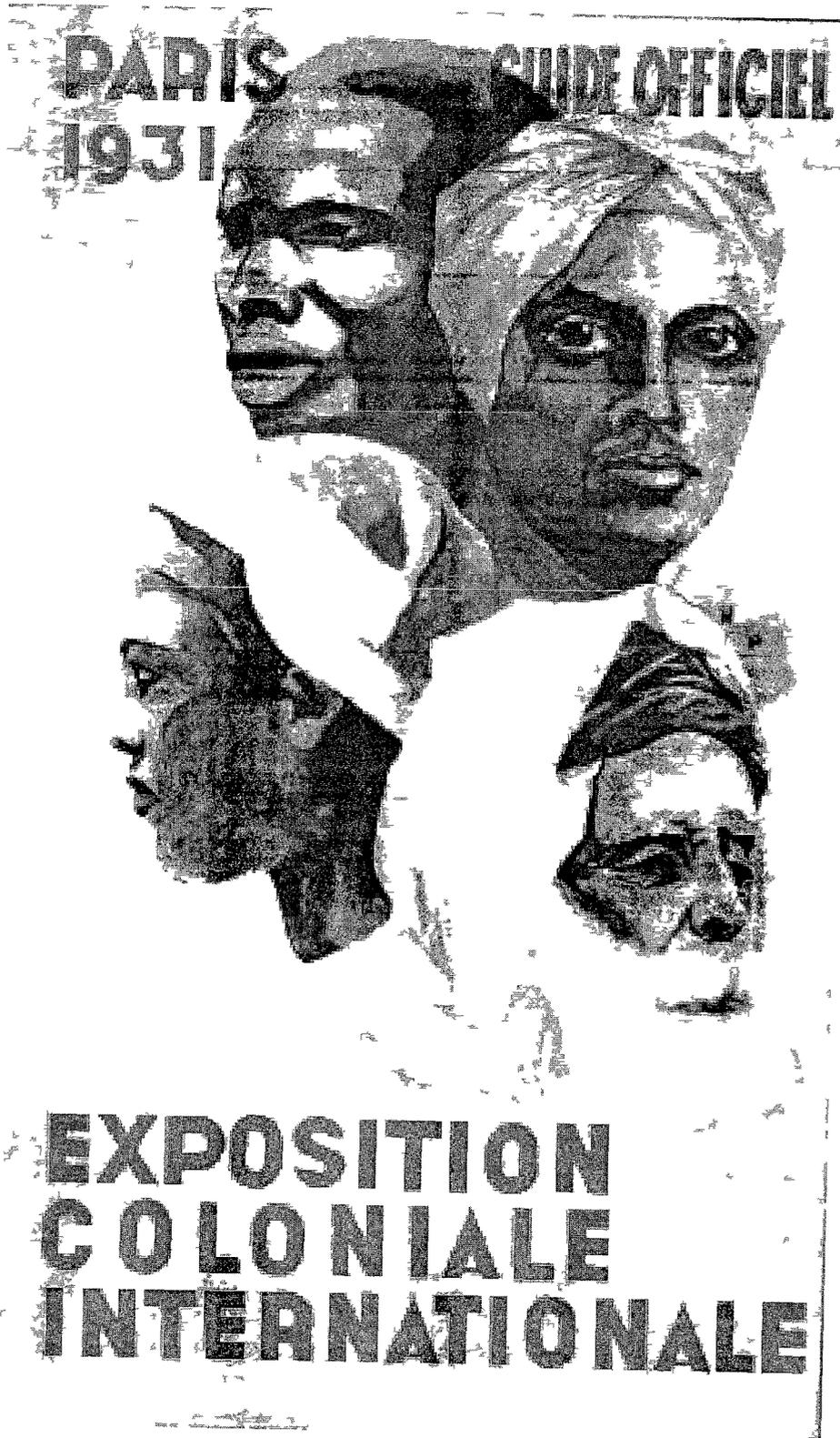


Fig 11 – Exposition coloniale international 1931, Bois de Vincennes, official guide

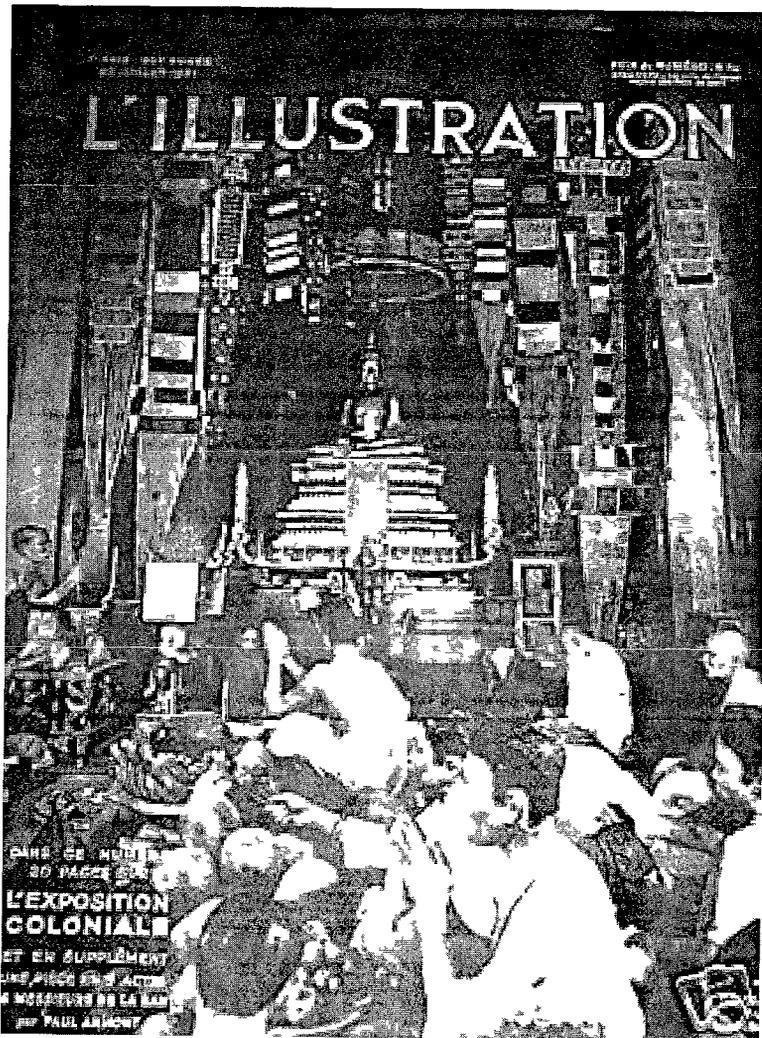


Fig 12 – L'Illustration (special edition on the Exposition coloniale internationale 1931), cover

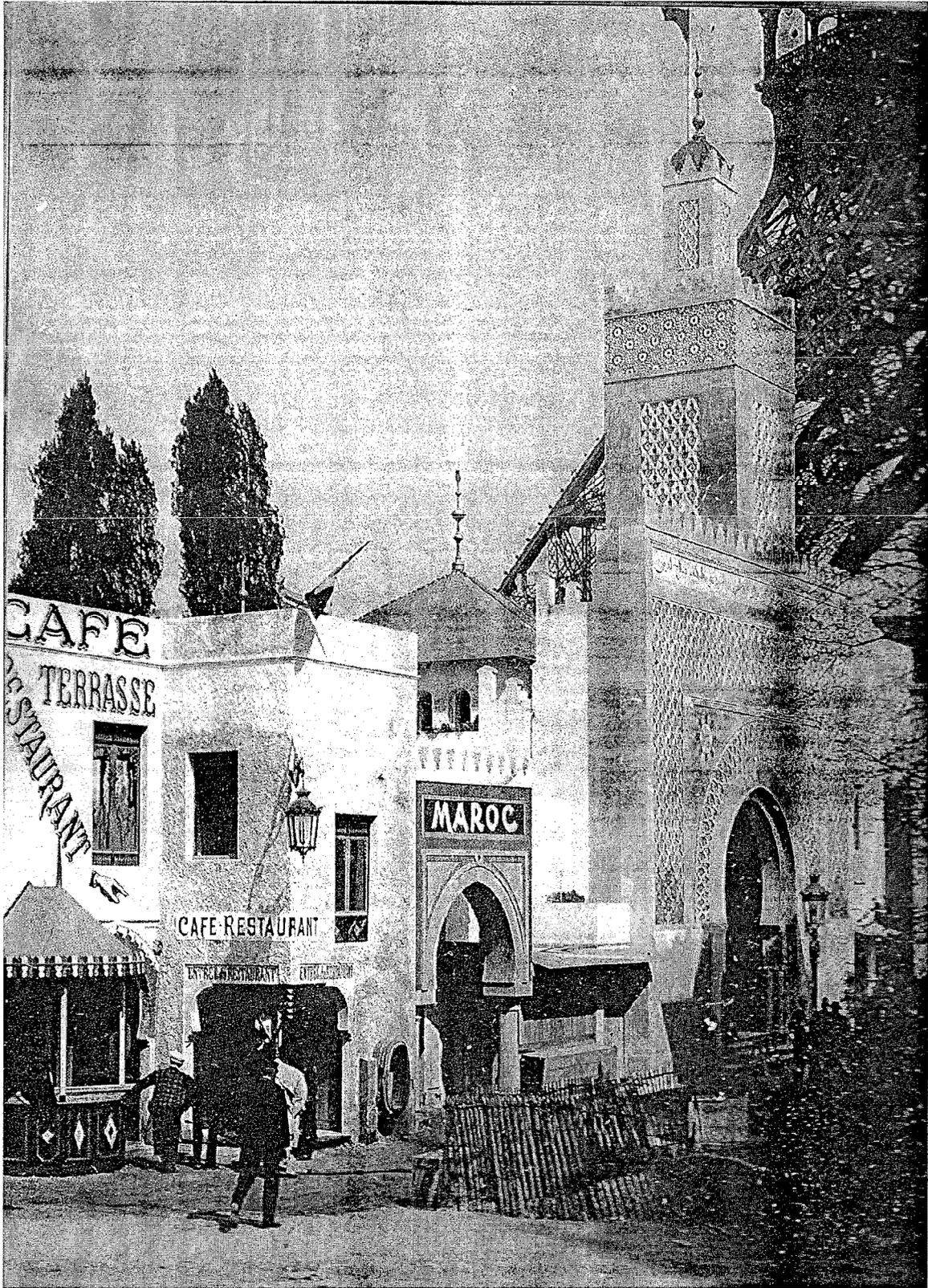


Fig. 13 – Exposition coloniale internationale 1931, view of Moroccan restaurant and cafe



Fig 14 – Eugène Delacroix, Algerian women in their apartments (1834)

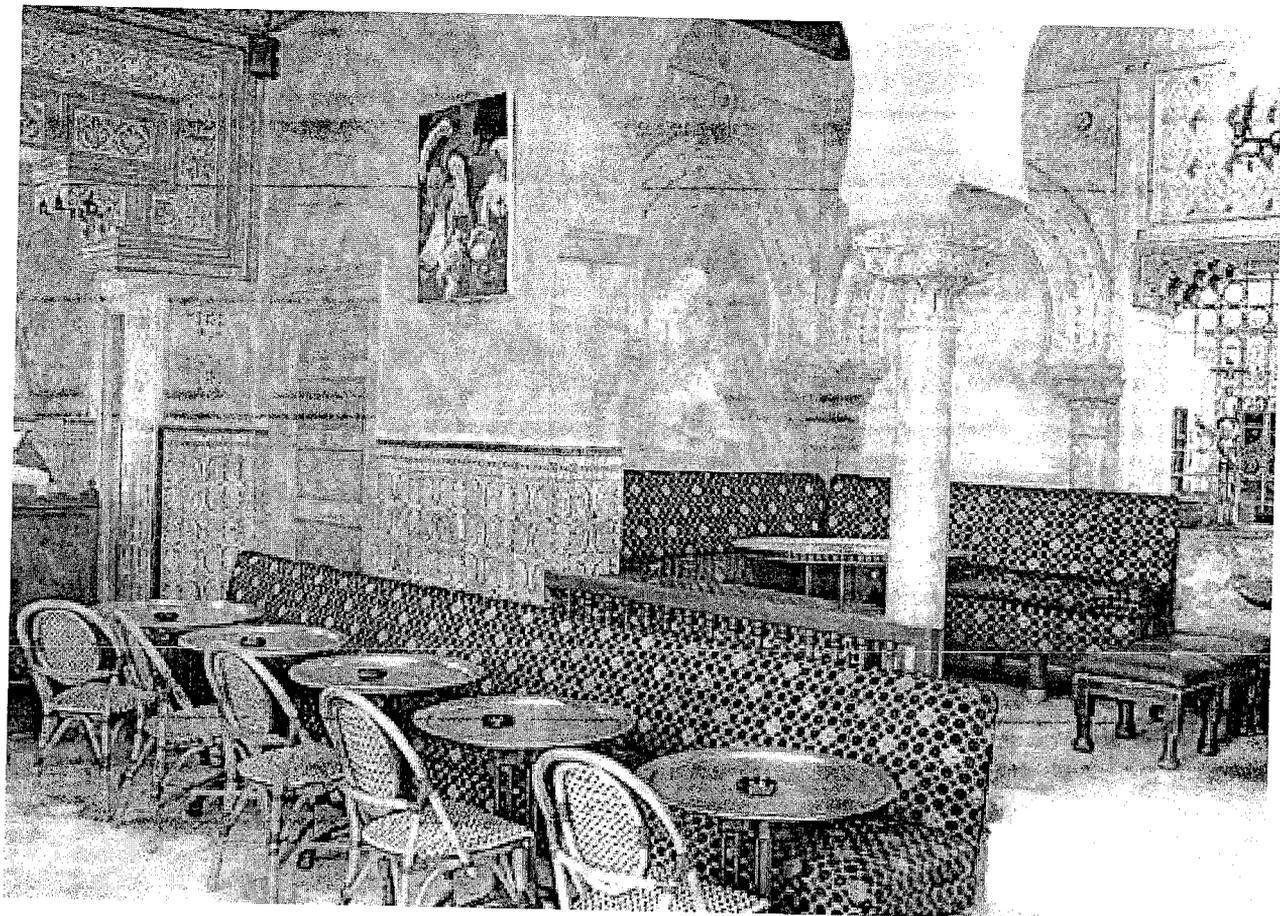


Fig. 15 – Mosquée de Paris, restaurant



Fig. 16 – Musée du Quai Branly, Les ombres restaurant

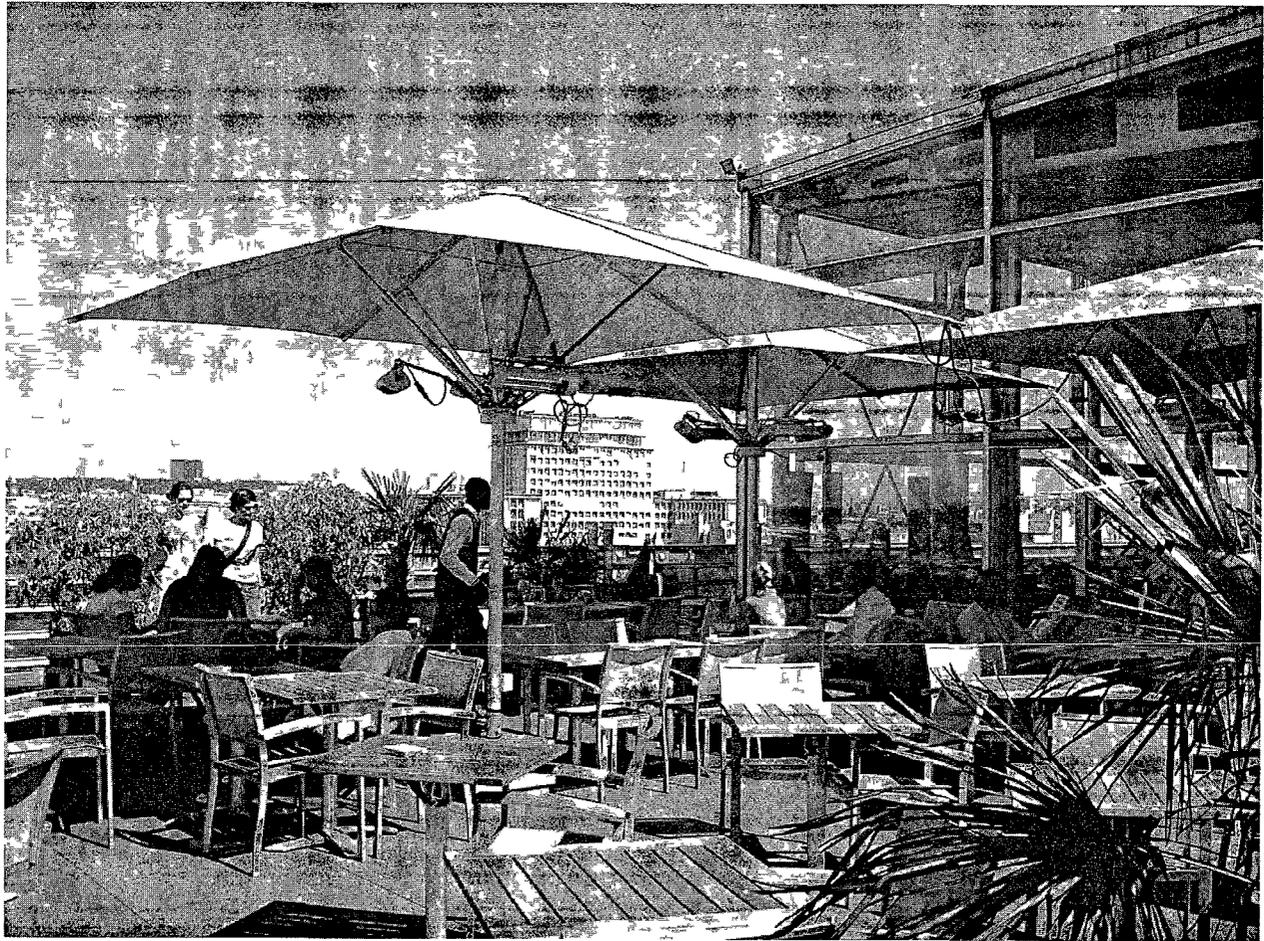


Fig. 17 – Institut du Monde Arabe, Le Zyriab restaurant, terrasse



Fig. 18 – Instiut du Monde Arabe, panoramic view from Le Zyriab terrace



Fig 19 – El Zyriab, Tabboulé dish

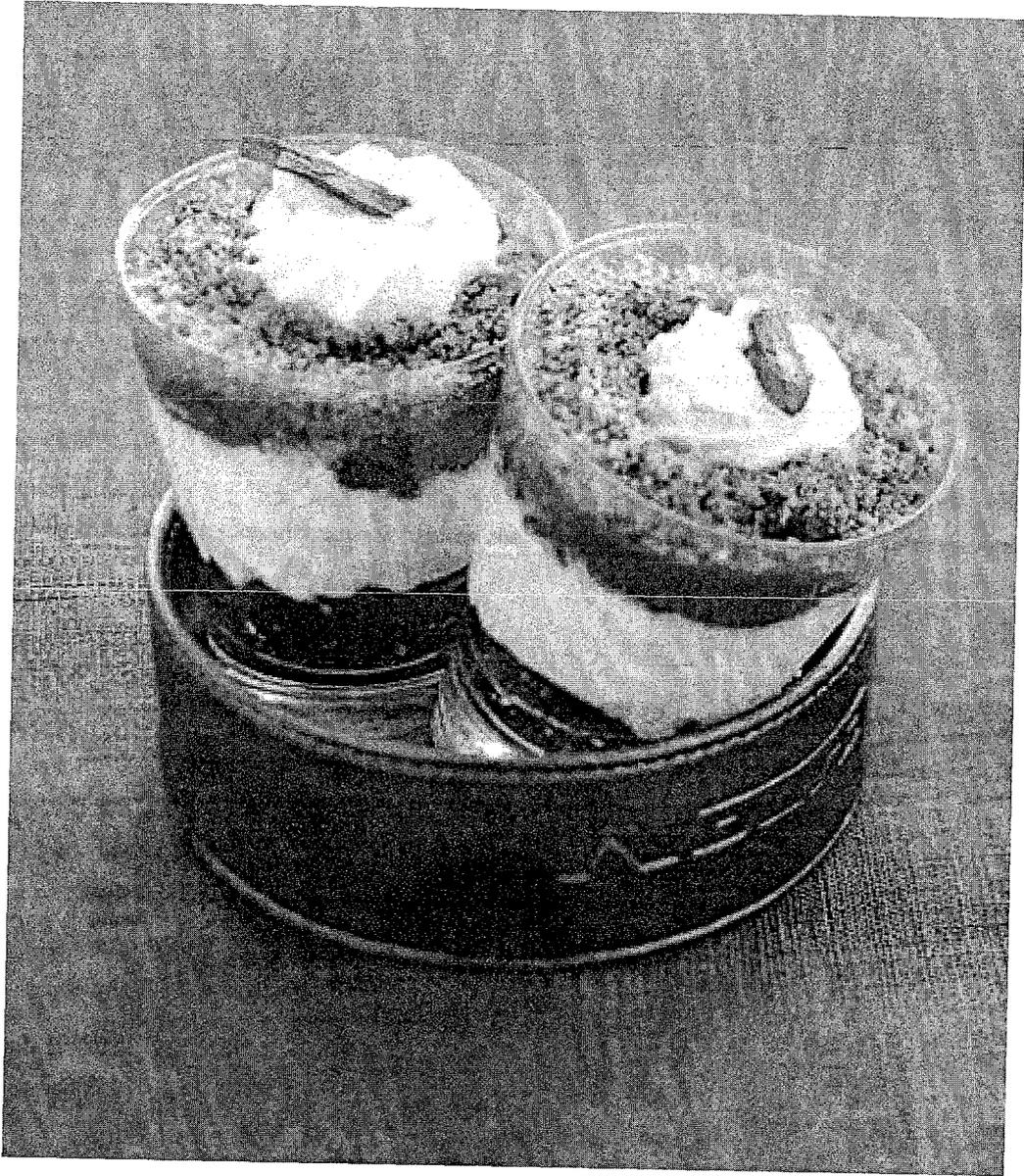


Fig. 20 – El Zyriab, Aich al Sarail dish